Arch 541a: Introduction to Landscape Design Studio | Process / Place

University of Southern California School of Architecture

Master of Landscape Architecture + Urbanism Core Curriculum

First Year MLA+U Studio | Fall 2024 | 6 Units

Location: Watt Hall, 3rd Floor Studios

Time: M/F, 1-6pm and W 1-3pm Lab, Pacific Time **Instructor:** Sarah M. Swanseen, RLA, ASLA, AICP *Senior Landscape Architect and Planner, OLIN*

<u>swanseen@usc.edu</u> | 609.457.5711 | Office Hours: By Appointment
Class Assistant: Mark Reid | 2025 MLA+U Candidate | <u>reidm@usc.edu</u>



Image Credit: S.Swanseen, Process/Place, Using Images from the Culver City Historical Society + Culver City Department of Public Works. 2024.

Course Description

"At every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences."

- Kevin Lynch, The Image of the Environment

All landscapes exist within a larger ecological, infrastructural, and sociocultural context. It's the practice of a landscape architect to work at the intersections of these systems. This requires landscape designers to be dynamic in process; taking steps to observe, document, interpret, represent, and intervene in these natural and man-made systems and environments. This studio explores design in the landscape through these lenses; developing a fluency and process.

The first half of the semester, students will be introduced to core concepts and develop technical skills through the study of different landscapes. These span from theoretical and precedent landscapes to on the ground sites during in-field investigations in the urban and rural fabric of LA County. Students will learn skills in site inventory, research, and design, as well as representational techniques including analog and digital orthographic drawing, collage, and 3d modeling that will be translated in the second half of the semester to the design of a site-specific intervention. The site of focus within the Baldwin Hills will be a testing ground for negotiating physical site systems including ecological corridors, legacy infrastructural use and pollution, and stormwater management, with cultural systems of mobility, connectivity, arts, culture, and recreation.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of aesthetics, spatial relationships, color, texture, hierarchy, and form in design and placemaking
- 2. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of ecological, hydrological, and social systems and context in the performance of a landscape
- 3. Observe, identify, and represent, landscape design features and landform typologies as well as site opportunities and constraints
- 4. Identify, develop, and communicate appropriate design approaches or interventions that address intersecting site conditions, opportunities, and constraints
- 5. Use both analog and digital techniques to draw diagrams, orthographic plans and sections, experiential perspectives, as well as model in 3-d
- 6. Produce drawings, layouts, and/or presentation slides that balance visual hierarchy of information including line weights, fonts, text size, colors, textures, and layering
- 7. Develop and present a narrative explaining analysis, design process, and impacts of their interventions
- 8. Provide constructive feedback to classmates and can be critical of one's own work
- 9. Contribute to the collective resources and knowledge of the studio and USC MLA+U program

Main Assignment Overviews

Sequence: Landscape Typologies

To build fluency in common landforms, design moves, and liminal/infrastructural landscapes, students will develop sketches, plans, sections, and study models for their assigned typologies. Collectively this helps build awareness of common facets of designed landscapes as well as fluency in representing space and surface conditions with clarity.

Sequence: Catalina Field Research

Students will prepare for a three day trip to Catalina Island with small group research and presentations on the social and ecological context and systems present on the island. While on site, students will study a transect on the Wrigley campus and explore representation of space and texture through an armature drawing and photo essay/collage.

Sequence: Precedent Studies

Each student will be assigned a precedent site to study and draw; building on understanding of spatial, material, and textural relationships developed during the first two sequences. Students will research the site, the designer(s), and available drawings/aerials to trace and produce a plan and associated sections, and model of a part of the precedent site.

Sequence: Site Design

The second half of the semester will be dedicated to the study of, and intervention on, one site. This exercise will build on and grow the technical skills learned in the first half of the semester to create viable design responses to site opportunities and constraints; leveraging and navigating legacy systems of mobility, arts and culture, ecology, infrastructure and pollution, and hydrology, among others. This work will be presented in a cohesive narrative to a jury at the term final review.

Other

There will be additional select assignments that are one-off and not a part of the above sequences. These will be aimed at both soft skill and technical skill building. Additionally, readings will be assigned for discussion at select studio sessions.

Grading Breakdown

Course final grades are broken down into the following components/milestones:

Component/Milestone	% of Grade
Participation, Teamwork, Collaboration	10%
Assignments and Pinups	30%
Midterm Review	20%
Final Review	40%
TOTAL	100%

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
В	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
С	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Note on Late Work + Grades:

To receive full recognition of work and the opportunity to present to juries, students are expected to be prepared with studio materials for assignments on the listed due date or review date and time. If you wish to request an extension due to emergencies or an excused absence, please talk with the instructor prior to the due date. A 10% reduction per day in grade will be applied to all late work.

Note on Attendance + Grades:

Three unexcused absences may result in a one letter grade reduction in your final grade. If you are sick, please let the faculty know prior to class that you will not be present.

Expectations

Participation, Preparation, Teamwork + Collaboration

- Participation: Students are expected to attend all studio sessions in person and be prepared for items on that day's
 agenda. They must be present for the full class period and be working on studio course work for the entire class
 time. Students will be given regular readings and are expected to be prepared to actively engage in discussion about
 the readings.
- Preparation: In order to be prepared for class, it is expected that significant time will be dedicated to research, production, readings, and design work.
- Teamwork + Collaboration: In addition to a few group work assignments, students will also be expected to
 collaborate in studio, discussing their work in informal conversations and critiques during and outside of class
 time.

Assignments + Pinups

• Assignments: Assignments may be grouped together in a sequence or individual assignments. Clear progress and due dates will be provided by the instructor as applicable. All assignments are required.

- Desk Critiques: Significant studio class time will be devoted to desk critiques where the instructor will meet
 individually or in small groups with students to discuss ongoing and past work and next steps. Students are
 expected to be prepared for desk crits with critical materials and drawings. Generally speaking, materials should be
 printed for drawing and discussion.
- Pin-ups: At specified time points, students are expected to present work that has been thoughtfully organized
 either on the pin-up studio wall or in digital slides (depending on the assignment requirements).

Midterm + Final Review

• Students will be expected to create a cohesive presentation of their work for presentation to juries comprised of both faculty and guests. Mid-review will be an assemblage of work-to-date whereas final review will be a summary of the entire semester of studio work with a focus on the final design project. Students must be present for the entire class review and will help their classmates by taking notes during their presentations and jury discussion.

General

- Documentation of work: It is expected that students maintain a system for storing all work throughout the
 semester on their google drive accounts. Digital drawing an layout files should be backed up periodically and saved
 as a "package" at significant milestones and at the completion of an assignment. Any analog work including
 models, sketches, collages, etc. must be thoughtfully documented via scanning and photography where
 appropriate. Students take high quality model photographs i.e. take well lit photos in natural lighting on a neutral
 background.
- Digital Submissions: Provision of final grades will be dependent on digital submission of all work. Work from the entire semester must be included at both midterm and final review periods.

Materials + Expenses

The instructor estimates that the cost for materials and other expenses throughout the semester should be around \$100. This will mostly be for modeling materials. Individual assignment prompts will be provided with recommended materials at time of assignment where applicable. Students are required to attend field trips via public transit, their personal vehicle, or uber. Additional costs also include transportation costs to San Pedro Harbor for the trip to Catalina.

Software, Tools, + Resources

Students will be required to use the Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign) and the latest version of Rhino. Students are expected to have obtained a computer as per the recommendations distributed to all incoming students. Software Tutorials can be found at the following link: https://www.linkedin.com/learning/

Digital Exchange Tools

Google Drive: The class will use Google Drive to exchange files and upload assignments. Copies of course materials can be found in Google Drive. Students are responsible to stay organized, update files, and use the required naming conventions for submissions. Please supersede old versions of files.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FzcjK5vDRW40V9G XwQ4bQwk-C1979Kt?usp=drive_link

Brightspace: This interface will be the primary location for official correspondence, including course announcements and the course syllabus. You can access Brightspace through your my.usc.edu dashboard or directly at https://brightspace.usc.edu/.

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the **USC Student Handbook**. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

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

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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.

Artificial Intelligence Class Policy

In this course, I encourage you to use artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs to help you with assignments that indicate the permitted use of AI. You should also be aware that AI generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not prepared to produce text or graphics that meet the standards of this course. In general keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written
- You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool
- It works best for topics you understand

To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

University Academic and Support Systems

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.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the <u>Financial Aid Office webpage</u> for <u>undergraduate</u>- and <u>graduate-level</u> SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

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 consists 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) 740-2500

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.

<u>USC Emergency</u> - 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.

<u>USC Department of Public Safety</u> - 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

Course Bibliography

Texts and Articles

American Society of Landscape Architects, Climate Action Plan, 2022. https://www.asla.org/uploadedFiles/CMS/Practice/Climate Action Plan/ClimateActionPlan.pdf

Burkholder, Sean and Karen Lutsky. "Curious Methods." In Places Journal (2017). doi: https://doi.org/10.22269/170523.

Carter, Carissa. "The Secret Language of Maps". A Stanford d.school guide. 2022.

Carlisle, Stephanie, Pevzner, Nicholas., "The Performative Ground: Rediscovering The Deep Section", SCENARIO 02: Performance, Spring 2012. https://scenariojournal.com/article/the-performative-ground/

Corner, James. "Terra Fluxus" in Waldheim, Charles. *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. Pg. 21-33

Green, Jared. "Emerging Landscape Architecture Leaders Tackle Intractable Problems (Part I)". The Dirt ASLA, 18 July 2024. https://dirt.asla.org/2024/07/18/emerging-landscape-architecture-leaders-tackle-intractable-problems-part-i/

Meinig, D.W. "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene." In *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, edited by J.B. Jackson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. 33-48.

Nelson, George. "Mobility", "Geometrics and Other Exercises", and "City", In *How To See: Visual Adventures in a World God Never Made.* Boston Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1977.

Petschek, Peter, "The Basics of Grading" In *Grading: LandscapingSMART. 3D-Machine Control Systems. Stormwater Management*. Birkhäuser, 2014. Pg. 69-107.

Purdy, Jedediah. "Introduction." In *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. 11-50.

Small, Andrea, and Schmutte, Kelly. "Navigating Ambiguity: Creating Opportunity in a World of Unknowns". A Stanford d.school guide. 2022.

Wall, Alex, "Programming the Urban Surface", In Corner, James. *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Theory*. Princeton Architectural Press. 1999. Pg. 231-249.

Vroom, Meto, J. "Lexicon of Garden and Landscape Architecture". Birkhäuser, 2006.

Video + Audio

Abdaal, Ali, "How I Manage My Time - The Trident Calendar System", Apr 24, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o2tm00Ar8A

Landscape Architecture Podcast, Episode: Barbara Deutsch FASLA, Jan 8, 2019. https://www.larchitect.org/barbara-deutsch-fasla/

Tufte, Edward, "Wonderful Data Visualization v2", November 23, 2022, https://vimeo.com/774276930

Preliminary Schedule

Each day includes an itemized agenda with any <u>assignments due underlined</u>. Any readings for that week are listed and can be found in the class drive folder.

W	Monday	TU	Wednesday	ТН	Friday
1	8/26		8/28		8/30
	Agenda: First Day of Classes MLA+U Group Meeting + Course Intros (1:30-2:30) Studio Familiarity/Find your desk Class Overview/Syllabus Walkthrough, Discussion + Q&A Assignment Prompts		LAB Work Time		Agenda: Class Introductions Reading Discussion Landscape Storytelling Pin-up + Exercise Landscapes Design Intro (Process + Place) Assignment Prompts Work Time Readings Due: Meinig, D.W. "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene." In The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes, edited by J.B. Jackson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. 33-48. Purdy, Jedediah. "Prologue" In After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. 11-50.
2	9/2		9/4		9/6
	UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY No Class		Meet 3-6pm Agenda: Field Work, Preparation + On-Site Practices Desk Critiques with Research groups + Individuals Reading Discussion Talk: Time Management Work Time Readings Due: Small, Andrea, and Schmutte, Kelly. Part I In "Navigating Ambiguity: Creating Opportunity in a World of Unknowns". A Stanford d.school guide. 2022. Pages 1-49 Video: Abdaal, Ali, "How I Manage My Time - The Trident Calendar System", Apr 24, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o2tm00Ar8A		Agenda: Crafting Plans + Sections Catalina Research Group Presentations Reading Discussion Landscape Typology Composite Sketches Desk Critiques Assignment Prompt Work Time Readings Due: Burkholder, Sean and Karen Lutsky. "Curious Methods." In Places Journal (2017). doi: https://doi.org/10.22269/170523. Nelson, George. Mobility, Geometrics and Other Exercises, City, In "How To See: Visual Adventures in a World God Never Made". Boston Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1977.

W	Monday	TU	Wednesday	TH	Friday
3	9/9		9/11		9/13
	CATALINA TRIP MAKEUP DAY No Class		Catalina Trip Agenda provided separately		
4	9/16		9/18		9/20
	Agenda: Communicating Work: Public Speaking and Presentation Tips Talk: Respect the Beans (aka the Drawing) Landscape Typology: Plans + Sections Landscape Typology: Model Catalina Field Work: Armature Work Time		LAB Work Time		Agenda: Pin-up: All work to date for external guest(s) Jonathan Koewler (OLIN) Emine Buran (KAA)
5	9/23		9/25		9/27
	Agenda: Tracing + Dissecting Design Through Precedent Talk: LAF, ASLA, WxLA, etc.: Landscape Organizations to Know About Reading Discussion Assignment Prompts Work Time Readings Due: American Society of Landscape Architects, Climate Action Plan Executive Summary, 2022. Landscape Architecture Podcast, Episode: Barbara Deutsch FASLA, Jan 8, 2019. https://www.larchitect.org/barbara-deutsch-fasla/ Green, Jared "Emerging Landscape Architecture Leaders Tackle Intractable Problems (Part I)". The Dirt ASLA, 18 July 2024. https://dirt.asla.org/2024/07/18/emerging-landscap e-architecture-leaders-tackle-intractable-problems- part-i/		LAB Work Time		Agenda: Precedent Studies Research: Desk Crits Meet in the center of campus with a sketchbook and drawing materials. Wear comfortable shoes!! Readings Due: Corner, James, "Terra Fluxus" in Waldheim, Charles. The Landscape Urbanism Reader. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. Pg. 21-33

W	Monday	TU	Wednesday	TH	Friday
6	9/30		10/2		10/4
	Agenda: o Precedent Research Class Pin Up Precedent Drawings Desk Critique Work time		LAB Work Time		Agenda: o Precedent Drawing Revisions Desk Crit Precedent Study Model Desk Crit Mid Review prompt + discussion
7	10/7		10/9		10/11
	INSTRUCTOR AT ASLA CONFERENCE No Class		LAB Desk critiques for progress review + questions by sign up		UNIVERSITY FALL RECESS No Class
8	10/14		10/16		10/18
	Agenda: o Mid Review Dry Run o Work time o Talk: Studio Guests		*Mid Review* Verle Annis Gallery		Agenda: ○ Meet 4-6p ○ Mid Review Evaluation Check-ins
9	10/21		10/23		10/25
	Vertical Workshop (TBC)		Vertical Workshop (TBC)		Vertical Workshop (TBC)
10	10/28		10/30		11/1
	Agenda: Introduction to the Culver City Parks Plan, The Baldwin Hills, and the second half of our semester! Sites in Flux: Documenting the Ephemeral Tech Workshop: Google Earth Tips + Tricks Assignment Prompts Readings Due: Small, Andrea, and Schmutte, Kelly. Part II In "Navigating Ambiguity: Creating Opportunity in a World of Unknowns". A Stanford d.school guide. 2022. Pages 52-131		LAB Work Time		Agenda: Site Visit Day, Agenda to follow Baldwin Hills, Culver City Park, Ballona Creek

W	Monday	TU	Wednesday	TH	Friday
11	11/4		11/6		11/8
	Agenda: Site Analysis Presentations Site Sketches + Photo Walk through Site Context Map Work Time		LAB Work Time		Agenda: Site Opportunities. Constraints + Early Ideas Tech Workshop: Rhino Tips + Tricks Reading Discussion (The Basics of Grading) Assignment Prompt Work Time Readings Due: Petschek, Peter, "The Basics of Grading" In Grading: LandscapingSMART. 3D-Machine Control Systems. Stormwater Management. Birkhäuser, 2014. Pg. 69-107. Carlisle, Stephanie, Pevzner, Nicholas., "The Performative Ground: Rediscovering The Deep Section", SCENARIO 02: Performance, Spring 2012. https://scenariojournal.com/article/the-performative-ground/
12	11/11		11/13		11/15
	UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY No Class		LAB Work Time		Agenda: Public Landscapes: Program + Use Site Plan + Section Desk Critiques Work Time Readings Due: Wall, Alex, "Programming the Urban Surface", In Corner, James. Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Theory. Princeton Architectural Press. 1999. Pg. 231-249.
13	11/18		11/20		11/22
	Agenda: Site Materiality, Planting + Experience Site Axonometric/Timescales Desk Critiques Assignment Prompt Work Time		LAB Work Time		Agenda: Planting + Materiality Desk Critiques Work Time Final Review Prompt (Final Requirements and Layout)

W	Monday	TU	Wednesday	TH	Friday
14	11/25		11/27		11/29
	Agenda: o Interim pin-up of site design work Experiential Perspectives Plan for next steps		LAB Work Time		UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY No Class
15	12/2		12/4		12/6
	Agenda: ○ Site Model Desk Critiques ○ Work Time		LAB Work Time		Agenda: ○ General Desk Critiques ○ Work Time
16	12/9		12/11		12/13
	UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY No Class		UNIVERSITY EXAM WEEK No Class Desk critique by request/sign up		UNIVERSITY EXAM WEEK No Class Desk critique by request/sign up
17	12/16		12/18		12/20
	Final Review Lindhurst Gallery				