Urban Design and Planning 470 Spring 2014 (3.0)
INTRODUCTION TO URBAN DESIGN

Class Meeting Time and Place:  Monday & Wednesday 12:00 –1:20am  Gould Hall Room 100
Instructor: Dan Abramson, PhD, Associate Professor
Office phone/voice mail: 543-2089; e-mail abramson@uw.edu
Office Hours: Gould Hall 448F; Monday 2:00-5:00pm or by appointment

Catalyst website: https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/abramson/44308

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to the discipline and practice of urban design, through a combination of readings, class discussion, and hands-on exercises dealing with the urban environment of Seattle. Students will become familiar with key theoretical foundations of urban design, and practiced in methods and skills that support urban design.

Hands-on field exercises in the city will provide students with an opportunity to develop and exercise their spatial, visual and graphic “literacy” in order to make sense of the urban environment for design purposes. Students will work individually and in teams using methods of "rapid urban assessment": imageability studies, thematic mapping, textual and photographic "thick description" of urban environments, and observation of social behavior in public space. A final report will give students a chance to analyze urban design issues in a particular case and propose basic design-related policy recommendations of a level commonly associated with professional community-scale urban and architectural design and neighborhood planning.

UrbDP 470, *Introduction to Urban Design*, is a required course for the Master of Urban Planning Specialization in Urban Design, and also counts towards either the core requirement or the urban design methods requirement for the Urban Design Certificate.

FORMAT

The course meets for two 80-minute seminar-style sessions each week. Class feature discussions of the reading, lectures by the instructor or guest speakers, and/or presentations of field work by students. Class meetings are for discussion and interaction. Students who arrive late, leave early or absent themselves for part of the session without explanation disrupt the class, and will lose points for participation.

There will be no test on the readings. However, except for the first class meeting, students are expected to read these texts *before* the class meeting to which they are relevant; to post their comments on the course Catalyst GoPost online discussion board as prompted; and to participate fully in class discussion. Comments on each of the readings must be posted to the course GoPost discussion board by 5pm on the day before the class meeting scheduled to discuss that reading. For each class meeting, the GoPost will identify which readings students should discuss; what particular questions or issues they should address; and any other instructions to help focus the discussion. In many cases students are expected to illustrate their comments with images they find or sketches they make. Students will also be expected to refer appropriately to the course readings in their final reports.
READINGS


The course schedule below shows the topics for each class meeting, and the relevant texts. Readings are given as references for the topics of discussion for each session. In some cases the instructor may replace or supplement these with other readings, especially if they would be particularly relevant to alternative assignment topics that students propose.

FINAL REPORT

The final report will discuss a case of a recently built project or a site for which a project is proposed or might be proposed. If students are unsure of what site they might report on, they should consult projects that are currently under review by the City of Seattle, as scheduled at: http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/news/events/DesignReview/UpcomingReviews/default.asp

Usually within a week or two of a scheduled review meeting, the actual design proposal for a project will be made available on this website. Students may view the proposal, and then decide which review meeting to attend as part of their research on that site. For example, at 6:30pm on Monday, April 7, 2014, there is a review meeting of the Northeast Design Review Board at the University Heights Community Center, 5031 University Way NE, Room #209 for a project proposed for 5755 NE 63rd St.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Digital camera; scale ruler (engineering); notebook; graph paper; colored felt-tip pens and/or pencils; presentation-size posters/boards; poster-sized printing costs. Students who already have at least a rudimentary knowledge of Photoshop, and/or SketchUp or other 3-D architectural modeling software will be encouraged to use that software to complete some of the exercises.

EVALUATION

Grades will be determined as follows:
45% for the first three field exercises (15% each);
25% for the final report;
20% for participation in online discussion of readings;
10% for participation in class discussion of readings.
# SCHEDULE

## Topics | Readings
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### Monday March 31
Introduction to course and to each other

### Wednesday April 2
Epistemological theories of urban design
- objective vs. normative approaches
- empirical vs. rational approaches


For discussion: What is urban design? How is it different from architectural or landscape architectural design? How is it different from urban planning?


On e-reserve.

**Handout Exercise #1**: “A Walk Around the Block”: Qualitative Visual Analysis – photo and written interpretation

**Illustrated essay due in Catalyst on Sunday, April 13, 5pm**

### Monday April 7

Why observe? The normative socio-economic basis of urban environmental “thick” description

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Ch.1 “Introduction” and Ch.3 “The uses of sidewalks: contact,” (these two chapters also in *The Urban Design Reader*, pp.80-92); also Ch.2 “The uses of sidewalks: safety”, Ch.9 “The need for small blocks”, Ch.10 “The need for aged buildings”, Ch.16 “Gradual money and cataclysmic money”.

Christopher Alexander, “City is Not a Tree,” *The Urban Design Reader*, pp.152-166.

In a Corbusian world, what is the role of socio-spatial observation?


### Wednesday April 9

Theory: Cognitive-perceptual bases for conceiving of urban design, and for analyzing urban space-time


Gordon Cullen, “Introduction to the Concise Townscape” *The Urban Design Reader*, pp.118-124.

Method: off-site and on-site observation - What to look for in an urban environment and how to look


**In-class Exercise: “What (time) is this place?” warm-up qualitative visual analysis – photo interpretation**

### Sunday April 13, 5:00pm – Exercise #1 “A Walk Around the Block” Due in Catalyst Dropbox.
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| Monday April 14 | Discuss Exercise #1: K. Lynch, “A Walk Around the Block.” [Distributed before class]  
K. Lynch, *What Time is this Place?*, Ch.6 “Boston Time,” pp.135-162. |
| Handout Exercise #2: Mapping the city image. **Due** in class as presentation, and in dropbox **Monday April 28**. |
| In-class Exercise: Cognitive mapping – how city image is structured in your memory |
| Monday April 21 | Guest Speaker: Philippe Panerai  
Urban Elements and Typomorphology: Anne Vernez Moudon, “Getting to Know the Built Landscape: Typomorphology,” on e-reserve.  
| Tuesday April 22, 6:00pm – Philippe Panerai public lecture on Grand-Paris metropolitan planning. |
| Wednesday April 23 | Typo-morphology continued, and New Urbanism: Leon Krier, “‘Critiques’ and ‘Urban Components’,” on e-reserve.  
| In-class Exercise: Map-reading - Seeing without ever having been there |
| Handout Final Project: Topic Abstract **Due** on Friday, May 10, 5pm. **Project Due** Friday, June 6, 5pm. |
| Monday April 28 | Exercise #2 DUE  
No readings; students present and discuss Exercise #2 |
| Handout Exercise #3: Environment-behavior; mapping the public realm as a temporal-socio-spatial ecology **Due** in class as presentations **Monday May 12**. |
Monday May 5

Elements of the Public Realm I – Places/Nodes/Cores: being in public

For discussion: What questions would you “ask” public places you are investigating?

Wednesday May 7

Elements of the Public Realm II – Networks/Paths: moving (and being) in public

Elements of the Public Realm III – Building presence (facades, edges, bulk): bounding public space

Friday, May 9, 5pm - Final Project Topic Abstract Due

Monday May 12

Sense of place

Wednesday May 14

Other Urbanisms I: Multicultural sense of place
Margaret Crawford, selections from “Everyday Urbanism,” *The Urban Design Reader*, pp.344-357.

Topics  Readings

Urban Design Course Syllabus  URBD 470
Exercise #3 DUE
No readings; students present and discuss Exercise #3

Wednesday May 21

Other Urbanisms II: Ecological and Resilient Urban Design

Monday May 26

No CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY

Wednesday May 28

Other Urbanisms III: Urban Design in Recently, Rapidly Urbanizing Societies

Monday June 2

Method: Intervention types
- Design projects
- Design guidelines
- Design review
- Participatory/Community Design
For discussion: How and why are/might each of these types of intervention be appropriate in the urban sites you have investigated?


Wednesday June 4

LAST CLASS – Wrap-up and in-class written evaluation
For discussion: Now that the course is ended, how do you find urban design as discussed here useful or relevant to your own studies and career aspirations?

Friday, June 6, 5pm - Final Project Due in dropbox.