

# HACKING THE URBAN EXPERIENCE

**CourseNo:** ARCHA4814\_001\_2015\_1

**Meeting Time:** T 07:00P-09:00P **Meeting Location:** [AVERY HALL 114](#)

## **Instructor Information:**

[John H Locke](#)

## **OVERVIEW**

This course seeks to assert the relevance of the fabrication skills at our disposal as potentialities for social and environmental relevance. Through the re-appropriation and re-imagining of existing urban conditions, the student will harness their entrepreneurial spirit to design and fabricate a series of fast, working prototypes that embrace the messy reality of New York. The student will begin by identifying a quality of the urban condition that includes the latent capability for improvement and work toward fabricating an adaptive, responsive and environmentally viable solution. Specific emphasis will be placed on testing and exploring through hands on research the possibilities of detailing and fabricating connections using unorthodox materials. At the conclusion of the course the student will have produced a rough proof of concept - a beta model - that synthesizes their arguments into a working intervention. Formulating a strong guiding thesis idea will be essential to the project's success, but the core challenge for the student will be converting a strong idea into physical reality, something to be observed, tested and documented.

Workshops will be conducted to introduce the students to the possibilities inherent in new material technologies, through production and detailing techniques, and the proper use of machines in the fabrication lab if necessary. Material workshops will be held to encourage students to explore with everything from dynamic, inflatable volumes to parametric agglomerations using quotidian materials.

## **GOALS**

By attempting to capture a broader audience for architectural interventions, a number of questions present themselves and the student will be challenged to anticipate possible eventualities - how will it be used? Can its use be changed? Is it durable? Is it waterproof? Can it safely stand up? Fabrication will be considered less from a formal quality, and more from a use, durability, improvisation and public participation viewpoint.

Ultimately the student will come out of the course with a healthy respect for two core concepts: Firstly, an increased skill in the use and applicability of the fabrication skills we have at our disposal for solving design issues using unorthodox materials in unconventional settings; and two, that there is an opportunity for architects to regain lost

relevance by inserting themselves through unsolicited proposals into the public consciousness as steward's of urban well being.

## **WORK**

Broadly speaking, the course will be divided into two halves. The first being made up of two quick flash assignments to get comfortable working in urban space and to allow for immediate user feedback. The back half of the semester will give the student time to further develop and pursue a project of their own undertaking.

The first investigation will be in the creation of a connection detail with the existing urban environment. It is encouraged that this be a joint that breaches the gap between an existing vertical extrusion and the student's intervention. Communication, flexibility, safety, durability and adaptability will all be tested while exploring different possibilities for a potential synthesis with existing urban forms, examples of which can include: will the student's intervention clamp on to a lamppost, hang from a phone booth, project from an existing building or rest in a parking lot? The second flash assignment will include an exploration of potential architectural applications of interactive, digital projections.

In parallel with other assignments, students will engage in Stranger Experiences - a short series of interactions that will provide the student with a deeper understanding of the role of spontaneous encounters in shaping urban space by talking and meeting strangers. How do people engage with existing spaces? With talking, following and watching each other? What qualities of urban space are most conducive to initiating these types of encounters?

All work should be posted to the class tumblr:  
<http://hackingtheurbanexperience.tumblr.com>

Students will complete the work in fluid groups.

## **GRADING**

First (2) Assignments: 20% Each

Final Assignment: 40%

Stranger Experiences: 15%

Attendance and Participation: 5%

## **CLASSES**

1: HELLO WORLD

Introductions, Overview, Introduce Assignment 01: Parasite Connection

Optional Readings:

- The Interventionists Toolkit, Parts 1-4, Mimi Zeiger, Places
- "Exit Through the Gift Shop"

- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Part 1, Chapter 2: The Uses of Sidewalks safety
- Volume 14: *Unsolicited Architecture*, Rem Koolhaas, Mark Wigley, Ole Bouman ("Bootleg PDF Version")
- Robert Caro, *The Power Broker*, pp. 478-495

## 2: BIG PROJECTED SCREENS

Discuss Assignment 02, Talk Light Projections, Tutorial on mobile power and projections

Optional Readings:

- Graffiti Research Lab, *Interactive Architecture*
- Hijacking the urban screen: Trends in outdoor advertising and predictions for the use of video art and urban screens by Raina Kumra
- Urban screens: Towards the convergence of architecture and audiovisual media by Tore Slaatta
- electric SignS, an intERviEW With JaSon EPPinK, tHE PixElatoR (pp. 217-221)

## 3: PROJECTION BOMBING

We will meet as a group at the chosen sites to carry out Assignment 03 with the mobile power rig. Begin Final Project narrative.

## 4: BIG INFLATABLE SPACE

Discuss Assignment 02, Talk Inflatables - History, theory, etc., Inflatable Tutorial

Optional Readings:

- AntFarm, *InflatoCookbook*
- Thomas Herzog, *Pneumatic Structures (INTRO)*
- Raumlabor, *Spacebuster*
- *The Inflatable Moment: Pneumatics and Protest in '68 (INTRO)*

## 5: KICKSTARTING THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE

Talk crowdfunding potentials and future trends. Final project version 1.0 due.

Optional Readings:

- *Brickstarter the Book* Chapters 41 and 69
- *Against Kickstarter Urbanism* by Alexandra Lange

## 6: WHO OWNS PUBLIC SPACE?

Materials Test for Final Project, Discuss corporatization and commodification of public space and the architect's role/responsibilities for design in the public realm.

Optional Readings:

- *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, William Whyte (video)
- Richard Sennett, "The Public Realm"
- *Communities Test Out Participatory Budgeting*, Gotham Gazette, March 2012
- "Against the Smart City" Adam Greenfield

INFORMAL REVIEW - DATE TBD

