

## **GESM 111g – Seminar in the Arts: Shelter**

Fall 2016\_4 units\_Mondays and Wednesdays\_10:00am-11:20am

**Location:** Harris 115a

**Instructor:** Lauren Matchison, Assistant Professor of Practice

**Office:** Harris Hall 208

**Office Hours:** by appointment

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### **Course Description**

“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” Sir Winston Churchill

This course asks a seemingly simple question – what is shelter? The answer however, is quite complex. Understanding shelter involves untangling many important and influential contextual factors, which we will study throughout the semester.

It is typically thought that people design domestic shelter based on physical opportunities and constraints (i.e. climate, materials, construction, etc). However, reliance on physical factors alone to create shelter is a gross oversimplification. Humans are social beings, operating within complex belief systems, family structures, social classes, gender relationships, etc. This course posits that it is these powerful social and cultural factors, rather than the physical factors, which truly drive the creation of shelter and provide a framework for value and order.

Professional architects do not create the majority of domestic shelter throughout the world – everyday people do – and they do it well. This course exposes the conflict between the priorities of traditional architect-guided works (which take considerable money and time to develop) with those shelters and settlements designed by everyday people (with scarce resources or time and little to no training). Understanding the nature of this clash of priorities allows for a more nuanced education in architecture. By critically examining and analyzing user-generated shelter and settlements (emergency housing, refugee camps, tent cities, slums, etc.) we will uncover basic ideas of humanity and shelter and will become more sensitive and engaged citizens as a result. Further, students will learn how humans endure throughout time and space; and find ways not only to survive, but also to thrive.

### **Topics of Study**

- I. Placemaking and Shelter
- II. Sustainable Shelter and Social Responsibility
- III. Shelter in Emergent and Impoverished Conditions

### **Learning Objectives**

1. To critically evaluate shelter as the manifestation of social and cultural influences at the scale of the personal and the communal. Students will recognize the specificity of context and place and their impact on domestic shelter.

2. To engage history as a lens through which to reveal fundamental insight into the basic nature of shelter and its intimate relationship with culture. Students will apply the lessons of history to expand their own social awareness as they examine man's endless struggle to create shelter in various conditions across the world.
3. To gain a clearer understanding of user-generated shelter and informal settlements around the world in order to better realize the underlying psychological issues humans infuse into domestic shelter.
4. This course relies heavily on critical thinking. Students will focus on reading, thinking, discussing and writing critically and with purpose.
5. To gain familiarity and acuity in writing persuasive essays (both long and short).
6. The improved ability to competently participate in group discussion. Students will gain confidence by preparing and presenting their own ideas and opinions verbally.

## Course Notes

To further facilitate learning, this course utilizes Blackboard online. Log in using your USC username and password at: <https://blackboard.usc.edu/>

Twitter feed: follow @ShelterUSC for current events relevant to course work.

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Course Reader: All students are required to purchase the course reader - it will be necessary to have your own reader for the midterm and final exam (sharing will not be permitted). Course readers can be purchased online at: [www.universityreaders.com](http://www.universityreaders.com) (click the Student "Buy Here" button on the top right side of the page).

Recommended Texts (these are recommended for further reading, but not required):

- De Botton, Alain. *The Architecture of Happiness*. New York: Pantheon, 2006.
- Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1987.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

### Reading Assignments, Discussions & Presentation

Students must be prepared to discuss and critique the readings aloud in class. In addition to class discussion, each student must write a minimum 500-700 word critical response each week. Weekly, student(s) will be asked to present a critical and interpretive response to the reading and lead the class in a subsequent discussion. Participation in Reading Discussion: Participation will include asking and answering questions and being actively engaged in the discussion. It is expected that students read the assigned papers prior to the lecture and be prepared to discuss background, current understanding, and gaps in knowledge for the topic in each reading.

### Design as Mitigation Project Documentation & Group Presentation

Students must research and present their findings to the class. Topics will be assigned by the instructor. Your research and presentation should include factual research (background of the project and the designer/organization; identification of the problem to be solved; methods used to solve the problem; discussion of how the solution was implemented; results of the solution, etc) and a critical assessment of the process and results. More details to follow.

Midterm Exam Written exam covering all topics, lectures, readings, etc. given before October 14, 2016

Final Exam Written exam covering all topics, lectures, readings, etc. given after October 14, 2016

## Grading Breakdown

Reading Assignments, Discussions & Presentation (35%)  
Design as Mitigation Project Documentation & Presentation (15%)  
Midterm Exam (25%)  
Final Exam (25%)

## Additional Policies

### Late Work Policy

Late assignments: late reading assignments will be accepted one class period late (for excused absences only) and will be marked down one letter grade

Missed reading discussion or reading presentation: no credit will be given, no exceptions

Missed exam: no credit will be given, no exceptions

Missed Pecha Kucha: no credit will be given, no exceptions

### School of Architecture Attendance Policy

A student may miss the equivalent of one week of class sessions (in this case, **two excused** absences are permitted) without directly affecting the student's grade and ability to complete the course. An excused absence is a confirmed personal illness, family emergency, or religious holiday. For each absence over the allowed number, your grade can be lowered by 1/3-letter grade. If additional absences are required for a personal illness, family emergency, pre-approved academic reason/religious observance, you must discuss the situation with your faculty member immediately.

Any student not in class within the first 10 minutes is considered tardy, and any student absent (in any form including sleep, technological distraction, or by leaving mid class for a long bathroom/water break) for more than 1/3 of the class time can be considered fully absent. If arriving late, a student must be respectful of a class in session and do everything possible to minimize the disruption caused by a late arrival. It is always the student's responsibility to seek means (if possible) to make up work missed due to absences, not the instructor's, although such recourse is not always an option due to the nature of the material covered.

### Cell Phone and Laptops

You will be asked to turn off (set to silent or vibrate mode) and put away your phones during all lectures. You may NOT use your laptop during lectures. I find that it can be too tempting to start checking email/going on facebook/surfing the web when you have your laptop in class. No laptops or other digital devices will be allowed during lecture.

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

### Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

### Religious Holidays

The University of Southern California recognizes the diversity of our community and the potential for conflicts involving academic activities and personal religious observation. The University provides a guide to such observances for reference and suggests that any concerns about lack of attendance or inability to participate fully in the course activity be fully aired at the start of the term. As a general principle, students should be excused from class for these events if properly documented and if provisions can be made to accommodate the absence and make up the lost work. Constraints on participation that conflict with adequate participation in the course and cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the faculty and the student need to be identified prior to the add/drop date for registration. After the add/drop date the University and the School of Architecture shall be the sole arbiter of what constitutes appropriate attendance and participation in a given course.

### Sample Bibliography

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Echanove, Matias Sendoa. "Urban Information Systems and Public Participation: Learning from Mumbai, Tokyo and the World Wide Web." The University of Tokyo, 2007. Yoshimi Lab, The University of Tokyo, May 2007.

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Gans, Deborah, and Matt Jelacic. "Displacement: The Realpolitik of Utopia." *Perspecta* 34 (2003): JSTOR.

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Halprin, Anna. "Rituals of Space." *JAЕ* 29.1 (1975): 26-27. JSTOR.

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