

**CourseNo:** ARCHA4726\_001\_2013\_1  
**Meeting Location:** FAYERWEATHER 200 S  
**Meeting Time:** W 09:00A-11:00A

**Instructor Information:**

[Michael J. Rock](#)

“[S]ince nothing can enter architecture without having been first converted into graphic form, the actual mechanism of graphic conversion is fundamental.” — Stan Allen, *Diagrams Matter*

This is a hybrid seminar about making diagrams, not diagrammatic architecture, but the diagrams themselves. It is, at the core, a class about giving form to concepts, i.e. graphic design. But we will also investigate how the development of the diagram itself can be generative and impact the forms that rise from it. It is a hybrid seminar in that we will look at our subject through readings and lectures as well as a series of highly practical, formulaic design exercises assembled to investigate specific conceptual problems.

In the language of semiotics, diagrams like maps are considered to be iconic. The icon, according to Charles Sanders Pierce, is the order of sign that functions through direct resemblance. The typical map has an obvious relationship to the topography it represents. The diagram's relationship to its subject may seem more abstract, not because of the formal language it employs but rather because the subject itself may be an abstraction. The diagram is a picture of an idea. Most diagrams, however, work through a complex of semiotic equation that includes features of both the icon and the symbol.

As complex forms of drawing, both the map and the diagram have an important function in the process of designing. Because they are reductions, both forms may reveal an essential truth not visible in the realm of the real. The diagram is the reduction of an idea to its most brutal contradictions: it depicts relationships, the map reveals adjacencies. But beyond their declarative and clarifying functions, maps and diagrams are visual objects in their own right and therefore worthy of a closer look.

The class will consist of two intertwined halves: On the theory side we will both consider a few essential readings and have a number of visitors talking about their work. The group will include designers working in many different media from the New York Times to art making. On the practical side there will be a number of short assignments that engage six different organizational forms: Inventory, Process, Time, System, Comparison and Map. We will work on how specific concepts as visualized as well as minute issues of typography, form, line weight and color. Later in the semester, the content of these exercises can be drawn directly from your studio projects. We will review these materials on a more or less bi-weekly basis and discuss both representational choices and graphic and typographic details.

Evaluation will be based on the quality of the visual projects, attendance and participation in the class discussions and critiques.