Arch 698a, 2 units

Advanced Design Research Seminar: The Los Angeles River

Instructor: Alexander Robinson, Associate Professor, alexander.robinson@usc.edu
Meetings: Mondays 10-11:50AM, Harris 115
Arch 698A, 2 Units

Course Introduction
This ADR (advanced design research) seminar is intended to serve as a foundation and launching pad for next semester’s advanced design research studio (698B) focused on designing the Los Angeles River and specifically a pilot project channel modification project. The course is focused on two primary aspects of the Los Angeles River: (1) its powerful current role as a form and place of cultural consciousness and the subsequent activities, byproducts, and mechanisms of such, including alternate and endemic ecologies and cultural practices and (2) how the river’s re-design can best proceed in such a context while also meeting an extensive set of multi-functional goals, all within a complex and dynamic terrain of political, ecological, technical and community factors. The course will accomplish this through a number of activities, including extensive readings covering its history and associated methods and theory, site and case study assignments, an intensive workshop, and the engagement with current planning efforts. In general, the course will focus on the river channel itself, rather than the few marquee large-scale (and largely offline the river) projects along its length.

In general, the course will begin with studies of perception, experience, and consciousness, exploring how the particular genius and morphology of the Los Angeles River has produced a powerful artistic and activist resonance, with particular emphasis on the role of the arts, alternative practices, movement, and aesthetics. It will then conduct an intensive workshop with a studio visiting from the University of Toronto, who are also focusing on the Los Angeles River. Following this the class will focus on the practices and challenges of designing a river channel as a landscape architect, and particularly for the purpose for developing a pilot channel modification project, as per the United States Army Corps of Engineers plans.

Class Objectives
- Familiarity with (nearly) all aspects of the Los Angeles River.
- Understand the significance of corporeal perception and aesthetics in the River’s history and future.
• Understand the design challenge the River poses contemporary landscape architecture and engineering practices.
• Gain expertise in the variety of design strategies appropriate for a constrained urban channel.
• Develop critical reading and discussion skills.
• Organize and practice advanced “book” and field site study research, including following appropriate academic standards for plagiarism.
• Build and demonstrate critical case study skills.
• Gain proficiency in advanced site field study skills.
• Develop communication skills: verbal, written, and visual.

Assignments
Most assignments will have a set of “check-in” prior to the final “sharing” and submission (on blackboard). With drawings, “check-ins” can be digital, but all final “sharing” that include drawings must be printed (and trimmed appropriately).

Reading & Responses
Each week there are required readings, students must bring in a 200-400 word reading response. The response should predominantly contain your critical and interpretative response to the readings. In other word, the response should not appear to merely a summary of the readings’ content, but rather a summary of your responses to the readings! Please share whatever thoughts you have. Bring these to class as a reference during discussion and submit at the end (in paper and PDF online).

Assignment I: Image of a River, individual (2 weeks)
Each student will construct a specific “image” or “story” of the LA River from media found online (e.g. social media). The story will be told in a grid that crystalizes one theme or idea of what the river is, developed inductively from what you find online. You must include the text somewhat like “The Los Angeles River is … “ followed by your own words. Please also discretely include your name and the sources of your images (you can generalize, such as “Instagram searches for #lariver”). Consider what aspects of the River interest you and explore! You must utilize at least 30 pieces of media.

Possible media sources:
1. Instagram
2. YouTube
3. Twitter
4. Newsprint & Journalism (headlines only OK)

Final deliverable will be a plotted and trimmed drawing (36”x36”). Please use a grid to layout the media (even if the images don’t fit perfectly within each square—you can use multiple squares for a single piece of media for example).

Assignment II: A History of _(Insert Movement)_*: Catalytic Frames & Consciousness, groups of 2-3 (6 weeks)
Study a way of movement that engages with the Los Angeles River. Map the network that facilitates this movement / engagement and study the viewshed exposure and river legibility of this mode. Through field studies, build a representation of the River from that point of view and characterize it structure, state of mind, and legibility. Create a timeline and record of how the river has been influenced by this kind of movement. Consider current issues and the future of this kind of movement. The final submission format will loosely follow the LARMPU memorandum and drawings format.

*Inspired by Rebecca Solnit’s book, A History of Walking
1. Walking
2. Cars & Public Transit
3. Floating / Paddling
4. Bicycle

Assignment III: Alternative Placemaking, groups of 2-3, (3 weeks)
Study and share an organization conducting creative placemaking on the Los Angeles River and their projects (or elsewhere). Identify their typological approach and supplement with other case studies. Final deliverable will be a presentation and memorandum.

Example organizations:
1. FoLAR
2. Current LA
3. Clockshop
4. LA Mas
5. River LA

Assignment IV: Channel Case Studies, groups of 2-3 (5 weeks)
Investigate a typological strategy for improving the river corridor. Collect and organize a set of international case studies with assessments of their multiple benefits, ecology, cost, character, and suitability to the LA River. From these create a summary memorandum with recommendations and observations as per LARMU reports.

Schedule
(specific reading assignments posted each week on blackboard)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>wk</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>Schedule &amp; Content (subject to change!)</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| 1  | 8.28  | Context
**Wednesday Meeting @LA River at Marsh Park, 9:15AM**
Meet with Steve Dwyer, USACE

Required:


https://www.kcet.org/shows/earth-focus/taylor-yard-a-change-of-heart-in-los-angeles |
<p>|     |       | Assignment I, Check In (1)          |                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Reading Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 9.4</td>
<td><strong>9.2 Labor Day Holiday (Monday, no-class)</strong> (see next week!)</td>
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| 3 9.9 | **Part I: Embodied Consciousness**  
**Catalytic Movement & Consciousness**  
**No Class, Robinson is on Catalina 9.9-9.12** (Make-up class held previous Wednesday, 9.4!)  
**Required:**  
Read two additional Roraback, D. from LA River series “In Search of the LA River” as assigned in class.  
https://search-proquest-com.libproxy2.usc.edu/hnplatimes/index?accountid=14749  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aM6Ehpoxs_sQ  
*Departure: History and Society,* KCET. | Assignment I, Submit & Share (2) |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>date</th>
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<th>event</th>
<th>reading_assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Experiential Architecture</td>
<td>Reading Response</td>
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<td>9.19. Thursday, LA River Kayaking! 3:45-6:30PM</td>
<td>Assignment II, Check In (1)</td>
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<td>9/23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Performance of Appearance I: Aesthetics</td>
<td>Reading Response</td>
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<td>Assignment II, Check In (2)</td>
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<td>9/30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Performance of Appearance II: Ecology</td>
<td>Reading Response</td>
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<td>Assignment II, Check In (3)</td>
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| 10/7  | 7     | 10.4-10.7 Intensive River Field Workshop with UofT Studio (exact schedule TBD)  
10.7 Jessica Henson LARMPU Presentation                                                                                                          | Workshop, Assignment II Share (4) |
| 10/14 | 8     | Part II: River Channel Design  
“Rebirth”                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Reading Response  |
|       |       | Assignment II, Share (5)                                                                                                                                                                             |                     |
| 10/21 | 9     | To be (a River) or not to be…                                                                                                                                                                       | Reading Response  |
|       |       | Assignment II, Share & Submission (6)                                                                                                                                                                 |                     |
| 10/28 | 10    | Alternative Placemaking / Tactical Urbanism  
Lecture by Robinson on Infrastructure Design Case Studies  
LA River County Master Plan Update Community Meeting (Time & Location TBD)                                                                                     | Reading Response  |
|       |       | Assignment III, Check in (1)                                                                                                                                                                          |                     |
| 11/4  | 11    | How to Design a River                                                                                                                                                                                | Reading Response  |
|       |       | Assignment III, Check-In (2)                                                                                                                                                                          |                     |
| 11/11 | 12    | Plans for the River                                                                                                                                                                                  | Assignment III, Share & Submission Part I (3) |
| 11/18 | 13    | Freakology                                                                                                                                                                                           | Reading Response  |
|       |       | Assignment III, Share Part II                                                                                                                                                                         | Assignment IV, Check In (1) |
| 11/25 | 14    | Multiple Benefits  
(11.27-12.1 Thanksgiving Recess)                                                                                                                                                              | Reading Response  |
|       |       | Assignment IV, Check In (2)                                                                                                                                                                          |                     |
| 12/2  | 15    | Social Equity  
(12.6 Last day of classes)                                                                                                                                                                  | Assignment IV, Check In (3) |
| 12/16 | 16    | Final Presentations 11-1PM                                                                                                                                                                           | Assignment IV, Submission (5) |
Grading
Participation in Class Discussions (30%)
Reading Responses (15%)
Assignment I (10%)
Assignment II (15%)
Assignment III (10%)
Assignment IV (20%)

Following academic standards for avoiding plagiarism is fundamental to passing this course and each of its assignments.

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