Good —
Well,
Better.
| UT Austin | ARC696 | M, W — 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM |
| School of Architecture | Good — Well, Better. | F — 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM |

Instructor
Piergianna Mazzocca
Emergent Scholar in Design
A history of space is inevitably tied to the history of bodies. All the ideas that gave the human body its outline, its appearance, and explained its internal mechanisms have also shaped the terrain upon which architecture was edified. A healthy, clean, and fit body meant a hygienic, purified, and ventilated space. In this carefully contrived interchangeability, medicine became the engine of a civilizing process that sought for an optimal distribution of individuals, places, rooms, and artifacts.

So, a history of architecture brings into play a more complex history, that of our bodily experiences and how they are structured. More specifically, the history of modernity is defined by narratives about progress that refer back to the quest of regulating the body by setting the well-being and the health of the population as its ultimate goal. In the 18th century, the politics of health emerged at the intersection of a new economy of assistance and management of the social body. And since this epoch, everyday spaces and objects have become constant agents of medicalization. If medicine was integrated into the economic and political management of society, so, too, did architecture.

Thus, to study the medicalization of architecture means to survey the intentions behind every object, every substance, and every word used to describe the clues about illness and the pursuit of health we see embedded in the spaces we inhabit. In every surface that turns into a ventilated corridor, a volume into a well-tempered room, ideas are crafted into materials where pathologies—or the fight against them—are registered and where the truth about the human condition becomes visible. In short, such an investigation reveals the history of how architecture was instrumental to achieve the modern ideal of progress through the medicalization of the population, of cities, and nature by chasing the always elusive common good.

Given today’s emphasis on wellness and well-being, it is incumbent on us to wonder about our past attitudes towards similar issues to understand how these preoccupations have been culturally and architecturally constructed. In architecture, strategies developed to spatialize care and therapeutic needs are manifold. From the garden city to the Ville-Radieuse, from the sanatorium to the roof terrace, architecture’s complicity with the betterment of our bodies, people, and societies stretches beyond those typologies that have dealt with health care directly to others were their relationship is not always so apparent or direct.

These concerns with architecture’s representation of goodness and its biopolitical applications will be at the core of the studio’s focus. We will learn to read space and buildings by interrogating the medicalizing processes at the core of certain architectural types while trying to rethink the gap between built matter and the collective ambitions used to justify its presence in the first place.

To do so, the studio interrogates the organization of welfare and public assistance in the urban context of Chicago, Illinois. Students are encouraged to respond to this collective site by questioning the spatial types that directly or indirectly deal with the city’s medicalizing processes.

Then, by taking these types as a given, students will project strategies that reconsider their established arrangement of space and the expected consequences these have in the construction of a new concept of public health. By doing so, the studio aims at expanding on architecture’s methods of analysis when confronting past and current attitudes towards health and the built environment and how these can help us project a more sustainable relationship with our bodies, our dwellings, and our cities.
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Methodology

The studio is interested in design-research projects as critical forms of documentation and of representation. Therefore, to document, to represent and to project is seen in this studio as essential tasks towards a deeper understanding of urban spatial production at all scales. The broader pedagogical ambition is to challenge conventional definitions of architecture and to advance inventive approaches while enabling critical action in the built environment. Our tactics will explicitly question predominant interpretations of architecture and of the built environment as merely physical constructs. The studio is organized into two parts that strongly inform and relate to one another. Each part is framed to foster the student’s ability to take an architectural position and research assumption in terms of the studio’s thematic focus. Both parts are preceded by an initial assignment that seeks to introduce the studio’s ambition. The end result of the studio will be the culmination of the following assignments:

Introductory Assignment

This first assignment draws from Charles and Ray Eames’ video, Powers of Ten. By setting a fixed frame and by presenting the content inside the frame in scalar intervals that increase or decrease on factors of ten, the film deals with “the relative size of things in the universe and the effect of adding a zero.” This assignment proposes the use of such a method (fixed frame, scaled content) as an analytical and projective tool. Students are asked to produce 2 series of 3 11x11 inches plan drawings of their bedrooms—the plan should be a perspectival view—each with increasing scale.

The first series—the analysis—explores the room as it is. Starting from the scale of the room (scaled 1:50 in the first drawing), students are to depict their rooms in all their detail—from the tiled, or parqueted flooring, to the objects that populate it (plants, chairs, lamps, stuffed animals, etc.) More and more detail will be added as the scale of the following drawings increases. Since the drawings should be full bleed, information of the rooms adjacent to it, the pieces of the city outside the room’s window, or the fluffy rug next to the bed should also be incorporated. These meticulous observations of the same space seek to reveal the connections such a space has when drawn on different scales, the information we add or leave behind, and the degree of commitment the students have with the object they represent.

For the second series—the projection—students will be asked to modify something in their rooms. This modification should occur first in a drawing where it has the most immediate repercussions and, secondly, students should argue and anticipate how these changes alter the rest of the drawings. Finally, the rest of the drawings on that series should also be modified to represent such a change.

Introduction

Part 1

Assignments

(1 Week)

Part 2

Assignments

(2 Weeks)

Surveying (3 Weeks)

Synthesis (1 Week)
Part 1 —

This first part uses two methods of analysis to understand our studio’s context and to discern possible design strategies: the collection and the survey. Both methods—the collection and the survey—propose the gathering of information and its reinterpretation to produce relevant knowledge about the studio’s theme.

These methods will allow students to develop a research statement that surveys and collects disparate historical, territorial and physical information together. The conclusion of this initial part of the studio will be the production of a booklet and maps that bring all the student’s disparate research into a collective cartographic biography of Chicago.

Assignment 1 —
Collecting

Grouped in pairs, students will define and identify architectural and urban types described as public forms of health in the context of Chicago. These types will be used as the site of their research. The goal is to methodologically dissect and ultimately connect similarities between spatial relationships and the systems that govern them through the collection of documents that speak of their creation and how they have been historically constructed.

Firstly, students are asked to collect different media, documents, and archives (drawings, pictures, paintings, advertisements, etc.) relevant to their chosen type. By scrutinizing the collected information, students will gain expertise in the materials, uses, and representations emblematic of their chosen type.

Secondly, students will be asked to interpret the collected information by redrawing it, being aware of highlighting relevant pieces of information that become crucial to understand their interpretation of the chosen object, system, and technology. They are also encouraged to add new information to represent their findings.

Assignment 2 —
Surveying

The second assignment continues with the exploration of the selected types by considering contextual specificities. Continuing to work in pairs, students will document and analyze a specific fragment of the city (relative to their type) by using maps as tools for research. The assignment aims to gather information by observing, documenting and drawing physical elements found in specific fragments of the city. Moreover, the survey should also cover the relationships with other types, existing infrastructure, and the landscape. After an initial phase in which students define their mapping and surveying protocol, they will later produce a series of maps where each student’s pieces and fragments of the city are portrayed as a final document of their survey. As opposed to conventional maps of the city, these maps should provoke speculative explorations. In these maps, students will not only draw their fragments as they appear in real life but should allude to their research statement.

Lastly, students will be asked to gather all of the collected and redrawn information into a booklet, offering insights on their chosen types. Instead of showing their collected information as disparate pieces, students are encouraged to present them as a narrative, using the booklet format as the medium to disseminate their findings. This process will transform the collected data into one single document that summarizes a research statement and that will become the basis for the following assignments. The assemblage of the booklet and its curation should serve as a critical reflection of the collected material.
Part 2 —
Projecting and Synthesis.

Assignment 3 —
Projecting

In the second part of the studio, each student will develop a design strategy for an architectural project that further expands on their research statement. Knowledge gained from the previous 2 assignments will form the basis to further develop design strategies. Students must engage with their selected fragment of the city while acknowledging, at the same time, that their proposals actively engage with the studio’s theme. The program and architectural object designed by the students should respond to their selected types—by reinterpretation, modification, mutation, augmentation, exaggeration, etc.—and the frame imposed by their research statement.

Objectives —

— To gain an understanding of the architectural project as a disciplinary research tool
— To reveal connections between architectural ideas and urban relationships by using a research thesis as a methodological device to approach design
— To interpret findings gained through speculative research and to translate them into projective designs
— To perform rigorous research on the specificity of the project context, not only its physical attributes but also its regulatory, cultural, social, and economic properties
— To consistently sustain a coherent design strategy and argument

Assignment 4 —
Synthesis

Students will assemble in Assignment 1 Booklet all the work done during the studio. This booklet should provide enough information about the projects’ ambitions, theoretical constructs, methodologies implemented, and process documentation. The collection of booklets will become a final collection about the studio’s claim.


Grading Criteria

Students will receive regular feedback and criticism throughout the semester. Simple fulfillment of requirements is insufficient for successful completion of the course. Grades will be assessed based on the degree of innovation, ambition, intellectual accomplishment and craft of the project as determined by the course instructors.

Final grades are contingent upon documentation submitted at the semester’s conclusion. Instructions as to the proper format and final deadline for such submission will be provided and must be met for successful completion of the course. Students are reminded that it is their individual responsibility to guard against the loss of their work, particularly digital files.

Final grades for the course will be based upon the following standards of assessment (inflected +/- where appropriate):

A Excellent work — Project surpasses expectations in terms of originality, conceptual rigor and craft. Work is complete in all regards.

B Good work — Project is thorough, well represented, diligently pursued, and work is complete in all regards.

C Required work — Project meets the minimum requirements but lacks rigor in one or more areas.

D Poor work — Project contribution is insufficient. Level-appropriate skills are lacking and work is incomplete in one or more regards.

F Unacceptable work — Project contribution is unacceptable. Minimum objectives are not met. Work is incomplete in multiple regards.

Attendance & Absence Policies

Class begins at 1:00 am and ends at 5:00 pm — except for Fridays on which class ends at 4:00 PM. Punctual and regular attendance is mandatory and required for successful completion of the course. 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.

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.

Deadlines

Established deadlines must be met for the successful completion of the course and are not flexible.

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 un-
derstanding of and commitment to the
school’s core values — broadminded-
ness, 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/architec-
ture/architecture-studio-culture

Academic Integrity

Students who violate University policy on
academic integrity are subject to disci-
plinary penalties, including the possibility
of failure in the course and/or dismissal
from the University. Since such dishonest-
y harms the individual, all students, and
the integrity of the University, policies
on academic integrity will be strictly en-
forced. Refer to the Student Conduct and
Academic Integrity website for official
University policies and procedures on
academic integrity:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/con-
duct/academicintegrity.php

University Code of Conduct
http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-infor-
mation/the-university/#universitycodeof-
conduct

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 fixa-
tive, 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 ac-
countable for the security of your shared
space.
The studio is an opportunity to apply
sustainability principles, being mindful
to recycle and reuse to reduce materi-
als 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 materi-
als and take what they need for studio
and fabrication coursework, is available
throughout the semester to all UT stu-
dents 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.

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 announce-
ment 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 evac-
uation 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 un-
less given instructions by the following:
Austin Fire Department, The University
of Texas at Austin Police Department, or
Fire Prevention Services offices. Infor-
mation regarding emergency evacuation
routes and emergency procedures can
be found at:

https://emergency.utexas.edu/
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. Abby Simpson (LCSW) 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. Abby Simpson, LCSW | BTL 114B | 512-471-3115

https://cmhc.utexas.edu/CARE_simpson.html

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/

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 above)

For immediate support

Visit/call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC):

M-F 8am-5pm | SSB, 5th floor | 512-471-3515
http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

CMHC Crisis Line:
24/7 | 512-471-2255 |
https://cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html

Free services at CMHC:

Brief assessments and referral services: https://cmhc.utexas.edu/getting_started.html

Mental health & wellness articles: http://cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html

MindBody Lab: http://cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html

Classes, workshops, and groups: http://cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html

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.

**Syllabus Change Policy**

Please note that information contained within the course syllabus, with the exception of absence policies, are subject to change with reasonable advance notice as deemed appropriate by the course instructor(s).

**Contact Information**

O
West Mall Building, Room 4.212
Office hours by appointment
E
Piergianna.Mazzocca@austin.utexas.edu
ARC696
Good —
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