

Course Description, Fall 2018  
 ARC 561R, ARC 696, Advanced Architectural Design  
 Instructor: Michael Benedikt (office hours by appointment).

## “ R O O M S ”

This studio differs from typical Advanced Design studios at UT in two ways:

(1) Rather than assign a large building far away, or in construction detail, it seeks to help students explore what makes a building “advanced” **experientially** and **relationally**. It does this by posing a series of eight instructor-devised **exercises** culminating in a short final design.

(2) It builds on Louis Kahn’s proposition that “a plan is a society of rooms.” This makes the fundamental unit or **object** of architecture a **room** (not “space” or “areas”). All of the exercises are room-based, therefore, dealing with two or more rooms **in relation to each other**: what they are; how they connect; how they feel; what and who they are good for, and how they are built and outfitted. The exterior setting of a room is considered as important as its interior. Constant attention is given to geometry, light, use, and materiality.

The semester will proceed **cumulatively**. Each **exercise**, one week long, starts with the result of the previous exercise, or branches off to explore a new alternative. Each exercise addresses a new **theme**, presented as a set of variables. There are eight themes in all.<sup>1</sup> The **final project** is *four* weeks long. It will ask the student to choose a program that needs no more than *four* significant rooms to realize, and to design a building that combines *four* or more themes plus any other ideas the student brings to the problem. Final project designs will not be based on, or be justified by, a particular site, but rather, will be better for some *kinds* of sites than others.

The primary **media** of the studio will be (i) pencil sketches on trace, leading to (ii) rendered, illuminated Rhino models, and (iii) small physical models. Rhino models will be considered the final output of each exercise and may include animation; the other outputs are complementary. Students are welcome to extend and enhance their media productions in any way they like.

Some students contemplating taking this studio might have concerns about its products’ **portfolio-worthiness**. If your portfolio lacks demonstration of technical drawing, large-building, or urban design skills, *and you are anxious about that*, you should probably not take this studio. If you plan to address those skills in other advanced design studios or have done so already, then you should rest easy. The output in this studio will impress any future employer (or graduate school) of your skills as a designer, creative thinker, and drawer-renderer, and make **you** a better architect forever.

**Influences and precedents** include: Louis Kahn, Frank Gehry, Solano Benitez, Pezo von Elrichhausen, MOS Architects; Harman’s ‘Object Oriented Ontology,’ Buber’s ‘I-It and I-You.’

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<sup>1</sup> The eight ‘themes’ are: Kinds of Space Isovistically Understood; Structural Archetypes; Discreet Horizontal Zones; Rooms that Move; Rooms with Bodies; the Harmony of Scales; Light from Everywhere; and Rooms in (Human) Relation.

## TEACHING and LEARNING METHODOLOGY

The Instructor sees himself as a *teacher* who brings as much as he can to class in the way of facts, ideas, techniques, experience, and precedents. He sees himself also as a *coach*, helping students realize *their* highest potential as designers. He teaches/coaches primarily through observation of, advice to, and dialog with individual students, sometimes in small groups, and sometimes with the whole class in seminar or lecture format. Attendance is therefore important (see Fine Print below). Studio meets MWF 1.15pm to 5.00pm. During the last week of September and first week of October, students will be asked to help prepare the A / R Symposium and exhibit. This will not involve more than a couple of hours from any student, if any (hours) at all.

Students are expected manage their time during studio and between studio meetings responsibly, to seek out literature—examples, precedents, readings—and to read and sketch and design on their own time. They are expected to have new work to show at every studio meeting. They are expected to be interested in trends in the profession and in the work of other schools. They are expected to share ideas and advice with each in class and during reviews. They are expected to attend all School Lectures and discuss them, and, in particular, to attend all of the CAAD Symposium (A / R) on Friday October 5 (there will be no class that day) and the John Szot lecture on November 7. Szot will also participate in a review during his visit.

Each student is expected to *take themselves seriously as a designer*, as, possibly, a *great* designer who will someday lead the profession. (Who knows what fate has in store?) This means that each student should commit herself or himself not only to their future success in business terms, but to producing the kind of work that *other* architects should want to emulate or contribute to.

## THE FINE PRINT

### EVALUATION CRITERIA

While each project contains certain quantifiable elements for evaluation, a significant portion of each grade is derived from broader and more subjective criteria. Student work will be evaluated according to its rigor and evolution over the semester. Grades are subject to deductions for late arrivals, absences, disruptiveness to the class, and late or incomplete work, at the discretion of the Instructor.

Grading for each assignment is broken into three components, scored as less-than-acceptable/competent (–), acceptable/competent (•), and superior (+), and then averaged over the semester weighted according to the time devoted, proportionally, to the exercise. A fourth component (participation) is judged over the entire semester and is used to lean one way or another when final grades occur at break-points in the A, B, C, D spectrum.

**Product:** How complete and handsome the final drawings and models are, and how informative the process models and drawings are; how clearly ideas are presented at reviews, and how well illustrated by examples, diagrams, and further analysis.

**Effort:** How much time has evidently been put into the assignment, that evidence consisting of number of articles or books read, trial drawings and models made, photographs taken, notes taken, passages written, lectures gone to, as well as hours spent in studio productively focused on the work at hand.

**Grasp:** How deeply the student has gone into understanding, questioning, and researching the nature of problem(s) posed by the assignment; how far they see the implications of the assignment extending into architecture and design generally; what knowledge of history and theory they appropriately bring to working on it.

**Participation.** This is judged only over the whole semester. How positive and cooperative a presence was the student in studio, with what attendance record in studio and at lectures, gallery shows, and symposia? How great was their willingness to engage in respectful dialog with teacher and classmates, to contribute to student life and studio culture generally?

### GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

A/A-	Excellent Project surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, visual language, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. Project is complete on all levels.
B+/B/B-	Above Average Project is thorough, well presented, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in effort to resolve required projects. Project is complete on all levels and demonstrates potential for excellence.
C+/C	Average Project meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class and not pursued with dedication and rigor. Project is incomplete in one or more areas.
C-/D+/D/D-	Poor Project is incomplete. Basic grasp of skill is lacking, visual clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required competence and knowledge base.
F	Fail Project is unresolved. Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. Note that this grade will be assigned when students have excessive unexcused absences.
X	Excused Incomplete Can be given only for legitimate reasons of illness or family emergency. Simply not completing work on time is not an adequate cause for assigning this evaluation. It may only be used after consultation with the Associate Deans' offices and with an agreement as to a new completion date. Work must be completed before the second week of the next semester in which the student is enrolling, according to the School of Architecture policy.

### ATTENDANCE

Punctual and regular attendance is required. With four (4) unexcused absences, the student's final grade for the course will be lowered by a full letter grade. The final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Aside from religious observances, absences are only excused with written documentation of a medical issue or family emergency. The student is responsible for completing work missed due to excused absences and initiating communication with the instructor to determine due dates.

If a student is late (45 minutes after the start of class) three (3) times, it will be counted as one (1) unexcused absence. Students should notify the instructor prior to class if lateness or absence is known in advance. Students must notify instructors directly regarding lateness or absences; Asking a classmate to inform the instructor is not acceptable.

### RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

A student shall be excused from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for the purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy requires students to notify each of their instructors as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students who violate University policy on academic integrity are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic integrity will be strictly enforced. Refer to the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website for official University policies and procedures on academic integrity:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>. <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct>

**CARE PROGRAM**

Counselors in Academic Residence (CARE) Program places licensed mental health professionals within the colleges or schools they serve in order to provide better access to mental health support for students who are struggling emotionally and/or academically. BTL 114B | (512) 471-3115 [https://cmhc.utexas.edu/CARE\\_dannenmaier.html](https://cmhc.utexas.edu/CARE_dannenmaier.html)

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time.

<http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

**SECURITY, SAFETY, AND THE STUDIO**

The studio is an exceptional learning environment. Since it is a place for all, it necessitates the careful attention to the needs of everyone. All spraying of fixative, spray paint, or any other substance should be done in the shop. Security is a necessary component for a studio that is accessible to you and your colleagues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Do not leave your studio without your studio key and do not leave your studio unlocked. Hold yourself and your studio mates accountable for the security of your shared space.