

ARC 333 / 383S - SITE DESIGN

David Heymann

T-Th 12.30 – 1:50 / GOL 3.120

2019 COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of site design is to *mediate the impact of built form on the world*. Site design is consciously engaged in *conspiring with the various realities of the site to suggest or limit form* (this is readily distinct from, say, structural design). In the broadest sense, site design includes design done when the building – or any intervention – is considered not as an isolated object but as a *specific piece of the world*, both practically and theoretically.

So site design is concerned with, on the one hand, something like proper drainage; and, on the other, what water on a site means to inhabitation. In site design, the specific architectural identity of the site is established by analysis, either with a program in mind or in search of program, and architectural interventions are suggested or controlled as a consequence of that analysis. While site design addresses issues ranging from the layout of parking to the history of landscape making, it actually describes an underlying design agenda (*conspiring with the various realities of the site to suggest or limit form*).

Site design necessarily includes a variety of subject matters, and these are wide-ranging enough to warrant the inclusion of two types of site design tests on the licensing exam (one written and one graphic). Site design is affected by many bodies of knowledge, including architectural design and its histories, landscape architecture and its histories, civil engineering, sociology, anthropology, geology, biology, real estate, planning, environmental planning, civics, government, etc., so this course is really "an introduction to site design." Critically, "site" and "design" are terms that have been substantially redefined in relationship to each other over the past twenty-five years. Consequently "site design" as an understood activity has also changed, and we will explore this evolution.

The intentions of this course are: - to give you an overview of the factors and forces at work in architectural site design, with particular concentration on the various concerns which develop from the site. - to provide you with necessary rudimentary technical knowledge and experience in the analysis and manipulation of site factors. - to prepare you for the Site Design portions of the A. R. E., the licensing exam, which tests a specific type of site design ability. - to explore what "site design" is becoming due to reconsideration of the value of landscape and the architect's concerns and responsibilities to landscape.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

This course is divided into two parts, the first of which focuses on pragmatic aspects of site design, the second of which focuses on cultural considerations of the role of site in architectural design. These are closely linked – there is no technique without a cultural agenda, and vice versa. In Part I of the course we will concentrate on aspects of site design arising from the realities of the actual, physical site, including: legal definition and measure; legal restrictions; topography and climate; access, utilities, parking, and site circulation; grading and drainage; and how each of these determines inhabitation.

The thrust of this portion of the course is to prepare you practically. Many of the issues to be covered in Part I do not translate well into lecture form. Grading, for example, is something you have to learn by doing: no amount of talking or explaining will make a huge difference. There will be a series of lectures on the technical topics, their architectural consequences, and a series of associated exercises with explanatory readings. Many of these exercises are drawn from the Licensing Exam. **The bulk of the exercise type work for this course occurs during the first half.** There will be an exam on this portion of the course just before midterm.

During the second half of the course we will give as broad a definition to the word "site" as possible, and look at the consequences of this broad redefining on design. While this may seem odd, it is appropriate. We tend to imagine that the processes of site design are used on certain kinds of sites, typically those where the ratio of land to building is quite large, or those where the site presents certain physical difficulties (like steep slope), or those set in fairly undisturbed natural surroundings. But the processes of site design apply to all sites, urban or rural, real or imaginary, physical or not, and the change in the value of site over the past twenty five years means that no architectural undertaking can ignore site.

During this second part of this course you will be doing extensive reading, discussion session work, and will be undertaking a several analysis problems to further your understanding. Aside from the readings and exercises, **there will be a written final** covering this portion of the course. Note that we will only briefly be reviewing the history of site design in a conventional linear way in this course. But we will be looking at various historical examples throughout the course. Still, this is not a course in landscape architecture or landscape planning. The focus of this course is the relationship of buildings to their landscapes.

RESERVE READING and REQUIRED TEXTS:

Much has been written about landscape and building relationships, and reading is critical to this course, particularly the second half. The bulk of the theory reading will occur during the second half of the semester; during the first half the reading will be primarily technical, associated with exercises.

Site Planning, International Practice, by Kevin Lynch (MIT Press, 2018), is the required textbook for this course (it will not be available through the Coop, as it is cheaper to purchase from Amazon). This book looks at site planning at a scale just slightly larger than most architects normally do, but that knowledge is invaluable, and for the undergraduates this book serves as a bridge to the required planning course later in your curriculum.

Readings from Site Planning will alternate with posted reserve readings on BOX. Some of these are short excerpts from Time-Saver Standards for Landscape Architecture (McGraw Hill). If you can possibly afford that book (about \$125) you should order it: it is REALLY useful (but having it is not required).

There does not currently exist a good book about grading. I had hoped to use Grading for Landscape Architects and Architects, by Peter Petschek (Birkhauser, 2008) this year, but it is not available.

Most of these reserve readings in the second half of the semester are prefaced by one of the stories from Invisible Cities, by Italo Calvino (A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974), you should consider buying and reading that book as well.

READINGS, AND DISCUSSION GROUPS:

At the start of the second half of the semester we will break the class up into groups of five. Each of these groups will be responsible for turning in "minutes" of a discussion that the group will undertake about the readings. These discussions will center on questions posed regarding the readings and lectures, and will be due on the day that the readings are relevant, as indicated on the course schedule. **Minutes questions will be posted on BOX.** The minutes are only intended as a record of your discussion, with a short summary of your conclusions, not to exceed 2 pages total (1 page preferred). **In order to receive credit, the minutes must be signed by all members of the group, and the minutes must be typed.** Each group will be responsible for establishing a meeting time, and designating a recorder.

There will be two sets of groups: graduates and undergraduates. During Part II of the course, the readings will be organized as follows: there will be certain readings for all groups. **In addition to these, there will be an extra article that must be read by the graduate students.**

Undergraduates may join a graduate group, but any group with a graduate student is required to read the additional article. Finally, there may be optional articles included (There are many great authors who have written about the built landscape, and part of this course is to introduce you to those).

The reading requirements will be explained on the cover sheet for each section of readings. **Minutes** are due every Tuesday, at the beginning of class, during the weeks after Spring Break. Minutes will be given a 0 (for not turned in) or 5 points. They will be docked one point for every day that they are late. Because **the minutes must be signed by all members of the group, and they must be typed**, it does not make sense to meet in the morning just before class).

EXERCISES:

Are due according to the schedule. During the second half of the course, some exercises will be done by your discussion group as a whole, some individually. Almost all exercises in Part I are worth 10 points maximum, and will be allotted points as follows: 10 for correct and complete, with points deducted for mistakes. All exercises in Part II are typically worth 15 points maximum, and will be allotted points as follows: 0 for not turned in, 5 for poor or incomplete, 10 for basic, decent and complete work, 15 for exceptional. Many of the projects, particularly in Part II, will be qualitative in nature: such projects usually involve synthetic thinking and invention - often part of the project will be figuring out what the problem is about, then taking a risk. Five points will be docked for projects turned in late (i.e., next class session) without medical excuse; projects turned in 2 classes late will not be given credit. **Note that the overall point structure may change as the exact number of exercises may change.**

EXAMS / FINAL:

There will be two exams. The exam over the first half, given the last class day prior to Spring Break, will test basic technical knowledge, and will be taken from the two parts of the Licensing Exam. The exam over the second half (which will be the Final) will be short answer and essay, and will include slide-based essays. Although there will not be slide identification questions, you will be expected to remember basic facts about the major projects that we will be looking at: I'll let you know.

ATTENDANCE:

Your attendance in class is required. **A sign-in sheet will be circulated at each class: you must sign this.** After 3 absences (i.e., your fourth absence) your cumulative point total will be reduced by 10 points, and will be reduced by 10 points for each additional absence thereafter; with 5 absences you will be asked to leave the class. If you have a serious and legitimate excuse for not attending class, please contact one of the TA's.

GRADES:

Your grade in this course will be based on the following (note point totals and number of exercises may change):

1. Exercises, Part I, total for 15 exercises (number of exercises / points may change): +/- 150 pts
2. Exam 1: +/- 60 pts
3. Minutes of discussion groups, total for 6 sets: +/- 30 pts
4. Exercises, Part II, total for 3 exercises (number of exercises and points may change): +/- 45 pts
5. Final: +/- 60 pts

6. - penalty for absenteeism

MAXIMUM TOTAL AVAILABLE POINTS: +/-345 pts

The points indicated above are the maximum available. Grades will be obtained from two curves (one for graduates, one for undergraduates). The curve is based on the highest point total that a student has acquired (as opposed to available): that number is then “100%”, and taking 90% of that highest student’s total gives you the break between A and B; 80% gives you the break between B and C, and so forth.

HONOR CODE, OTHER POLICIES:

This course respects the UT standard regarding academic dishonesty fully. Please review the UT Honor Code and an explanation of what constitutes plagiarism. Link to University Honor Code: <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>. This course also observes UT Policy regarding accommodations for religious holidays. By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

INSTRUCTOR: hours by appointment

David Heymann (heymann@utexas.edu)

TEACHING ASSISTANTS: hours TBA

Margaret Bunke (mbunke@utexas.edu)

Patrick Klimaszewski (patrick.klim@utexas.edu)

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Suggested: *Take notes during class in something like a sketchbook: you should record visual information as you see fit, because the issues will be **made evident in the slides**. Based on extensive reading into student performance, **you may NOT use a computer to take notes**. You might obtain a three-ring binder to keep all of your notes plus handouts, etc., together. It will take some time for you to get a handle on the information in this course. Because it is both a grad and undergrad course, the nature of the information falls precisely in between. There will not be a lot of information that you will need to directly memorize. In general, because this is a general course, the bulk of this course is concerned with your understanding the underlying issues, and, many of the issues are discussed with reference to specific slides. Finally, I tend to lecture in what seems to be a very loose way; things will sort of seem to make sense at the time (particularly in second half*

of the semester), but at the time of the test you will be struggling to remember what the issue was. I would strongly recommend that you take 15 minutes after class to try to reconstruct the issues discussed in lecture.