Design in the Dynamics of Urban Landscapes – Winter Term

Syllabus

This course will help you establish and continue to build a foundation of urban ecology knowledge as the basis for your design interventions in urban landscapes. In this course, you will use urban ecology to help you:

- envision metropolitan development and urban design across scales,
- use your understanding of environmental functions to contribute to spatial decisions,
- use your understanding of cultural values and social norms to propose more sustainable landscape patterns,
- think beyond distinct categories of natural and developed landscapes, private and public land, brownfields and greenfields, open space and developed land, high density and low density.

The course asks you to consider the possibilities for design intervention in an urban place dynamic in which the landscape is constantly and simultaneously changing at different scales that have different but related drivers. This urban place dynamic includes ecological, atmospheric, hydrological and geological factors; global trade and financial markets; water, waste, energy, communication, and transportation infrastructure maintenance and construction; fate and transport of pollutants and contaminants; economic use, design, development, occupancy and management, and abandonment of landscapes by different communities and for different purposes; and different aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural interpretations and interventions by people who “own” the place in different ways. Among these drivers is design – not only as an intervention in this dynamic - but also as an imaginative proposal that inherently opens possibilities for future landscapes.

Third year MLA students in this course will develop a design intervention in Shenzen, China, as part of the International Schindler Award competition: Access to Urbanity: Designing the City as a Resource. Individual MLA students will enter the competition, crediting their student consultants and faculty and GSI advisors. We will continue to draw on our textbook, Urban Ecology (Forman, 2014) as a shared knowledge foundation and platform for design critique.


**COURSE GRADES- Winter Term**

Shenzen Competition Submission – 50%
Stand-up Presentation – 10%
Final Portfolio Version – 40%

**Total 100%**

**NOTE:** Students receiving a higher grade for their Final Portfolio Version of their project than for the Shenzen Submission versions will receive that higher grade for their Shenzen Submission. 

Class participation, with particular emphasis on being thoroughly prepared with new drawings for critique on studio working days, is required and may affect your grade by as much as one full grade level. Late work will receive a reduced grade.
Course Schedule
January 7 – 9. Individual review meetings of work completed Fall Term to help you prepare your competition submission.
January 12-14 – Work days.
January 16 - Office pin-up for critique.
January 21 – Office pin-up for discussion of panel content and layout.
January 22-30 – Work days.
**January 31 - Submit your entry to the International Schindler Award competition. (and simultaneously as pdfs to your CTools dropbox)**

**Feb. 2** - Stand-up presentation of your entry to the practice community.
Feb. 4 - Discussion around your personal goals for portfolio ready work.
Feb 6 - 11 Final project revisions and/or graphic product development

**Representation**
February 13- Charette on portfolio representation from the Shenzen project
February 16-23 - Work days
**February 25 – Gallery review of portfolio representations of your projects**
February 27 – 10 am. Portfolio representations due. 1 pm. Student and instructor reflections on the course.