DENSITY | austin

In 1900, 10% of the world’s population lived in cities. In 2006, the United Nations announced that the majority of the world’s population – almost 3.3 billion – lived in urban rather than rural areas. In 2050, it is estimated that 75% or more will live in urban areas. Today, we exist in ‘city regions’ (more than 1,000,000), ‘megacity regions’ (more than 10,000,000) and ‘megapolitan city regions’ (more still).

Density “as distinct from congestion promotes engagement. Interaction, made possible by proximity, is crucial and far more difficult to sustain where things are spread out across great distances...” (Alex Krieger, “The Virtues of Cities,” 1995) Density is more than units and numbers; it is a complex relationship between people and things that constitute how a city functions. Increasing density in the city may be one of the most effective approaches to sustainability.

Austin is one of the five large urban areas that makes up the I-35 Corridor, or I-35 Megalopolis. It is one of the fastest growing regions in North America. With a current population of ~930,000 in the city and ~2 million in the 5–county metro area (2017), Austin is expected to add over 1 million people in the next 40 years. Where? How?

We will investigate these contemporary urban issues at the scale of urban and building design.
PREREQUISITES_ ARC 320D, ARC/ARI 221K, and ARC 415K with a grade of at least C in each.

CURRICULUM FLAG_ This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage students in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing a student with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to the student’s major. At least one-third of the grade will be based on independent investigation and presentation of one’s own work.

INTERMEDIATE DESIGN STUDIO_ Students pursuing the Bachelor of Architecture must complete four Intermediate Design Studios during their second and third years. Building on the Foundation Design Studios taken during the first year, the goal of the Intermediate Studios is to prepare students for Advanced Design Studios in their fourth and fifth years. Each Intermediate Studio will be structured around one of four broad themes of inquiry (Operational, Environmental, Integration, and Speculation) and will offer a critical framework and vocabularies for design and development into key issues emphasized in the theme. Intermediate Studios will also serve as a platform to prepare students for the range of offerings of the Advanced Studios (e.g. Comprehensive, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, etc.). Intermediate Studios will follow a similar structure, but each instructor will individually determine the scope and design problem for each studio.

THEME: ENVIRONMENTAL_ This studio emphasizes architecture as a response to context: architecture and landscape architecture in the city and in nature, urban issues, housing, making place. This studio should take advantage that students are concurrently enrolled in or have already completed the course Site Design.

STUDIO STRUCTURE + SCHEDULE_ Our work will include the following formats:

Case Study_ is a form of qualitative research employing an intensive study of an executed design in a specific context. Through first-hand experiences (sometimes) and references, we will research housing and mixed-use typologies in order to understand the impact of different designers, sites, constraints and culture.

Analysis_ is a close examination, often a separation into components, which may provide a deeper understanding. A variety of analytic techniques will be used to better understand the particularities of the city and the corresponding site. The analysis is meant to be generative in understanding and, eventually, designing the city.

Research_ is to study something methodically. We will investigate “urbanism” (the characteristic way of life for city dwellers) from varying perspectives including designer, city official, writer and so on.

Urban and Building Strategies_ includes designing the relationship, or play, between the various components that constitute housing. The studio will engage multiple scales -large (city), medium (building) and small (unit)- in order to understand the impact of the small in the big and the big in the small. In particular, we will focus on multi–family housing in areas that transition between residential neighborhoods and activity corridors.

and...

Dialogue_ is the exchange of ideas or positions on a particular issue. All Intermediate II studios will be engaging similar questions, while specific projects and sites though will differ. To enhance dialogue, please look for opportunities –formal and informal– to engage your fellow classmates in discussion.
Assignment #1: CASE STUDY_ Research and Analysis (2 weeks)  
wk 1–3 _15% of final grade (team)  
review: 01.31.18  
Using team research as well as individual in–class exercises, the 2 weeks will be devoted to inquiry and speculation. In studying various architects, we will examine both text (writing) and image (building) to better understand housing as a typology. The efforts of each team will provide a collective catalogue of information for reference throughout the semester.

Assignment #2: UNIT_ Part to Whole (2.5 weeks)  
wk 3–5 _20% of final grade (pair)  
review: 02.19.18  
Building upon the first assignment, the exercise will explore and question the components of housing relative to the growing (and evolving) population of Austin, TX. While we will seek to understand the assemblage, we will focus on the design of the housing unit, both interior and exterior, in relation to the needs of the occupant(s).

Assignment #3: URBAN + BUILDING DESIGN (9 weeks)  
wk 6–16 _65% of final grade (independent)  
reviews: 03.09.18, 04.02.18 + 04.16.18  
For the remainder of the semester, the studio will engage the challenges of accommodating significant increases in population while striving to maintain the complex character, or texture, the city. Following an analysis of our specific sites, we will focus on designing ‘multi–family’ housing in East Austin adjacent to the Manor Road corridor.

FINAL REVIEWS: MAY 2, 3, 4, 2018  
PORTFOLIO REVIEWS: TBD

LEARNING OUTCOMES_ Students will be exposed to a series of learning goals several times and from different angles over the four Intermediate Studio sequence. The goal is that similar issues are repeated from studio to studio but from different angles, allowing students to find, within the diversity of the topics, a “common thread” as they go through the sequence of the four studios. The level of expectation will grow as students go from being introduced to an issue, to becoming competent at it. Some issues would be only 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  
• Basic grasp of accessibility and egress  
• Collaborative and Leadership Skills: Demonstrated through the 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

DESIGN CONVERSATIONS  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, etc). 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 (typically 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 in to 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](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. 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. Please leave a message if she is unavailable by phone.
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.  

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 studio–mates accountable for the security of your shared space.

SUSTAINABILITY_ 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. Our studio will participate as a “test studio” with the Material Exchange this 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.

RESOURCES_ A variety of information and tools will be used during the course of the semester.