USC University of Southern California

PPD 644: SHAPING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Urban design shapes the appearance, layout, and organization of the built environment. Use of the term implies a deliberate process to create functional, efficient, just, and aesthetically appealing places.

At least three disciplines - architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning - claim expertise and authority over the scope of urban design. Architects tend to focus on the design of the collective architectural forms of the built environment. Landscape architects are apt to emphasize the form and processes of the natural environment in the design of large-scale built environments. Urban planners typically consider themselves responsible for defining the social, economic, and political foundation of urban design. They identify the strategic design framework and guiding institutions that influence the direction and quality of urban change. We can imagine an overlapping Venn diagram to represent the practice of urban design as a shared enterprise between architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning, underscoring the complementary relationships between these professions. They all share similar concerns for human scale, public space, sense of place, sustainability, urbanism, aesthetic values, historic preservation, urban conservation, and other such matters.

While the professional identity of urban design remains a shared enterprise, there is a growing sense that urban design has established an autonomous identity as a field. The scholarship pertaining to the appearance and design of cities, and the human consequences of the built environment has grown in recent years, not only within the professions but also in the disciplines of social sciences, the humanities, and the environmental science and health fields. The body of relevant literature includes critical, interpretive, and reflective work on the one hand, but also empirical findings about the nature of practice and human consequences of the built environment, on the other. This course will introduce students to important concepts and foundational literature in urban design and physical planning. These ideas and methods will be presented,

interrogated, and discussed in class in a seminar format. Students will be encouraged to apply the ideas and methods through a variety of in-activities and through the analysis of a particular site from an historical, spatial, and social perspective.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this semester, students will be able to:

1. Explain the foundational principles of urban design, including important concepts, theories, precedents, and best practices.
2. Demonstrate skills in documentation, observation, critical analysis, and representation of the built environment, such as existing attributes and future possibilities.

ASSIGNMENTS

Besides time spent in the classroom, USC courses must meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class work per week. This means that our four-unit class will generally require an average of 8 hours weekly for reading and preparing assignments.

To reinforce our learning, the following work beyond the classroom will be expected:

Reading: Students will demonstrate their understanding of the concepts, theories, and practices of urban design through discussions of the assigned readings. All readings will be provided digitally through USC's Blackboard Learning Management System using the [Perusal](#) application, a social e-reader platform. Students will be expected to discuss the required readings with each other in Perusall and to come to class ready to engage in a robust analysis of the texts.

Class Lead: In small groups, students will be responsible for leading at least one class during the semester. Specifically, this means the group will:
- Skim readings for the week well in advance.
- Identify real-world examples or case studies that link to the topic.
- The group may assign additional readings or resources for the whole class, such as videos, blogs, or planning documents that complement the topic. The identified resources will be shared with all students at least a week in advance.
- Present the examples or case studies and prepare questions that will reinforce understanding and initiate discussion. Approximately one hour each week will be devoted to in-class group led discussions.

Three Place-Based Investigations: Students will be asked to reflect and apply what they have learned through course readings and in-class discussions. The first of these investigations will ask students to document a particular site over time. The second, to document the site geographically. The third assignment asks students to evaluate the site from the standpoint of its users. In the final weeks, students will be asked to summarize their learning and present a synopsis of their investigations to the class. The investigations will require students to develop communication skills in a variety of media. Specific details, including a summary of criteria used to evaluate the investigations will be developed collaboratively in class.

GRADING

My approach to grading is inspired by Professor Ryan Cordall of Northeastern University and others who have challenged the value of assigning reductive, numerically-determined grades.

In this course, I want you to feel empowered to explore and experiment. I hope to create an environment in which risk-taking and creative scholarship is rewarded, even if assignments don't turn out as expected.

Students will assess their work in dialogue with me. We will collaboratively assign grades by assessing your work in terms of goals you set for yourself and your intellectual growth during the class.

Formally, this means that I will ask you to draft self-evaluations a few times during the semester, including a final self-evaluation in which you will assign yourself a grade. Barring extreme circumstances, this self-assessment will determine your grade for the semester. Ideally, knowing this process in advance will free you to do more ambitious work from the beginning of the semester.

I reserve the right to adjust grades if a student takes undue advantage of this consultative grading paradigm.

CLASSROOM NORMS

Sharing our thoughts and ideas with others can be daunting. To model the expectations of a professional environment in our field, and to promote a respectful classroom environment, we agree at a minimum, to:
- Let others speak without interruption,
- Support our points with evidence, or speak from personal experience,
- Encourage everyone to get involved (i.e., ask questions of each other, make succinct points, etc.),
- Accept feedback in the positive spirit with which it is given as a means of development.

AI GENERATORS

We will explore the use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:
- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.

- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.

SHARING OF COURSE MATERIALS OUTSIDE OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

USC has a policy that prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND READING MENU

Note: the assigned readings are subject to change based on student input and interests. The final readings will be listed in the Blackboard Weekly Modules and available in Perusall.

Week	Topics and Activities (in class)	Readings and Resources	Assignments (outside class)
(1) 8/22	A. Introduction and overview, including discussion of class norms and expectations. B. Places we love C. Charting our course		Before class: Post to the course's Blackboard Discussion Thread an image of a place you love (or perhaps a place you love to hate). Be prepared to discuss.
(2) 8/28	Concepts: Urbanism & Defining Urban Design	Birch, Genie (2011) "From CIAM to CNU: The Roots and Thinkers of Modern Urban Design" from *Companion to Urban Design*	
(3) 9/5	Concepts: Urban Form & Urban Morphology Technique: Figure/Ground	Selection from Spiro Kostoff (1991), *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meaning Through History* Bulfinch Press Adhya, Anirban and Philip D. Plowright "Figure Ground" (2022) in *Urban Design Made by Humans* MUD-LAB Toolkit "Figure Ground" Hebbert, Michael (2016) "Figure Ground: History and Practice of a Planning Technique" *Town Planning Review* (87)6	

(4) 9/12	Concepts: Space and Place	Hayden, Dolores (1995) "Urban Landscape History: The Sense of Place & the Politics of Space" from *The Power of Place* Moreira, Susanna (2021) What is Placemaking? *ArchDaily* Koh, A. (2017). "Placemaking When Black Lives Matter" *Progressive City*	
(5) 9/19	Concepts: Public Space and the Public Realm	Iveson, Kurt (1998) "Putting the Public Pack in Public Space" Smith, Neil and Setha Low (2005) "Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space" in *Politics of Public Space*	
(6) 9/26	Concepts: Flaneur/Flaneuse and the Urban Sensorium Technique: Serial Vision and Survey Techniques	De Certeau, Michel (1984) "Spatial Practices: Walking in the City" Manchester Urban Design LAB (2020) "MUD-Lab Toolkit: Serial Vision" accessible at www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/mudlab Cuesta, Rafael et al (2003) "Survey Techniques" in *Urban Design: Method and Techniques*	Place-Based Investigation: Time
(7) 10/3	Theories: Modernism	The School of Life Art/Architecture Le Corbusier YouTube Perry, Clarence (1929) "The Neighborhood Unit" from *The Urban Design Reader* Scott, James C. (1998) "The high modernist city" from *Seeing Like a State* Yale University Press	
(8) 10/10	Theories: Modernism and its Discontents Technique: Cognitive Mapping and Legibility Analysis	Holston, James (1989) "Death of the Street" from *The Modernist City* Lynch, Kevin (1960) "The Image of the Environment" and "The City Image and Its Elements" from *The Image of the City*	

		Adhya, Anirban and Philip D. Plowright "Legibility" (2022) in *Urban Design Made by Humans*	
(9)10/17	Theories: New Urbanism	CNU Charter for New Urbanism Duany, A. and Talen, E. (2002) "Transect Planning" *APA* Talen, Emily (2011) "Form-based codes vs. conventional zoning" *Companion to Urban Design*	Place-Based Investigation: Space
(10) 10/24	Theories: Landscape and Ecological Urbanism	Scheer, Brenda (2011) "Metropolitan form and landscape urbanism" *Companion to Urban Design* Pulido, Laura (2000) "Rethinking Environmental Racism White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*	
(11) 10/31	Theories: Everyday Urbanism	Crawford, Margaret (2008) "Introduction," "Preface: The Current State of Everyday Urbanism," and "Blurring the Boundaries: Public Space and Private Life" in *Everyday Urbanism* Irazábal, Clara (2011) Ethnoscapes *Companion to Urban Design* Renteria, Jennifer (2020) The Starlite Swap Meet *in East of East: the Making of Greater El Monte,* Rutgers University Press	
(12) 11/7	Theories: Tactical or Guerilla Urbanism	Hou, Jeffrey (2011) "Citizen Design: Participation and Beyond" from *Companion to Urban Design* Rosa, Marcos and Ute E. Weiland (2013), Selection from *Handmade Urbanism: From Community Initiatives to Participatory Models* Hurley, A. K. (2016). DIY urban planning is happening all over the country. Is it only	Place-Based Investigation: Users

		for white people? *The Washington Post.*	
(13) 11/14	Precedents & best practices: The Street and Pedestrian Scale	Frank et al (2019) "Complete and Healthy Streets" from the *New Companion to Urban Design* Handy, Susan (2019) "Accessibility- Oriented Urban Design" from the *New Companion to Urban Design*	
(14) 11/21	Precedents and best practices: The Community Scale of Plazas, Parks, Open Space and Third Places.	Whyte, William H. (1980) Selections from The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces in the *Urban Design Reader* Shaftoe, Henry (2008) "What Makes a Space Convivial?" from *Convivial Urban Spaces: Creating Effective Public Places*	Present summary of Place-Based Investigations: 3 slides, 5 minutes
(15) 11/28	Precedents and best practices: Institutional Scale (how urban design gets done) Summing Up	Carmona, Mathew (2013) "The Place-shaping Continuum: A Theory of Urban Design Process" *Journal of Urban Design* Case Scheer, Brenda (1994) "The Debate on Design Review" from *Design Review: Challenging Urban Aesthetic Control* Krieger, Alex (2008) "Where and How Does Urban Design Happen?" from the *Urban Design Reader*	Present summary of Place-Based Investigations: 3 slides, 5 minutes
12/5	NO CLASS (STUDY DAY)		
12/12	NO CLASS (FINAL) ALL OUTSTANDING ASSIGNMENTS DUE BY 9:00PM		

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of

academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - *(213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - *988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call*
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.
Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - *(213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call*
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - *(213) 740-5086*
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - *(213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - *(213) 740-0776*
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - *(213) 740-0411*
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - *(213) 740-2101*
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - *UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - *UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - *(213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - *(323) 442-2850 or* otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.