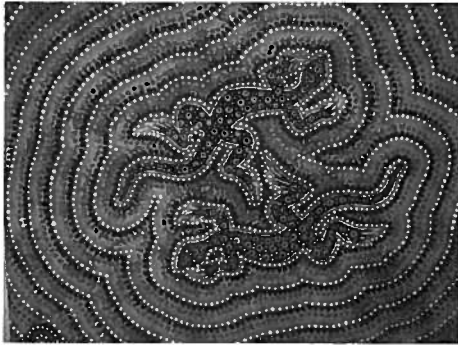


ARCH 406: Interdisciplinary Design V



Professor Frances Downing, Ph.D., ARCH
College of Architecture, Texas A&M

Course Meeting times:

1:50-3:30 MWF

4:00-4:50 MW

ARCC 204BB

Office Hours in Williams 008B

2:00-4:00 TTh or

979-845-7852

Course Description

Topical approaches to design emphasizing theory and practice of architecture or related disciplines such as urban design, interior design, health care design, etc.

Prerequisites: Upper level classification in the BED Architectural Studies Option; ARCH 405

Introduction

Six basic philosophical positions and their epistemological doctrines will be examined and form the basis for four projects. Included are Rationalism, Realism, Pragmatism, Phenomenology, Structuralism, and Constructivism. Each position will inform the projects in this course; however, the effective worldview that will be introduced is Embodied Realism. This position includes a systematic approach to architecture with ecological responsibility as a cornerstone. Each position can be found, in some form, in present day architectural practice. Often these positions are mixed, misunderstood, or critically deformed in modern architectural theory and practice. This studio will attempt to tease these worldviews apart so that the student can understand the range of possible positions held by various architects and theoreticians.

Objectives

Upon completing the course, participants will be able to:

- Articulate basic project purposes and goals.
- Associate appropriate design activities with various project objectives, and plan and implement an effective process to meet those objectives.
- Draw upon an understanding of history and theory, body and memory, and context in the critical observation and discussion of architecture.
- Discriminate between and evaluate design alternatives on ethical, aesthetic, and technical grounds.

- Integrate and coordinate structural systems.
- Select building materials and assemblies.
- Express ideas and proposals clearly and accurately in graphic, written, and oral presentation.

Upon completing the course participants will **understand**:

- The impact of various physical and biological constraints, cultural values, and societal settings on the status and role of the architect, and on architecture as a profession.
- Theories and principles that have been and are the basis for the critical understanding and the making of architectural form.
- The variety of ordering principles, strategies, and ideas by which architects bring the disparate elements of a building together and infuse them with human significance and enduring values well beyond the requisites of a project.
- The interactions between aesthetic and ethical values in the formation of architectural judgments.

Upon completing the course participants will **be aware of**:

- How architects and others have exercised judgments on different types of projects.
- How individuals and groups respond to their environmental setting both psychologically and physiologically.
- Theories and methods that clarify the interrelationships of human behavior and the physical environment.

Course Requirements:

The structure of this course involves three basic teaching modes: Socratic discussion, individual and small group critiques, and formal critiques. Readings will be assigned throughout the semester for the purposes of group discussion and debate of theoretical issues and practical response. Students will be expected to interpret, question and critique the readings (see appendix A). While projects will involve a focused set of issues with some rigid and controlled constraints, all issues are open to discussion at any stage of development. Although the overall schedule will be supplied, day-to-day development lies squarely on the shoulders and the individual design student.

Field trips may be required and will generally be scheduled outside of official class hours. Unofficial field trips are encouraged but are not the legal responsibility of the College or University and cannot be condoned during official course meeting times.

Expression for design will be in model and drawing forms with specific exploration leading to final projects. Students will be responsible for bringing developed ideas to class in any graphic form of expression—diagrams, drawings, models, collage, et cetera. Drawings, diagrams, and models should be developed with some care given to the medium chosen. They can be rough, but not messy, they can be incomplete, but they should continually show development; they can be simple, but not simplistic. Any drawing diagram or model should be lovely to look at and explain itself as thoroughly as possible.

Performance Evaluation:

Because of the dynamic pedagogical nature of the studio environment, attendance is mandatory for all scheduled class meetings, for the full class period. You are expected to be on time. Active participation in class discussions is encouraged and noted. I also expect you to be prepared to work in studio during class on class assignments only, and encouraged to consult and discuss work with your peers and other instructors. All studio assignments are to be completed on time. Late work will result in a substantial reduction of the grade. However, rare individual exceptions to these rules will be considered if there is notification in advance, or in the case of illness (doctor's note required). Each assignment will receive a numerical grade that will then be weighted using the points to arrive at the final score. This final score will be converted into a letter grade as follows: A (<100 and >90), B (<90 and >80), C (<80 and >70), D (<70 and >60), F (<60).

The ability to share ideas is an important attribute for a designer. You must be able to verbalize your intent so that others can constructively criticize whether your product matches the quality of your ideas. You must train yourself to think as rationally as possible concerning the actions you take and the reasons for those actions. This is a very difficult ability to acquire, but not impossible. Studios are purposely constructed to allow you to function on both ends of this equation—as one who is criticized, and one who criticizes. Criticism should never be used as a bludgeoning hammer to strip someone of all self-esteem; rather, it should be used in the spirit of assistance. I will be observing how you accept and give criticism because a designer's life is generally structured around "teams" rather than the solitary artist.

Class Schedule

January 20—January 29:

A Bridge to Nowhere: Living in the Mind

January 29—February 15:

Site and Sensibility: Being in the World

February 15—March 12:

Making Place: Constructing a Life

March 12—March 22:

Reflective Journals: Autobiographical Memory

March 22—April 26

Thresholds and Townhouses: Patterns in the mind and living in the world.

April 26—May 7

Portfolio: Constructing the work—Deconstructing the work

Required Texts:

Downing, F. *Remembrance and the Design of Places*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2000/2001

Hildebrand, G. *Origins of Architectural Pleasure*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press

Suggested Texts:

Hanlon, D., *Compositions in Architecture*. New York. John Wiley & Sons

Allen, E. & Iano, J. *The Architect's Studio Companion*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Lechner, N. *Heating, Cooling, Lighting*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Academic Integrity Statement

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

<http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>

Academic Calendar <http://admissions.tamu.edu/registrar/general/calendar.aspx>

Final Exam Schedule <http://admissions.tamu.edu/registrar/general/finalschedule.aspx>

On-Line Catalog <http://www.tamu.edu/admissions/catalogs/>

Student Rules <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/>

Religious Observances <http://dof.tamu.edu/faculty/policies/religiousobservance.php>

Center for Teaching Excellence <http://cte.tamu.edu>

APPENDIX A: For READINGS

Interpretation, Question, and Critique

Interpretation:

Construction, Signification, Meaning

To interpret a text one must construct it in terms that are understandable to the self. The significance and meaning of the text evolves as each person reads and rereads the material. Interpretation is like making a diagnosis: you read; read “into”; read “between the lines”; “see” in a “special light”; read “in view of”; and “take” an “approach to” (notice that these embodied metaphors are a way of understanding the act of interpretation).

Question:

Inquiry, Investigation, Controversy, Interrogate

To question a text is the simple matter of finding an uncertainty, a point of doubt either about meaning or logic. One can question what is unclear: “pose” or “set” or “propose” or “propound” a question; “bring into” question, interpolate; demand or want to know.

Critique:

Judgment, Merit, Logic

To critique is to give a commentary—an editorial analysis of meaning, significance, or logic. To review and discern perceptively, the quality of the text and the information and “insight” it provides.

APPENDIX B

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE / TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

The Studio Culture Statement is the official policy of the Department of Architecture at Texas A&M University and will be published widely and used to guide design studio pedagogy.

STUDIO CULTURE AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY: A POLICY STATEMENT

All students, faculty, administration and staff of the Department of Architecture at Texas A&M University are dedicated to the principle that the Design Studio is the central component of an effective education in architecture.

They are equally dedicated to the belief that students and faculty must lead balanced lives and use time wisely, including time outside the design studio, to gain from all aspects of a university education and world experiences. They also believe that design is the integration of many parts, that process is as important as product, and that the act of design and of professional practice is inherently interdisciplinary, requiring active and respectful collaboration with others.

The Operational Procedures are intended to provide a framework for the successful development of an effective Studio Culture, both as a part of the academic program and as a model for future professional practice.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Students and faculty in every design studio will embody the fundamental values of optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation. Every design studio will therefore encourage the rigorous exploration of ideas, diverse viewpoints, and the integration of all aspects of architecture (practical, theoretical, scientific, spiritual, and artistic), by providing a safe and supportive environment for thoughtful innovation.

Every design studio will increase skills in professional communication, through drawing, modeling, writing and speaking.

Every design studio will, as part of the syllabus introduced at the start of each class, include a clear statement on time management, and recognition of the critical importance of academic and personal growth, inside and outside the studio environment. As such it will be expected that faculty members and students devote quality time to studio activities, while respecting the need to attend to the broad spectrum of the academic life.

Every design studio will establish opportunities for timely and effective review of both process and products. Studio reviews will include student and faculty peer review. Where external reviewers are introduced, the design studio instructor will ensure that the visitors are aware of the Studio Culture Statement and recognize that the design critique is an integral part of the learning experience.

The design studio will be recognized as place for open communication and movement, while respecting the needs of others, and of the facilities.

The Dissemination and Oversight Procedures are intended to ensure that all students, and all faculty members, whether assigned to design studios or not, are aware of the Studio Culture Policy and work together productively to maximize the value of this component of the departmental pedagogy.

Oversight suggests peer-review and mentoring at all levels, and presumes a positive role for those charged with administration, including the exploration of innovative teaching approaches, and opportunities to demonstrate collaboration both within the academy, with the design professions, and with the society we serve.

DISSEMINATION AND OVERSIGHT PROCEDURES

The Studio Culture statement shall appear on all studio syllabi, with a verbal introduction and personal philosophy statement provided by individual design faculty member at the start of each semester.

The statement will also be posted on the department and AIAS websites.

The Department Design Caucus will initiate a formal discussion on the statement at the start of each academic year, with express purpose of ensuring that all new and returning faculty members understand and embrace its philosophies, and understand its opportunities.

The AIAS and the administration of the Department will ensure regular and open communication on all aspect of the academic program, including Studio Culture.

The Head of Department will include consideration of Studio Culture as part of the Annual Review of faculty members. This may suggest the use of peer review, encouragement of visiting critics, and recognition that productive review of the process and outcomes of design is not the exclusive domain of those assigned to teach design studios.

