ADVANCED DESIGN STUDIO/PRACTICUM [Fall_2017]

MWF 1pm-6pm
Edna Ledesma, Ph.D.
Sutton 3.130B
Office hours by appointment
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PREREQUISITES
Undergraduate: ARC 520E (formerly 520L) and ARC 520G (formerly 530T) with a grade of at least C and satisfactory completion of third-year portfolio review.

Graduate: Satisfactory completion of Vertical Portfolio Review.

[Empowerment by Design: Brownsville West Rail Trail]

The subject matter is a live project for an economically deprived area on the U.S.-Mexico border; its context includes the dysfunctional interaction of the Rio Grande River, the U.S.-Mexico border wall, vacant sites, historic fabric, transit, and green infrastructure.

The course will study an eight-mile abandoned railroad corridor in Brownsville, Texas, to explore the potential conversion of a historic freight line into a new city place. The corridor, located on the southern edge of the city, runs parallel to the Rio Grande River and the U.S.-Border Wall, and links to both economically deprived and affluent neighborhoods directly to the historic downtown. Additionally, two key institutions anchor the corridor: Texas Southmost College, the local community college; and the 77 Flea Market, visited by over 20,000 locals every weekend. Furthermore, the corridor terminates at a U.S.-Mexico international crossing bridge, the original crossing for rail freight traffic in Brownsville.

The core purpose of this interdisciplinary studio/practicum is to address social justice in the design of the 21st century American city. The studio will therefore study potential transformations of this vector as a catalyst for social and economic change, and the significant impact that access to hike and bike infrastructure has in addressing mobility, health, and economic development as an extension into the downtown and the wider city context.

The project will be underwritten by a research grant provided by the local government in support of the students’ field visit, an end of the semester presentation/celebration with community stakeholders in Brownsville, and a book publication of the projects. The research grant and collaboration with local stakeholders are integral to the studio/practicum methodology to address socially based urban design, city planning, and architecture.
ASSIGNMENTS

- **Preliminary Diagnosis** (4 weeks)
  15% of Final Grade

- **Master Plan Strategy** (7 weeks)
  30% of Final Grade
  Mid Term Review

- **Individual Design Strategy** (7 weeks)
  45% of Final Grade
  Final Review

- **Participation** (14 weeks)
  10% of Final Grade
  in-class attendance and field travel to south Texas

**Travel**
The studio will make two travel trips to Brownsville, Texas for fieldwork and community engagement with local partners.

**Travel Dates:**

- **Trip 1: Fieldwork Documentation**
  Thursday September 14th-Monday September 18th

- **Trip 2: Final Design Presentation with Local Partners**
  Thursday November 30th- Saturday December 2nd

*These fieldtrips are required class participation for this studio.*

Expected travel costs for both trips are approximately $750; students in the studio will receive a $500 travel stipend to help subsidize these expenses.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**
Students have been exposed to the following learning objectives in previous semesters. The level of expectation will continue to grow as students further develop each competency. Some issues would only be mentioned in passing in one studio but will be studied in more depth in another.
- **Design Composition Skills**: Developed through three-dimensional architectural form and space, both exterior and interior; building envelope
- **Design Integration Skills**: Demonstrated through creative engagement with issues of materiality, structures, construction, and environmental system
- **Site Analysis and Design**: Developed through the creative engagement with relevant contextual; environmental and programmatic factors underlying the project
- **Critical Thinking**: Quality of conceptual and critical thought; learning from precedents; research skills
- **Graphic Skills**: Quality of presentation; clarity of communication; appropriateness of media strategy and level of skill displayed; be able to draw upon a range of tools and approaches useful in interdisciplinary work
- **Collaborative and Leadership Skills**: Demonstrated through the active engagement in all activities of the studio
- **Interdisciplinary Design**: understand the roles and potential of each discipline in an urban environment through infrastructure and redevelopment;
- **Research and Diagnosis Skills**: be familiar with important cases in design through design collaboration; be able to design a redevelopment strategy, through a critical process of analysis and case study evaluation

**STUDIO CULTURE**
The School of Architecture believes in the value of the design studio model. Studio learning encourages dialogue, collaboration, risk-taking, innovation, and learning-by-doing. The studio offers an environment where students can come together to ask questions and make proposals, which are developed and discussed among classmates, faculty, visiting professionals, and the public-at-large. Studio learning offers intensive one-on-one instruction from faculty members, and provides the opportunity for each student to develop his/her critical thinking skills and spatial and material sensibilities. The design studio offers a synthetic form of education, where project-based learning becomes the foundation for developing an understanding of and commitment to the school’s core values – broadmindedness, interconnectivity, professionalism, exploration and activism – all in service of architecture’s fundamental mission: to improve the quality of the built and natural environments. [https://soa.utexas.edu/programs/architecture/architecture-studioculture](https://soa.utexas.edu/programs/architecture/architecture-studioculture)

**DESIGN CONVERSATIONS: JESSEN LECTURES**
The School of Architecture offers a wide range of opportunities for students to extend the design conversations taken place in studios (Lecture Series, Goldsmith Talks, Exhibitions, City Forum). Students are encouraged to participate and be engaged. Specifically, all B.Arch and BSAS students in studio are expected to attend all the Jessen Lectures (three per semester by lead practitioners from around the world). The lectures and the group discussions in studio that follow are important for the holistic education of intellectually engaged students and participation will have an impact on students’ grades (see below).
EVALUATION CRITERIA
While each project contains certain quantifiable elements for evaluation, a significant portion of each grade is derived from broader and more subjective criteria.

Student work will be evaluated according to its rigor and evolution over the semester. Grades are subject to deductions for late arrivals, absences, and late or incomplete work at the discretion of the instructor.

Grading for an assignment is broken into four components, each of which is given roughly equal weight:

**Pursuit:** the consistent and rigorous development and testing of ideas.
- The ability to formulate a query or thesis and pursue a self-determined concomitant method of inquiry
- The ability to identify and implement various processual mechanisms (software, sketch drawing and models, etc.) in the development of the design
- Initiative as demonstrated in work ethic – Does the student do what is asked; go beyond what is asked; direct their own efforts; eager to produce the next iteration of the design?

**Grasp:** the ideas and understanding of the project at hand and integration of knowledge introduced in companion courses.
- A strong and clearly stated design objective
- Spatial acuity as demonstrated in plan – including reasonable disposition of programmatic elements – and sectional development
- Synthetic and critical thinking; the ability to holistically organize a project as demonstrated through creative engagement with issues of materiality, structures and construction, structural and environmental system integration, building materials and assembly, sustainable practices, etc. in support of the design objective
- Structural competence and material sensitivity as demonstrated in wall thickness, floor plates, and assembly

**Resolution:** of the design objective; the demonstration of competence, completeness, and finesse in the final design presentation.
- Quality of presentation; clarity of communication; appropriateness of media strategy and level of skill displayed through the work presented at all stages of the design process; technical documentation

**Engagement:** the active participation in studio activities, leadership, collaboration, group discussions and reviews.
A student must earn a letter grade of C or better in order for the course to count towards a degree in the School of Architecture and to progress into the next studio. A letter grade of C- will not satisfy degree requirements.

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

A/A- Excellent
Project surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, visual language, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. Project is complete on all levels.

B+/B/B- Above Average
Project is thorough, well presented, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in effort to resolve required projects. Project is complete on all levels and demonstrates potential for excellence.

C+/C Average
Project meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class and not pursued with dedication and rigor. Project is incomplete in one or more areas.

C-/D+/D/D- Poor
Project is incomplete. Basic grasp of skill is lacking, visual clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required competence and knowledge base.

F Fail
Project is unresolved. Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. Note that this grade will be assigned when students have excessive unexcused absences.

X Excused Incomplete
Can be given only for legitimate reasons of illness or family emergency. Simply not completing work on time is not an adequate cause for assigning this evaluation. It may only be used after consultation with the Associate Deans' offices and with an agreement as to a new completion date. Work must be completed before the second week of the next semester in which the student is enrolling, according to the School of Architecture policy.

ATTENDANCE
Punctual and regular attendance is mandatory. Participation is expected. With three (3) unexcused absences, the student's final grade for the course will be lowered by a full letter grade. The final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Aside from religious observances, absences are only excused with written documentation of a medical issue or family emergency. The student is responsible for
completing work missed due to excused absences and initiating communication with the instructor to
determine due dates.

If a student is late (5 minutes after the start of class) three (3) times, it will be counted as one (1) unexcused
absence. Students should notify the instructor prior to class if lateness or absence is known in advance. Students
must notify instructors directly regarding lateness or absences; Asking a classmate to inform the instructor is not
acceptable.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES
A student shall be excused from attending classes of other required activities, including examinations, for the
observance of a religious holy day, including travel for the purpose. A student whose absence is excused under
this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete
an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy
requires students to notify each of their instructors as far in advance of the absence as possible so that
arrangements can be made.

By UT Austin policy, you must notify the instructor of the pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the
date of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, an 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.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Students who violate University policy on academic integrity are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the
possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the
individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic integrity will be strictly
enforced. Refer to the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website for official University policies and
procedures on academic integrity: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php. University
Code of Conduct: http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct

CARE PROGRAM
Counselors in Academic Residence (CARE) Program places licensed mental health professionals within the
colleges or schools they serve in order to provide better access to mental health support for students who are
struggling emotionally and/or academically.

Laura Dannenmaier (LCSW) is the CARE Program Director and is the assigned CARE counselor for the School of
Architecture. Faculty and staff may refer students to the CARE counselor or students may directly reach out to
her.

Laura Dannenmaier | BTL 114B | (512) 471-3115
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students with disabilities who require special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time.
http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/

SECURITY, SAFETY, AND THE STUDIO
The studio is an exceptional learning environment. Since it is a place for all, it necessitates the careful attention to the needs of everyone. All spraying of fixative, spray paint, or any other substance should be done in the shop. Security is a necessary component for a studio that is accessible to you and your colleagues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Do not leave your studio without your studio key and do not leave your studio unlocked. Hold yourself and your studiomates accountable for the security of your shared space.

BCAL
Concerns regarding the safety or behavior of fellow students, Teaching Assistants (TA), or Professors can be reported to the Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050. Calls can be made anonymously. If something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION
In the case of emergency evacuation:
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Students should familiarize themselves with all exit doors of each classroom and building they may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Reentry into a building is prohibited unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services offices.
- Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency.