Gulf Coast DesignLab – Public Interest Design Advanced Design Studio

Instructor: Coleman Coker, Professor of Practice

Course Description: The semester’s work incorporates a Public Interest Design approach that is part of the Gulf Coast DesignLab’s mission gulfcoastdesignlab.org. Through community-based engagement using a design build methodology you will become better prepared for professional practice through: 1) learning how to effectively engage your stakeholder and communicate design intention for an appropriate project used by the public; 2) increasing your knowledge of architectural processes through: a) material analyses that meets your stakeholder’s needs; b) craftful material detailing that expresses the poetic quality of your design; c) become familiar with contract documents development; d) budgeting / scheduling evaluations; e) developing means and methods to meet applicable codes; 3) gaining the satisfaction of helping increase eco-literacy for those on the Gulf Coast impacted by climate change.

Stakeholder: the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) of Houston https://galvbay.org/. GBF’s mission is threefold: 1) promote science-based environmental education for the public, ranging from school children to public officials, so they recognize the positive quality-of-life benefits healthy ecological systems provide; 2) expand conservation and restoration efforts by working closely with other interested partners around the Bay; 3) foster research and monitoring of Galveston Bay by training citizen scientists to augment professional efforts while aiding in watershed planning.

Design Problem: the GBF recently purchased property overlooking the bay on which to build their new headquarters. In the midst of their capital campaign, this project is scheduled to be built within the next five years. You will help plan for this by designing and building an outdoor environmental education pavilion that can be used immediately. Your design is intended to accommodate thirty guests participating in the stakeholder’s environmental education programs that take place several times each week. The design is to be architecturally inspiring and reflect the aspirations of your stakeholder as they make a better place for all.

Travel: Several field trips will take place during the semester. The first will be to meet your stakeholder, determine their needs and investigate / document the place where you’ll work. You’ll return a second time to present your design and get approval from your stakeholder. And finally, there will an extended stay of 12-14 days at the end of the semester to install your built work. The stakeholder will cover your travel / lodging expenses while off campus.

Pedagogic Objectives: Through a public interest design approach nurture more diverse and poetic ways to: 1) develop your design skills through learning to better communicate with a stakeholder; 2) recognize that each design is intrinsically part of and responsive to its larger social and environmental context; 3) explore and express qualities of materiality, place and the temporal; 4) implement your newfound knowledge through an applied research approach.

Required Material: You will need what's typically required in design studio along with incidental drawing items such as graphite pencils, charcoal, illustration board, drawing pads and typical model-making material. Along with these each student is required to furnish their own: tape measure, speed square, utility belt, hard hat, safety vest, etc. If you don't already have these, instructions as to what's required will be given.

Required Texts: Selected and provided by instructor.

Prerequisites: verify with your advisor that you have taken required courses necessary for entrance into the studio.

Office hours: 10am -1pm T, W, F and by appointment, room GOL 2.202 / ccoker@austin.utexas.edu

Shop Requirements: Students in this course must have taken EHS’s on-line training and pass a short exam. As this training is supplemental to SOA’s woodshop training, no one is excluded or grandfathered from the requirement; both are required in order to use the woodshop’s tools and equipment. As part of the school’s efforts to comply with this mandate, the woodshop has a card reader installed at the entrance. Those who have taken the on-line EHS training will be able to use gain access to the woodshop during operating hours by simply swiping their UT ID cards at the door; those who have not taken the on-line training will not be allowed to enter the woodshop. No exceptions can be made. If you haven't completed this training class and testing it can be accessed at: (https://utdirect.utexas.edu/ehs/class.WBX?scourse_comp=0&s_course_prefix=OH&s_course_number=0500)
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
- **Collaborative and Leadership Skills**: Demonstrated through active engagement in all activities of the studio

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-studio-culture](https://soa.utexas.edu/programs/architecture/architecture-studio-culture)

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
**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 in to the next studio. A letter grade of C- will not satisfy degree requirements.

**Studio Course Grading Guide:**

**Grading:** Establishing grades for projects of a creative nature is a more complex matter than grading in other academic areas. While each project contains certain quantifiable elements by which it may be evaluated, a significant portion of each grade is derived from a broader, more subjective set of issues. Grading for studio courses is broken into three components for each given mark:

30% Concept: Grasping and implementing the ideas behind exercises, combined with an appropriate process of inquiry and completion of those exercises.

30% Process: the consistent and rigorous testing and advancement of design ideas that result in a refined resolution and completion of designed work.

40% Resolution: mature demonstration of competence, completeness and finesse of a final design through graphic representation, physical modeling, mockups, oral presentation and artifact making, which not only presents a broad conceptual basis for the final work but also indicates a thorough grasp of detail and economy in the competent execution of the evidence-based research work.

Your work in these three areas will be evaluated on its evolution and thoroughness over the semester.

**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 you 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 you are enrolling, according to 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 (15 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](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php). University Code of Conduct: [http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct](http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct)

**Mental Health and Support Services:** Taking care of your general well-being is an important step in being a successful student. If stress, test anxiety, racing thoughts, feeling unmotivated, or anything else is getting in your way, there are options available for help:

- In-house CARE counselor (see below)
- For immediate support
  - Visit/call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC):
    - M-F 8am-5pm | SSB, 5th floor | 512-471-3515 | [cmhc.utexas.edu](http://cmhc.utexas.edu)
    - CMHC Crisis Line:
      - 24/7 | 512-471-2255 | [cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html)
- Free services at CMHC:
  - Brief assessments and referral services: [cmhc.utexas.edu/gettingstarted.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/gettingstarted.html)
  - Mental health & wellness articles: [cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html)
  - MindBody Lab: [cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html)
  - Classes, workshops, and groups: [cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html)

**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.
**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/](http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/)

**Campus Carry:** Texas law permits individuals who have obtained a concealed handgun license (CHL) to carry their loaded, concealed weapon in university buildings on campus. The university has determined certain sensitive areas and buildings where concealed weapons will be prohibited. All students are to be familiar with and abide by the publically displayed campus policies on the school’s official website.

**Security, Safety and Sustainability:** 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.

The studio is an opportunity to apply sustainability principles, being mindful to recycle and reuse to reduce material consumption at UTSOA. Recyclable materials should be placed in blue bins or any other containers with white bags. The Material Exchange, a give-and-take system for students to donate materials and take what they need for studio and fabrication coursework, is available throughout the semester to all UT students in the UTSOA Technology Lab. All unwanted, reusable materials should be brought to the Material Exchange station in the Technology Lab at the end of the semester.

**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](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency).