URPL- GP 1620 INTRO TO URBAN PHYSICAL DESIGN

W 6:45 – 8:25PM TISC LC11 (Tisch Hall, 40 West 4th Street)
W 8:35 – 9:35PM WAVE 668, TISC LC19 (Waverly Building, 24 Waverly Place)

Instructors:
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will introduce students to the critical thinking about the design of the built environment at many scales from the design of a park bench to the logic of large citywide systems.

In his essay Where and How does Urban Design Happen? Alex Krieger concludes “Urban design is less a technical discipline than a mind-set among those of varying disciplinary foundations seeking, sharing, and advocating insights about forms of community.”1 The physical form of the city is a result of a multitude of design decisions about built and unbuilt spaces.

Throughout this course you will be introduced to a series of tools to critically observe, analyze, evaluate, and make urban design decisions at different scales. At the end of the semester, you should feel confident to express your own attitude and insights about forms of community and the built environment.

METHODOLOGY

Over the course of the semester, lectures and exercises will move through a variety of urban scales starting at the smallest scale of the human body and our experience of public space in the city. At a medium scale, we will look at the urban block, the relationship between built fabric and street and the way in which built form is regulated.

At the large scale, we will consider a neighborhood and the many uses, buildings and spaces within it. Finally, we will take a look at the extra-large scale to consider city-wide infrastructure systems and the multiple scales of design decisions inherent in them.

Each new exercise will relate to the lecture topic presented that same day. Together they introduce various tools to observe, analyze, diagram and represent urban design decisions. In addition to learning new tools (analog and digital), these exercises invite you to critically reflect on the urban spaces surrounding you and the decisions that lead to the creation of these spaces.

Students will work in teams of 2-3 to combine all exercises into a 5-minute video profile that describes their attitude towards urban design and decision-making about urban physical space.

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While the lectures will draw from a variety of local and global case studies, exercises will focus on two primary locations: Washington Square Park, NYU’s “front lawn” and the neighborhood surrounding the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, an area expected to undergo dramatic transformation to its physical built environment over the next decades.

*Aerial View of Gowanus Canal*

The general structure of class and lab time is as follows:

**Lecture:**
- Review of last week’s exercise
- Lecture of new topic
- Demonstration of new exercise

**Lab:**
- Hands on help with exercise
- Q&A

Each assignment will be submitted digitally using **NYUClasses**. The following material is recommended for creating and submitting the assignments:

- Cell phone or camera for photos and video footage
- Tripod
- Your NYU ID for access to lab computer accounts
- Tape measure
- Pens and pencils for hand drawings, sketching
- Roll of trace paper (12”)
- Sketchbook or paper
- Headphones for audio editing
SCHEDULE

Small: The scale of the human perspective  Tools: observation/ images
9/6   Introduction and overview of the course
       Video  William H. Whyte: The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces
       Lab & Assignment: Exercise 01 - Measure and draw a piece of park furniture

9/13  Guest speaker Shin-Pei Tsay , Gehl Institute
       Reading: Gehl Institute (2017), A Mayor’s Guide to Public Life
       Lab & Assignment: Exercise 02 - Time lapse video of a public space

9/20  Privately-owned Public Space
       Reading: Schmidt, Nemeth and Botsford (2011) The evolution of privately owned public spaces (PDF)
       Lab: Basic Adobe Premiere skills
       Assignment: Contribute a profile, images/video and sketch to www.apops.mas.org

9/23  11:00 AM (Sat) Site visit to Gowanus, Brooklyn

9/27  The Sidewalk as Urban Space
       Reading: Active Design: Shaping the Sidewalk Experience, Chapter 1 (pp. 14-27)
       Lab & Assignment: Sidewalk analysis using Adobe Illustrator

Medium: The urban block and street  Tools: analysis/ maps

10/4  The Street
       Reading: Chapter 1, Global Streets Design Guide (pp.1-17)
       Lab & Assignment: Measure and annotate a Street Section using Adobe Illustrator and Google Earth

10/11 Regulating Design: Bulk and Height Regulations
       Reading: tbd
       Lab & Assignment: Figure Ground Map using ArcGIS

10/18 Masterplans or Urban Design Frameworks
       Reading: David West (2017): Why we don’t like the word masterplan in Architects Journal
       Lab & Assignment: Scale/Fabric comparison using ArcGIS and Google Earth

10/25 Midterm presentation of analysis
Large: Neighborhood

11/1  Gowanus Neighborhood Planning Study
Guest Speaker: Sagi Golan, Senior Urban Designer, Department of City Planning
Lab: Diagrams, Adobe Illustrator
Assignment: Interview with an urban designer*
* Note: you will be given suggestions for interview subjects earlier in the semester and are highly encouraged to contact them as soon as possible to arrange an interview date.

11/8  Urban Design Manifestos
Guests: Dominick Bagnato and Cassim Sheppard (authors of “The Quito Papers”) 
Reading: Joan Clos in Metropolis Magazine
Lab & Assignment: Adobe Premiere, edit of interview

11/15 Social Performance of Design (Justice/Equity)
Reading: Diana Budds (2016): How Urban Design perpetuates racial inequality and what we can do about it in fastcodesign
Lab: Adobe Premiere, begin final video work

11/22  no class

Extra-large: City-wide infrastructure systems

11/29 City-wide Systems: Water
Reading: tbd
Lab: Help session with final video

12/6  City-wide systems: Mobility
Reading: Laura Bliss (2017), 8 Bright Ideas for Driverless Cities in City-Lab
Lab: Help session with final video

12/13 Final Review

12/20 submit final movie
POLICIES

Please refer to the Academic Policies page for details and the School's policy on academic integrity. https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies

GRADING

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES (10 exercises, weekly submission) 50%
FINAL VIDEO 25%
CLASS PARTICIPATION 25%

All students enrolled in the course are required to submit weekly exercises digitally at the specified date. Late submission may result in a lower grade. In the case of illness or other special circumstance, notification should be given to the instructors and the Program Office as soon as possible and before the deadline in question. All drawings, images, or video footage produced for any of the individual exercises can and should be used to compile and edit the final video.

It is recommended to backup your files regularly in addition to the submission for the event of software or hardware malfunctions or accidental file deletion by teammates.

MIDTERM AND FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Verbal and visual communication skills are essential to the work of professional planners. Throughout the course, we will give individual students the opportunity to present their weekly assignments at the beginning of class in an informal but informational setting.

Two major reviews will occur during the semester:
For the midterm presentation, you will be asked to curate your weekly exercises to date into a formal digital PDF / PowerPoint presentation to discuss the content of your work and your assessment of the urban design aspects observed and analyzed.

For the final review, you will present your attitude towards urban design in a 5-minute video followed by a brief description of your intentions for the video and a discussion with the class and invited guests.
RESOURCES

Urban Design

Gehl, Jan and Svarre, Birgitte: *How to Study Public Life*, Island Press, 2013
Mostafavi, Mohsen and Gareth Doherty, eds. *Ecological Urbanism*. Lars Müller Publishers,
Work A.C. *49 Cities* (Inventory Press; 3rd Revised edition, 2016)
R. El-Khoury and E. Robbins *Shaping the City* (2nd edition, 2013)
F. Miazzo and T. Kee, *We Own the City*, (2014)
http://www.urbandesign.org/
https://urbandesignforum.org/

Software
The course will require hand drawing and digital computer-aided software drawing techniques
over the course of the semester for producing maps, diagrams, and drawings of sites and
analysis.
We will work both in class and primarily in labs on specific skills and techniques for completing
workshops and assignments. The software programs that will be covered for the course are:
Adobe Suite CS6 (Illustrator, Photoshop, Premiere)  (on lab computers),

Educational versions / trial here (subscriptions):
http://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/buy/students.html

Lynda: (Software Tutorials and Help available with your NYU login)

LABS
Labs are not available outside of scheduled class time due to other course scheduling.
However, students may find other locations for using Adobe software as well as the digital
studio facility in Bobst library for video editing.
https://library.nyu.edu/departments/digital-studio/

Gowanus Neighborhood, Brooklyn
http://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/gowanus/gowanus.page
http://www.gowanuscanalconservancy.org/ee/
http://bridginggowanus.org/