

COURSE INTRODUCTION

**THE FRAME OF REFERENCE STUDIO: ANALOGY AS A STRATEGY TOWARD CREATING IDENTITY**

**PEDAGOGY:**

We will approach architecture as a system as well as a lived reality. The systems range from the quantifiable and physical (program/ functions, mechanical/electrical, constructional etc.) to the more formalistic and abstract (systems of orders, movement, rhythm) etc. While techniques of representation (construction, de-construction and selective extraction/ emphasis), will help us understand and appreciate the embodied systems, it is our attention to our own perceptions, trust and attentiveness to our own senses, which will aid us in grasping the implications of these systems upon our places of inhabitation. The study of architecture involves reflecting upon our own deeply subjective experiences in order to unearth the essential and underlying structures of order.

The design studio is not merely the vehicle for application of knowledge that is gained through lecture courses. The act of exploring architecture through an engaged process of active designing helps to contextualize other specialized knowledge gained through lecture formats. Thus, epochs/ movements/ names in history, ideas in theory, and technical information on systems of construction, all gather heightened meaning and relevance through the studio process. With this relationship, it becomes inevitable that one attempts to research necessary pieces of information as necessitated by the design process without waiting for that in the future.

The studio process allows us to engage the realm of the real world while allowing us to maintain a distance. This distancing, which is a luxury, is best spent if we expend our energies in critical thinking. Recognition has to be made that our world is as real as the real world that often appears with distinction between quotations.

The following are broad areas of discussions expected in the studio and during critiques. Class participation is expected:

1. Modernity as a global condition of life and its relationship to architecture
2. Materiality and sensorial experience of places
3. Architectural representation as its own form of reality

**EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

The broad educational objectives of this studio conform to those developed by the school. The work will address "material quality of buildings, structure, light modulation and fenestration and plan organization". In addition and in parallel, this studio, through the use of sketch problems, building design projects, reading writing and class discussions, begin to introduce broader critical issues that bear upon the design and eventually building processes. The topical interest if this semester is outlined below

**TOPICAL FOCUS:**

The broad focus of the assignments this semester will be the issue of **IDENTITY**. Webster's defines this word as a noun to mean both self-sameness and uniqueness.

In our creative design efforts we seek an identity, a specificity of character for our architecture. The assignments and the projects of this studio will examine the possibilities of creating identity or specificity through a sequence of three steps. First we will look at the relationship between identical elements and how they can constitute a whole that has distinct properties. Next we will consider similar things in the same role. In the final step we will look at the potential of mental ideas, connections and relationships inferred by the creative mind and how this can become a determinant of design. It is in the last step that the process of divining analogical relationships becomes important.

**STUDIO PROCESS:**

It is expected of all the students that their process in thinking/designing and representing is charged with a spirit of **EXPERIMENTATION and EXPLORATION**. This is not a call for the unusual and over expressive architecture, but a rejection of the prosaic and the unimaginative work. While the design process and the final critiques bear resemblance to what occurs in the professional world, there are key differences. The educational process, in order to be effective, demands that the thought and evolutionary process behind design is open for discussion. This studio will regard the process and discussion of the process with equal merit to the completed project. The process is expected be clear and continuous. The following will be major themes of emphases throughout this semester:

**TECTONICS:** Tectonics can be understood as the intelligence embodied in the interrelationship of elements that make up a piece of architecture. The recognition of this intelligence in itself, it could be argued, constitutes a dimension of aesthetic experience. The tectonic can operate at multiple levels in architecture ranging from the joint (Japanese traditional wood joints for example), to spatial/organizational tectonics to formal. The idea that architecture is not a scenographic, representational art is shared among many critics and practitioners around the world; a view increasingly recognized with urgency since the technology to produce imagery is multiplying at an alarming rate. Yet the same technology is also allowing us to create architecture with greater expressive and inventive characteristics, a potential that cannot be tapped into without a real experience of the tectonic aspects of architecture

**CRITICAL THINKING** is the ability to make creative, insightful connections amongst the facts gathered. It is expected that the projects are driven by students' ability to draw connection amongst various aspects of program, site, and socio-cultural conditions which help to construct a conceptual basis for the project. Concepts are intended as embryonic thought that helps guide the project and not for generating very specific meanings.

**RESEARCH/ STUDY:** It is expected that students conduct self-initiated research to help advance their design process. Various reference materials will be suggested on an individual basis. Empirical observations of the built environment will be encouraged along with reference to literature from the libraries and the web.

**REPRESENTATIONS:** The architectural design process requires exploration of ideas via VISUAL/ PHYSICAL means; that is through drawings and models. It is the fundamental belief of this studio that in order to explore as well as enhance one's ideas, one must PRODUCE. Any argument that it is "all in one's head", merely waiting to be represented, is simply UNACCEPTABLE. You are expected to develop ideas through doing, which will then be followed by discussions, which will affect the next moves. Your thoughts do affect what is produced but does not determine it. What you produce will affect your thinking.

There will be equal amount of emphasis on both models and drawings. Both are required on a regular basis to advance design and each medium will inform the other and not act as a sole determinant. It is expected that progress is made from one studio session to the next.

You are expected to take notes and maintain a file of studio handouts. You are also expected to maintain a sketch-book (preferably larger, 9"x11") dedicated to this studio. The final requirements will include a portfolio at the end of the semester as well as project specific journals.

**LANGUAGE:** A critical and rigorous studio process does not allow any one the arbitrary luxury of likes and dislikes. It demands that we earnestly attempt to articulate our views in a lucid manner. This is not to be mistaken as an exercise in design justifications and salesmanship. Rationalization is not sought to explain things "away" in any absolute manner. The studio process is never "clean" and linear. The attempt to reach clarity requires us to articulate our thoughts. This requires that we respect and exercise our own ability of language. Written statements regarding design ideas will be required through out the process. These are to be typed and submitted as both hard copies and electronically.

There will be periodic readings that need to be completed.

**CLASS CONDUCT/ ATTENDANCE:** There are a total of 44 scheduled studio sessions before the end of the semester. More than 2 unexcused absences will affect the final grade. Attendance is mandatory during all scheduled critiques. You are expected to respect and contribute to the collective studio environment and work in class. There are no official breaks. Occasional visits to the reading room will be allowed. Students as a collective group are expected to maintain the cleanliness of the studio.

"Walk-mans" in the class will be permitted, but check with instructor first. There are certain times and phases of the project where individual use of walkmans don't affect the studio process.

**GRADING:**

All assignments will be graded. The proportional values of individual assignments will be listed in a separate hand out. The final grade of each assignment will depend not only on the quality of the final product but so significantly on the studio process, the students' enthusiasm and participation in regular studio dialogue and consistent progress. A separate hand out regarding criteria for grading will be issued during next week.

