Advanced Urban Design Studio: London
ARC 693K/ARC 696/ARC 561R/ CRP 685D/LAR696
Instructor: Simon Atkinson PhD RIBA, MRTPI

Background
This studio follows much of the format adopted for the Summer London Studio/Practicum run previously, but with some differences. The studio is an integrated studio open to each discipline in the School, and operating at an advanced level. We will be working on a live and significant project in inner London, will be reviewed by local officials and stakeholders, where work is submitted when complete to help guide their future design decision making. As such, the studio is open to: Masters in Urban Design, Architecture, Community & Regional Planning, Landscape Architecture, Sustainable Design, Historic Preservation, and Interior Design, and is an advanced B.Arch. studio.

Introduction
Brixton, London, is a well-known inner-city township in south central London. Historically, it was a genteel neighborhood with one of the first department stores, later becoming a compact rail suburb, and in the latter 20th century becoming known as one of the most ethnically diverse city environments in the world, characterized by a complexity of markets, busy streets, public housing, and a diverse cluster of job centers and amenities. Increased pressure was placed on Brixton with the introduction of the Victoria line, offering an underground station, while limited investment has taken place there over many years, and now social and economic pressures are indicating that the richness of this urban tapestry could be eroded.

Community groups, working with the local authority, Lambeth Borough Council, have put together a framework of values and possibilities that they have been working on since 2014. We have now been invited to work with them to aim to realize the many objectives that they have put forward in aiming towards a better future. This has involved community groups, stakeholders, shareholders, and school children. Your work will require the careful development of strategies for a future Brixton, and will be guided through team work. At the same time, the multitude of needs and opportunities offers scope for a rich variety of individual projects.

As an indication, here are some of suggestions put forward from community meetings showing a need for: start-ups, enterprise, and localized economy; markets and retail; maintaining history and culture; environmental, social and economic sustainability; maintaining a mix of old and new; affordable housing; employment and education; a new rail station; new
public places and maintaining key landmarks; bike parking; continuing community involvement. One key statement that came out of the workshop with high school students is as follows:

“…that it becomes a safe, clean, happy, affordable and accessible place for all people.”

The initial impact of Brixton is that you face a complexity of markets and traffic, as it is in many senses a competing hub of activity. It is clear that there needs to be carefully approaches towards calming, and perhaps restricting traffic while developing a network of spatial opportunity which then leads to a variety of new infill projects, particularly focused on housing and job creation. Simultaneously, this approach needs to develop a careful understanding of the uniqueness of this context in social, cultural and historic turns, as a basis to intervention, and in opposition to a more comprehensive and willful approach that could easily be adopted. This is the context to the studio beginning with a series of interdisciplinary team projects that will be reviewed locally, and then leading to individual studies that feed back into the team project, developing it further, prior to development of an overall presentation and report.

Initially, studio teams will produce designs for the center of Brixton, an ethnically diverse, inner city, dense urban area. The challenge is to redefine the area, its buildings, and urban places without losing its rich historic and social integrity. This offers scope for a sensitive urban design approach, but also one where skills in interpreting and adapting historic structures, urban infill, urban housing, the need for design of a new rail station, the design of significant urban places, markets, and pedestrian-friendly streets each will be subjects developed individually by team members. The studio is a capstone urban design studio, an advanced architecture studio, a planning practicum, an advanced landscape architecture studio, and an interiors and historic preservation studio.

A financially supported and voluntary field visit takes place September 14-20, with on site work, visits to professional offices, and significant new projects in London. The studio works alongside a three-credit hour seminar “The Design of New Communities” which students can register for or attend. The seminar informs the studio with case studies taken from the London region, and which will be documented by those in the seminar.

**The Design Project**

Aims to: carry out comprehensive site survey work; establish values in design through criteria and diagrams; evolve scenarios of future outcomes as integral to the design process; develop a preferred plan and design that meets stated criteria; and addresses a competition format graphic presentation.

The subject matter is a live project in central London for a problematic context involving vacant sites, historic fabric, transit, problems of mobility, and lack of sense of place, or green infrastructure.

The studio will work in teams, but include individual projects.

The studio is open to students from Architecture, Historic Preservation, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, Interior Design, and Community and Regional Planning. It begins in Austin followed by a field visit to London, with a daily pattern of visits and project work. The studio will then be completed in Austin.

Visit to London:

1) Examines recent design projects related to interiors, new buildings, urban landscapes, city design, and urban conservation;

2) Carries out office visits to leading design and planning practices in the city, plus field visits to neighborhood and housing design projects.

3) Undertakes fieldwork for the design project, a live project selected to examine sustainable practices in urban design, landscape architecture, and architecture. A particular emphasis is placed upon design within an inner-city context; the roles of public place, design of low carbon footprint housing environments; and the design of environments that promote health and wellbeing.
The studio aims to offer a rigorous introduction to vocabularies, case studies, and design preferences for sustainable environments. It offers a platform to address design within an inner city context, and to undertake a competition form presentation. Students will begin with research and design development, followed by site visits in teams, building a vocabulary of information related to location and sustainable design practices. This then leads to individual work where more detailed design understanding for architecture, urban landscape architecture, or planning can be develop.

As the Planning Practicum the course will serve as an intensive, and applied research exercise where students apply the skills they have learned to a real-world planning problem in an urban setting.

**Course Objectives:**
- Understand the roles and potential of each discipline in an urban environment through redevelopment;
- Be able to draw upon a range of tools and approaches useful in interdisciplinary work;
- Be familiar with important cases in design through design collaboration;
- Design a redevelopment strategy through a critical process of analysis and case study evaluation;
- Gain a grasp of basic skills in graphic communication for the design process.

**Example Projects**
Urban Design: Urban designers will continue with the overall team project and then specialize in, for example, public space infrastructure; urban housing; sustainable design strategies.

Architecture: Project examples are urban housing; a mixed-use building with start-up work incubator, retail plus housing; a retail/marketplace; a center for the arts; adaptive re-use of historic fabric; design of a rail station; design for a city hotel.

Landscape: Examples include: public space design; a green street strategy; ecology park; water harvesting/retention landscape; a “greening the city” strategy.

Planning: Examples include development of community support structures; an urban sustainable housing proposal; a “greening” the city strategy; the development of 3D animation and communication graphics, an urban conservation strategy.

Preservation: Projects include: an adaptive building reuse; inventory and proposals for historic buildings and places, and proposal for a conservation area.

Sustainable Design: Design for walking, bike, and pollution free environments; sustainable housing; progressive waste design.

Interior Design: Adaption of a 1974 recreation center; market interiors; urban housing.

**Tentative Timetable**
Assignment 1: Brixton strategy city design and presentation Aug. 28 – Sept. 30
London visit Sept. 27 – Oct. 3
London presentation Sept. 30

Assignment 2: Design revisions and development Sept. 28 - Oct. 14 Presentation

Assignment 3: Individual project Oct. 14 – Dec 5 Final Review
Report submission Dec. 11
Grading Policy

A+ Exceptional (the university computer does not accept beyond an A, but I will notify anyone in this category)

A Work is inventive, appropriate, shows verbal and visual ability, is conceptually vigorous, and insightful

A- As above, but with scope for further development

B+ Strong, well researched and thorough work, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and completes all work. Demonstrates potential for excellence.

B Strong, well researched and thorough work, diligently pursued, and successfully completed.

B- Strong, well researched and thorough work, diligently pursued. One or more assignments or projects requiring further development.

C Assignments and/or projects are not pursued with dedication or vigor. Assignments or projects are incomplete in one or more areas.

F Unacceptable work

X Offered where there are clear personal circumstances indicating that it would be inappropriate to offer a final grade at that time.

Attendance
You are expected to attend each class session. A student with two non-excused absences may be asked to leave the class.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement
The University of Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-6441 TTY.

Academic Integrity Statement
Strict standards of academic honesty will be enforced according to the University policy on academic integrity. All written work handed in by you is considered to be your own original work, prepared without unauthorized assistance. I expect that a student's name on any assignment means that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid.