

# USC School of Architecture

University of Southern California School of Architecture

## Introduction to Landscape Architecture Design: Translations & Dialectics

Landscape Architecture 541A, 6 units // Fall 2018 Semester

Location	Watt Hall (WAH), 3rd Floor, Landscape Studios University of Southern California
Time	Monday / Wednesday / Friday 2-5:50PM
Coordinator	Alexander Robinson, Assistant Professor email: <a href="mailto:alexander.robinson@usc.edu">alexander.robinson@usc.edu</a>

### Course Introduction

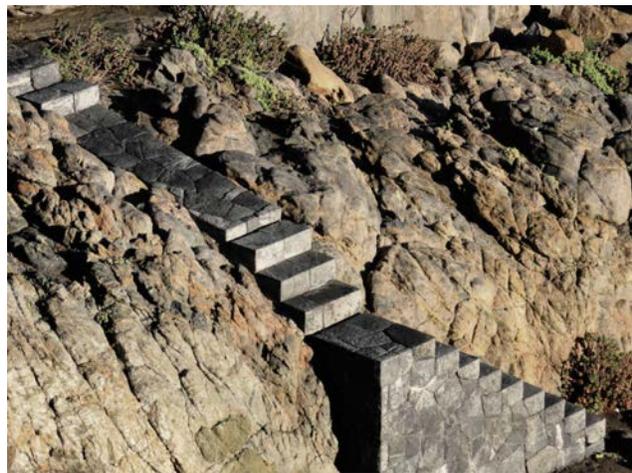
**dialectic** (from OED):

- a. *Logic, reasoning; critical investigation of truth through reasoned argument, often spec. by means of dialogue or discussion.*
- b. *In Idealist philosophy: the philosophical analysis of metaphysical contradictions and their resolution; spec. (in Hegelian thought) the repeated process by which internal contradictions within both concepts and the external world (i.e. the natural world and the world of human history and society) give rise to the dissolution of those concepts, forms of life, etc., and their transition into new ones, resulting in continued progress in both thought and the world; (also) the second of the three stages in this process, in which the original concept, etc., is negated.*
- c. *The existence or operation of opposing (abstract) forces, tendencies, etc.; the tension produced by these.*

“Dialectic [...] are a way of seeing things in a manifold of relations, not as isolated objects.”

– Robert Smithson, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape

Landscape architecture is in large measures a practice of manipulating the exterior ground plane for the purposes of society. To do this well, the practice of landscape architecture must operate on the existing conditions to transform it into one that better delivers value to society. In topographic design, for instance, we must make find a way to mediate between nearly insensible (sublime) geologic process (or by the logic of some past use) and whatever future purposes we might have for the landscape. We adapt a system whose conditions and framework currently has no inherent interest (or even predilection) to serve our intentions, into one that does. To form landscape designs, two different forms of logic have relations – the geological condition and the logic of human



intervention / need. The translation from one condition to the other can be considered what landscape architects do and design. The character of this translation and how we treat the various entities involved defines the landscapes we make.

Both the projects *Punta Pite* and *Olympic Sculpture Park* as places are defined by multiple relations, but it is this relation between movement and topographic condition that define their design. The logic of movement—of human program—within the current site conditions defines the project. A project defined by relationship, this careful dialogue, is what we will call a dialectic. The design of these landscapes can be understood by neither the previous site nor the intervention alone. Its definition lies within the resolution between the two. Dialogue that occurs between two different “logics”; a dialogue that is not predetermined by either logic but is informed by both. Landscape architecture design traditionally thrives on this dialectic—it is driven by a relation of site, in an intersection, not an overriding order.



## Exercises and Deliverables

### Part 1: Translations & Dialectics

Practice translations and adaptations between the mediums and techniques of landscape architecture design tools to generate content and form from form and site. You will also practice basic skills of form making, drawing, and modeling.

Translation Exercises (Drawing & Models – 2 weeks)

Catalina Project (Models & Drawings – 5 weeks)

### Part 2: Urban/Nature Dialectics

Adapt part one content and logic to site conditions and then condition a formal intervention to this hybrid of existing site logic and introduced logic.

Case Study: Drawings and Model (~2.5 weeks)

Urban Project: Drawings and Model (~5 weeks)

## Other Class Methodology

### In Class Pin-Ups

The class will predominantly consist of group pin-up reviews. After the second meeting, you will be expected to pin up all the work due/you want to discuss before class starts! Any work that is not ready (and pinned up) by then will not be discussed and considered late.

Carefully pin up your drawings using good pins and pinning and careful trimming (with a straight edge) when necessary. They should be straight (using a level) and evenly spaced (1” apart in general with 2” apart between students – measure!). The presentation of your drawings will affect your grade! Poorly pinned up drawings / poor quality pin-ups may not be assessed. No multi-colored pins!

You are generally encouraged to participate in the in-class pin-up reviews. Eventually, student input will become mandatory. This is a portion of your grade!

Weiss Manfredi, C

### Lectures & Workshops

There will be semi-regular lectures / workshops to introduce topics and demo assignments. These will generally be conducted after the pin-up.

### Site Visits

There will be site visits. In general, no transportation will be provided (with the exception of the Catalina boat and transportation on the island). You will be required to take a Taxi or public transportation. Please bring suitable shoes (covered), water, and visit a bathroom prior!

### Limited Software Instruction

The class and instructor only provide instruction as related to the assignments. For basics and additional software instruction beyond what is provided in media courses, see the resources listed below (Lynda in particular is a great resource!).

### Studio Instruction Time

Following pin-ups, presentations, and class discussions you are expected to stay in studio (with necessary for bathroom / coffee, etc. breaks) and work until the end of class-time. Professor Robinson will be available for specific questions and consultations at a nearby desk. Please consider whether the question can easily be answered by your peers prior to consulting a professor.

### Final and Mid Reviews

Outside reviewers will come to discuss and evaluate your work at mid and final reviews. Presentation orders will be posted. All students must be pinned up 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time to participate in the review (and not be penalized). The entire class must be present (and awake!) during the course of the review. Do not take your own notes – ask another student to make notes for you. Presentation durations will be specified.

### Readings

There will be semi-regular readings. Look at class assignment schedules to see the date that the readings must be read by.

### Model Photography

All models must be photographed by the standards and instructions presented in class. In general, this means that models must be naturally lit (outside) with a naturally lit solid color background (white be default). The background of model photographs should not be “photoshopped” out – white background or not!

### Schedule

Week	Date	Content
1	8/20	Introduction Translation Exercises
2	8/27	Translation Exercises <b>8/29-8/31 Trip to Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies on Catalina Island</b> (Intensive: W, Th, Fri) 8/29, Meet in San Pedro!
3	9/3	<b>9/4 Labor Day Holiday (No Class)</b> Catalina Project (1)

4	9/10	Catalina Project (2)
5	9/17	Catalina Project (3)
6	9/24	Catalina Project (4)
7	10/1	Catalina Project (5) 10/1 Professor Robinson Out of Town (UVA Panel) <b>10/5 Mid Review</b>
8	10/8	Case Study Project (1)
9	10/15	Case Study Project (2)
10	10/22	Case Study Project (3) <b>11/21-25 Thanksgiving Recess</b>
11	10/29	Urban Project (1)
12	11/5	Urban Project (2)
13	11/12	Urban Project (3)
14	11/19	Urban Project (4)
15	11/26	Urban Project (5) <b>11/30 Last day of classes</b>
	12/11-13	MLA Final Reviews (Final Date TBD)

## Grading

Grading is made through a synthesis of the following: completion of assignments, instructor assessment of work quality, outsider reviewers' assessment of work quality, and participation in class.

Midterm projects (42%)

Post Midterm Projects (52%)

Participation throughout (6%)

## Equipment and Resources

Students will be required to use the Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign) and Rhino V6 (Windows or Mac, OK).

Lynda Software Tutorial (USC provided)

<https://itservices.usc.edu/lynda/>

Also, equipment as listed for workshop.

## 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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards”

<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

### Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and micro-aggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>