University of Georgia
College of Environment and Design
Spring 2012 – Professor Melcher

LAND 6040 Community and Place Studio

Professor: Katherine Melcher
When: Mondays & Fridays 8 - 11 AM
                Wednesdays 8 – 9:55 AM
Where: 305 Tanner

Office: 510B Caldwell Hall
Office Hours: M & F 11-12 or by appointment.
Phone: (706) 582-2885
E-Mail: kmelcher@uga.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This studio considers the human experience as the starting point of design. Our needs, our perceptions, and our values ultimately inform the way we create places, whether we are aware of it or not. Although human needs, perceptions, and values differ between individuals and groups, our common ground is what defines a community.

We will explore the interrelationship between place and people's behavior, values, and experiences at a variety of scales: neighborhoods, public places, and a community-based project. You will be introduced to research methodologies from the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology, and geography) to develop techniques for analyzing the human aspects of a place. Theoretical precedents will provide an historical understanding of how and why we design places in response to different social, economic, and political conditions. The intent is to build upon design methodologies learned in previous studios and elaborate upon the human element in design.

The studio will be divided into three parts:

Part 1 explores the design of communities, neighborhoods, and cities. How we build where we live is a complex subject combining environmental, economic, and cultural concerns. Often neighborhood design is an utopian expression of our ideal community. This investigation starts with a theoretical overview and case studies and culminates in two neighborhood designs. (individual)

Part 2 introduces social research methods that help us understand how people use space. Methods include environment-behavior studies (psychology), behavior observations, and participation techniques. These methods will be applied to a redesign of publicly-owned space in Athens. (individual)

Part 3 synthesizes our design knowledge into a community-based project: providing a landscape master plan for the Brooklyn/Bethlehem Cemetery in Athens, GA. Awareness of the site's and the community's particular culture and history is critical to this project. (group)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowledge:
- Learn the variety of methodologies that help reveal how humans interact with places.
- Become familiar with urban design and planning terminology and how it relates to the physical form and function of a city.
- Understand how physical communities have developed over time and how design can address current issues facing our communities.
- Develop an understanding and awareness of social issues that impact public spaces such as territoriality, accessibility, control, and security.

Skills:
- Develop an approach to design that responds to people of diverse backgrounds and abilities.
- Use building form, landscape, and systems (transportation, utilities, waterways) to create a neighborhood design that responds to historical, political, and economic contexts.
- Design a public place that grapples with the challenges of democracy in a diverse society.
- Further develop your ability to effectively communicate design ideas through graphic (hand and computer), writing, and presentation skills.

Values:
- Explore how your own vision of an ideal community can be reflected in design.
- Explore how your interpretation of the value of public space in society impacts your design approach.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

The major concepts in this class will be explored through the studio projects, which involve concept development, independent research, sketches and design iterations, pin-ups, critiques, and final presentations. To bring theory and project precedents into the studio, there will be readings, case studies, field trips, lectures, and seminar-style discussions. My hope is that the studio will be a collaborative environment in which you can explore, expand, and refine your own approach to design.

READINGS:
Recommended texts:

The Urban Design Reader. Michael Larice and Elizabeth Macdonald, eds. Routledge, New York: 2007.

The City Reader. 3rd ed. Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout. London: New York, 2003.

Public Places, Urban Spcaes: The Dimensions of Urban Design. 2nd ed. Matthew Carmona, Steve Tiesdell, Tim Heath, and Tanner Oc. Oxford, UK ; Burlington, MA: Architectural Press, 2010.

Time-saver Standards for Urban Design. Donald Watson, Alan J Plattus, and Robert G Shibley. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

You are not required to purchase these books; but they give a good overview of the theory and practice of urban design, and you should refer to them in the library and in class. Additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester as they relate to the class projects; topic specific readings will be suggested to students as they relate to their design projects.

GRADING SYSTEM:
Grading will be based on the following scale:

A = 93-100%   **Excellent (astonish me):** Work reflecting superior design, research,
A- = 90-92.9%   and graphic ability that is logically thought-out and well-presented. Changes
                          or revisions would be minimal.

B+ = 87%-89.9%   **Good (impress me):** Work representing a good understanding of the
B = 83%-86.9%   theory and concepts involved in the project but should be slightly
B- = 80%-82.9%   reworked.

C+ = 77%-79.9%   **Fair (adequate):** Work which indicates a satisfactory understanding
C = 73%-76.9%   and execution of the project. Moderate revisions would be necessary.
C- = 70%-72.9%

D = 60%-69.9%   **Poor:** Work which in incomplete and in the design process and
                          project solutions are poor or inconsistent. Work shows lack of
                          comprehension of subject matter and would require extensive revisions.

F = 59.9%   **Unacceptable**

The grading breakdown is as follows:

Project 1:	Neighborhood Design	30%
Project 2:	Public Place Design	30%
Project 3:	Community-Based Design	30%
In class exercises, attendance and participation		10%

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:
(subject to change)

Jan. 9 – 13	(Week 1)	Design approach and Project 1a (professor out)
Jan. 16		MLK Day (no class)
Jan. 18 – Feb. 13	(Weeks 2 – 5)	Project 1
Feb. 17 – Mar. 9	(Weeks 6 –9)	Project 2
Mar. 12 – 16		Spring break
Mar. 19 – 23	(Week 10)	Project 2 (cont'd.)
Mar. 26 – Apr. 30	(Weeks 11 – 16)	Project 3
Friday, May 4		Final project due on final exam day

COURSE POLICIES:

Class participation: All students shall participate in class activities, complete reading and drawing assignments prior to the due date and come to class prepared so that work can be accomplished during class hours. All students are expected to work in studio during class hours to advance their projects. One to one critique time during studio hours is crucial to completing projects correctly and on time.

Attendance policy: Each student is allowed three "sick days" per semester. Additional absences above the three days are considered unexcused and points will be deducted from your final grade. If illness is a problem for you and you anticipate the need to be out more than three days, you must indicate that to me prior to class time. You are responsible for the work missed in class.

Late work: No late work will be accepted. Assignments must be submitted on the stated due date. If work is not submitted as specified by the instructor a score of zero will be assigned. It is the responsibility of the student to contact their instructor if they know they will be absent for studio deadlines.

Documentation of Student's Work: Students are encouraged to photograph or otherwise document all projects at the end of the semester for possible inclusion in their student portfolio. According to UGA-CED policy; students' class work becomes intellectual property of the College. The University, the School, and the instructor reserved the right to keep your work without the student's approval.

Academic Honesty: As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.