

Hacklab / Worldbuilding DTLA's future

ASCJ420 – an Annenberg Collaboratory

Spring 2016 – Wednesdays 2:00pm-5:20pm – ANN 405

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A remarkable transformation is taking place in the heart of Los Angeles. Over the last 10 years, Downtown LA (DTLA) has taken on new life as it builds ties to the south and the east, reaching toward Exposition Park and the LA River. From the Walt Disney Concert Hall to the California Science Center and from LA Live to SCI-Arc, a dynamic area is taking shape along the Figueroa Corridor and extending East to the Arts District.



Rendering for the future 6th Street Bridge, DTLA

What might Los Angeles become in the next 25 years? Will the city lose its vibrancy and diversity as it gentrifies? Or will we invent new ways for people to thrive on difference? How will communication technologies transform the ways we live, move, and create together?

This experimental class invites students to envision possible futures for DTLA. It builds on an ongoing ‘**world building**’ project at the Annenberg Innovation Lab, which has engaged a diverse cross-section of thought leaders and community members to imagine the future of living, moving, and making in LA. Their brainstorming expanded on provocative ‘what-ifs’: What if DTLA was a network of public spaces that formed a sustainable, unified metabolic system? What if the street were a platform for exchanging everything from culture to products to social services? What if LA made water scarcity its main concern? Based on these questions,



Judge Dredd, Mega-City Two: City of Courts

participants identified themes related to DTLA's future and tested their visions through possible scenarios.

The next step, and the core task for this class, will be to give these broad visions texture by prototyping 'artifacts,' creating characters, and telling stories that one might encounter in the DTLA of 2040. Through this process, students will explore DTLA and its diverse communities, select an urban issue for in-depth investigation, and contribute to the growing network of visions for DTLA's future.

Students will:

- explore DTLA and its diverse communities (field trips!)
- meet with people who are shaping DTLA's future – activists, artists, city planners, etc.
- build prototypes of future artifacts – vehicles, shelters, bus stops, etc.
- collaborate with participants in the School of Cinematic Arts World Building Media Lab
- contribute to the growing conversation around visions for DTLA's future.

Assignments and Deliverables (grade % in parenthesis)

Specific topics will be determined jointly during the first few classes, based on participants' interests, skills, and expertise. Participants will be expected to:

- **Attend classes and participate (20%).** To the extent possible, field trips, visits and off-campus activities will be scheduled during class time. But there will likely be class-related activities happening outside of class periods. We may also hold joint sessions with IML575 (World Building as a Design Practice for Storytelling – Prof. Alex McDowell), which meets Tue/Thu 9:00-11:50.
- **Keep a Design Journal (20%).** Each participant will be expected to individually keep an on-line design journal, with (at a minimum) weekly entries documenting their research, finds, sketches, etc.
- **Work in groups to design a future artifact (50%).** You will not be required to build a working prototype, but rather a concept or "paper prototype". This will be described/documenting/demonstrated through various multimedia objects as appropriate – these might include physical models, virtual models, performance, design fiction videos, etc. As a starting point (to be discussed and confirmed during the first few classes), the documentation of these designs will be assembled through a multimedia site (e.g. scalar - <http://scalar.usc.edu/>)
- **Publicly present their work (10%)** at the end of the semester, in front of a panel that might include domain experts, community stakeholders, city officials, etc.

Possible project themes

To the extent possible, we will try to match class projects with some of the instructors' on-going projects. This will depend on which projects get funded, and whether the schedules can be matched to the semester calendar. Two current possibilities include:

- **Water.** We have a pending application in front of the LA Department of Cultural Affairs, proposing a multimedia installation as part of the upcoming Summer 2016 LA Biennal

<http://www.currentla.org/>. A successful class design could become part of this multimedia installation. “Water” is also a central theme of the IML575 class, with which we hope to collaborate.

- **Transportation.** We will be exploring the design of autonomous vehicles (a.k.a. self-driving cars) to be deployed in Los Angeles, in collaboration with Urban Systems Laboratories. This could provide opportunities for class participants to work on the design of elements of this system -- including vehicles, stations, support systems, or experiences.

By necessity, the schedule for the class can only be set once we have a sense of the participants, their skills and interests. The general outline will be as follows.

Week 1: Introductions

Overview of the class and syllabus.

Introductions: we'll get to know each other, take stock of our collective knowledge of DTLA and relevant skills. This will be facilitated via an interactive activity.

Go over participants' **schedule constraints**. In particular, we will need to know what latitude we have to schedule activities outside of class periods, as well as for joint activities with the IML575 studio class.

Week 2, 3, and 4: (re)discover DTLA, explore possible themes for project

This will be done through a combination of world building discussions (exploring “what ifs?” for DTLA’s future), excursions through the city, meetings with stakeholders, and joint research into possible project themes.

Our objective is to make a decision about themes and participant teams by the end of the third week of classes.

Weeks 5 and 6: Rapid prototyping exercise

Teams will take a first stab at designing a first iteration of their project artifact. This will serve a variety of functions: begin to gather information; explore ‘design thinking’; establish what knowledge and resources the groups have, and what is needed.

The outcome will be first drafts of the projects, which we will refine in the second half of the course.

Weeks 7-14

The schedule for the second half of the semester will be established based on the unfolding of our work in the first half. Participants will collaborate with the instructors and play an active role in shaping the schedule and activities of that second part, including selecting readings or visits, reaching out to guest speakers, organizing focus groups or community workshops, etc.

Preparation for classes

Preparation activities will be determined as the class unfolds and might include readings, screenings, visits, explorations, etc. Materials will be made available on-line and there is no required textbook for the class.

Policies and Procedures

A. Laptop Policy

Effective fall 2014, all undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors will be required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the Annenberg Virtual Commons for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's Information Technology Services website.

Do take advantage of the Adobe Creative Cloud training sessions offered at Annenberg this Fall.

B. Plagiarism

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Please see the SCampus (<http://scampus.usc.edu/1300-academic-integrity-review/>) for the university's Student Conduct Code.

USC School of Communication Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Communication's policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as Communication school administrators.

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

C. Additional Policies

- Attendance: Regular attendance is required and essential for your success in this course. If for any reason you are unable to attend class, you must inform the instructor in advance and provide supporting documents to be excused. Frequent absences without legitimate excuses will negatively affect your grade.
- Checking USC e-mail: class-related e-mails will be sent to your USC e-mail address. Please check it regularly and make sure your account is not over quota.
- Use of technology in the classroom: You are welcome to use your laptop, tablet, or cell phone in class, but only in connection with class-related discussions. Use common sense, and make sure your device use doesn't distract you or your classmates from class participation.

D. Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:
http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

E. Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

F. Sexual Assault Resource Center

The Center for Women & Men and the Sexual Assault Resource Center are one and the same. Student Counseling Services is a separate place that also offers confidential counseling and support groups on a variety of other topics. To schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services, call (213) 740-7711 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays or visit the Engemann Student Health Center on the University Park Campus.

G. Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.