

USC School of Architecture

Arch 538L: Planting Design

Fall 2024, 2 units

Thursdays 2:00pm-3:50pm

Watt Hall 3rd Floor Studio Space, MLA Corner

Instructor: Sally Reynolds, PLA, ASLA

Office Hours: Thursday's after class or by appointment

Contact Info: sallyr@usc.edu | 510.368.0136

IT Assistance: <https://itservices.usc.edu/students/>



"In biological systems there are no parts, only participants." Hans Peter Duerr 1929-2014

Course Description

This course will provide practical and implementable tools and theory to build methodologies in planting design with a focus on human health, comfort and beauty, and particularly green infrastructure and climate resilience. Students will explore the art and science of plants through various types and scales of sites with consideration for ecological value, human experience and sustainable landscape management practices.

Students will implement practical tools for developing site analysis and resilient plant selection and design. Lectures, readings and case studies will augment the planting design exercises in which student will implement practical tools for site analysis, resilient plant selection and design communication. Field trips

and guest lectures will illustrate excellence in the profession of landscape architecture theory and practice via guided visits of completed works in the Los Angeles region.

This is a hands-on class that will require active engagement in every class. If you miss a class you will need to make up any work that is done during the class time. Your classmates have a wide range of experience and knowledge in horticulture, cultural practices and technology. Collaborative work will be required, and each student is expected to do a fair share of each group assignment.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze a site for planting design purposes using site assessment data at the scale of the region down to the site, including but not limited to solar and wind patterns, rainfall and drainage, climatic ecoregion, soil and geology.
- Define and develop climatically resilient plant palettes based on site conditions, project program, experiential qualities and land stewardship practices through the use of diagrams, plant boards and written narrative.
- Demonstrate understanding of plant selection and arrangement based upon environmental tolerances, existing native habitats and cultural context.
- Demonstrate understanding of how plant structure informs space making and experiential qualities of landscapes.
- Create graphically clear, scaled planting plans, schedules and construction documentation standards using LandFX software.
- Analyze planting designs for performative aspects, using strategies for calculating landscape performance benefits, such as carbon sequestration, stormwater retention, social/cultural value, community engagement, etc...
- Generate 3-d visualizations through a range of analog and digital methods that communicate the experiential / atmospheric qualities of the proposed planting designs.

Prerequisite: Arch 537 or Permission of the Instructor

Course Schedule

Subject to change.

	Topic	In Class Activity	Assignment
Week 1 Aug 29	Course Introduction & Overview	Class Discussion & Campus Walk for Assign. #1	Assignment #1 and Reading #1
Week 2 Sept 5	Site Analysis & Planting Design	Pin Up Assign #1 and Reading #1 Discussion, Site Analysis Lecture, Field Exercise	Assignment #2 and Reading #2
Week 3 Sept 12	Structure & Plant Communities in Designed Landscapes	Pin Up Assign #2 and Reading #2 Discussion, Lecture	Assignment #3 and Reading #3

Week 4 Sept 19	Planting Plan Documentation Methods	Pin Up Assign #3 and Reading #3 Discussion, Autocad-LandFX Training Session	Assignment #4 (Midterm assignment)
Week 5 Sept 26	Field Trip 1	<i>TBD.</i>	Field Notes & Photo documentation, Continue working on Midterm
Week 6 Oct 3	Mid-Term Pin Up	Mid-Term Pin-up and Discussion	Rest
Week 7 Oct 10	Fall Recess No Class		
Week 8 Oct 17	Field Trip 2	Garden Landscape (Descanso)	Field Notes & Photo documentation
Week 9 Oct 24	Techniques for Large Scale Planting Design Guest Lecture	Lecture (Guest Lecture Chris Landau, LANDKIT), Xun to attend and discuss combined Media / Planting assignment.	Assignment #5 – Large Scale Planting Approach using Grasshopper – Combined Assignment with Media 3
Week 10 Oct 31	Trees in the Urban Environment Guest Lecture or Campus Tree Walk	Urban Tree Planting & Plant Performance. Lecture by Eric Diaz and/or Arborist	Assignment #6 - Case Studies
Week 11 Nov 7	Field Trip 3	C&S Nursery and Final Project Site in Baldwin Hills	<i>Field Notes & Photo documentation</i> Continue Working on Case Studies
Week 12 Nov 14	Present Case Studies	Case Study Presentations & Plant Performance Lecture, Assign Final Project	Assignment #7 - Final Project, Reading #4
Week 13 Nov 21	Workshop / Desk Crits (final project)	Quick Discussion of Reading #4 and Desk Crits	Continue working on Final Project
Week 14 Nov 28	No Class Thanksgiving Break		Zoom Desk Crits Optional
Week 15 Dec 5	75% Progress Presentation of Final Project with Critics	Final Project Presentations 10 min each	Continue development of final project integrating review feedback into Final submission.
Final Dec 12	100% Final Project Submission	Submit Final Project PDF online	Done!

Course Notes

Students will be expected to utilize in person site observations, site documentation, research, simple physical modelling and spatial design skills.

[Include grading type (e.g., Letter, Credit No/Credit, Numeric). Note any unique characteristics of the course of operating procedure. Is the course Web-Enhanced (i.e. Blackboard), Blended or Online? If copies of lecture slides and other class information will be posted on Blackboard, note that here. If multimedia or technology-enhanced learning strategies will be used, please describe them here.]

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will utilize hand sketching, Adobe Suite, Auto Cad, Sketchup and/or Rhino, Land Fx and simple physical modelling. If students have proficiency with digital modelling and rendering software they may also employ these tools (Lumion, Enscape). MidJourney can be explored as a tool, but not used as only method of generating final renderings.

Additional information may include how to access free versions of the products if available. Link information for the [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#). Link information for software support and availability. USC Technology Support Links [Zoom information for students](#), [Brightspace help for students](#), [Software available to USC Campus](#).]

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

All readings and assignments will be posted on BrightSpace as well as in the Course Google Drive Folder. Reading response prompts will be assigned with each reading to facilitate discussion. Students are expected to submit short written responses to each reading during or prior to the class meeting in which the reading will be discussed.

Additional optional readings and educational materials are listed in the Bibliography of this Syllabus, some of which may be posted on BrightSpace/Google Drive as well.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Students are expected to complete all Assignments listed in the Preliminary Course Schedule above. Assignments will be graded based on rubrics provided in the Assignment Briefs.

Participation & Field Trips

Class participation is a graded component of this course. 10% of your grade will be based on active participation in class activities, discussion. Attendance alone will not be considered participation. If you are sick or unable to attend a class session, please let me know prior to the class that you will not be present.

Field Trip Attendance is a required component of this class. Submission of short Field Trip Documentation Assignments is required.

Grading Breakdown

[Including the above detailed assignments, how will students be graded overall? Participation should not exceed 15% of the total grade. Where it does, the syllabus must provide an added explanation. No portion of the grade may be awarded for class attendance, but non-attendance can be the basis for lowering the grade, when clearly stated on the syllabus. The sum of percentages must total 100%.]

The following table describes how grades will be determined.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	% of Grade
Class Participation	10
Field Trip Attendance and Assignments	10
Readings	10
Assignments	30
Midterm Project	15
Final Project	25

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Table 2 Course Grading Scale

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

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments must be submitted digitally to BrightSpace and uploaded to the Google Drive Course Folder by 11:59pm the day that the assignment is due. If work is submitted late, grades will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for every day late.

Grading Timeline

Assignments will be graded within 1 week of submission.

Course Specific Policies

[Add any additional policies that students should be aware of: late work submissions, missed classes, use of technology in the classroom, etc. Course-specific policies differ from university policies in that they are set by each instructor or department/program.]

Attendance

The School of Architecture's attendance policy is to allow a student to miss the equivalent of one week of class sessions (so one class session for ARCH 639) without directly affecting the student's grade and ability to complete the course. If additional absences are required for a personal illness/family emergency, pre-approved academic reason/religious observance, the situation should be discussed and evaluated with the faculty member and appropriate Chair on a case-by-case basis. For each absence over that allowed number, the student's letter grade will be lowered 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., A to A-).

Any student not in class within the first 10 minutes is considered tardy, and any student absent 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 instructors', although such recourse is not always an option due to the nature of the material covered.

Classroom norms

All students are expected to contribute to class discussions and share their life experience and perspectives. We will use respectful language and make space for equitable and inclusive discussions. In order to achieve our course learning objectives your instructor will be responsible for time management to accommodate the course content. USC is an open campus and from time to time there are unpredictable events that occur on the campus. If a stranger enters our classroom or joins our group while we are on a field trip, I will actively ask them to leave the classroom or the group. My primary concern is your safety. It

is my responsibility as your faculty to notify USC DPS if strangers enter our classrooms or if there are other potential situations that require assistance

Zoom etiquette

The class is an in-person course. However we may meet via Zoom if a university policy change requires it. Zoom invites are available through the Brightspace interface.

In the case of any online class periods, Zoom is set up to automatically record and transcribe class sessions, which are then made available to students in Brightspace.

As students may be personally identifiable in class recordings via their voice, name, or image, these recordings may be considered “educational records” subject to federal privacy laws (FERPA). However, as long as the recordings are posted to an appropriate class website (such as Brightspace or Zoom) that is accessible only to students enrolled in the class and instructors, TAs, graders, and student services staff members, these recordings are FERPA compliant.

Students are to use and handle recordings appropriately under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). Students are not permitted to create their own class recordings without the instructor’s permission. Violations of these policies will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Zoom recordings will be retained in the cloud until the submission of Fall grades, at which point they will be deleted.

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.

Creating a policy for the use of AI Generators in your course

Given that you will be using AI tools as learning tools in other departmental courses, the use of AI generators are not prohibited in this course. However, please discuss any proposed AI use with Instructor and receive written approval for use prior to implementing these tools. AI tools are not permitted for reading analysis assignments.

If AI is approved, you should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. 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.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Evaluations

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. I will be requiring a mid-review course evaluation as well as the end of semester evaluations that will be distributed when available.

Course Expenses

Students are expected to attend all field trips. Transportation will be required to visit 3 of the sites which are off campus. The instructor will work with students to arrange car pools, however ride share costs may be incurred. Some model making materials will need to be purchased to complete the final assignment as well as sketchbook / paper and drawing instruments. Costs area anticipated to be minimal (\$25 - \$40). Printing / plotting for pin ups and work sessions will be required.

Statement on 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 [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate](#)- and [graduate-level](#) 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.

[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.

Preliminary Bibliography

Bibliography will be expanded upon over the course of the semester.

Beardsley, John Editor, Cultural Landscape Heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC. 2016

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Vogt, Benjamin, *A New Garden Ethic*, New Society Publishers, BC, Canada, 2017

Vogt, Gunther. *Miniature and Panorama. Vogt Landscape Architects Projects 2000-2006*. Lars Muller Publishers.