New York University
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

Advanced Topics in Urban Design
P11.2680 (001)
Spring 2009
Tuesday, 8:35pm to 10:15pm
Room 201, 194 Mercer Street
Instructor: Claire Weisz, Adjunct Associate Professor

This course will concentrate on the design methodology, research, interpretation and analysis of urban spaces in the New York City and region.

Class Format
The format of the course will be a mix of instructor and guest presentations, discussion sessions, field trips and studio work. Students will be required to keep field notes in a sketchbook and will be encouraged to develop skills in freehand drawing. The class will be introduced to computer graphics programs that develop three-dimensional massing and rendered presentation views. A companion graphic imaging course that is being offered Spring Term 2009 is encouraged.

Studio Projects
Three related urban design projects will be assigned during the semester. The projects will be based on realistic professional assignments and will be structured to describe design issues such as scale, program, context, infrastructure and environmental factors. Students will complete each assignment as teams of two or three, with each group presenting their findings to the entire class for critique. The projects will increase in scale from the start to end of the semester.

Research Paper
A short 4 page illustrated research paper on a recently designed urban space or development will be required from each student. The student will also prepare a summary oral lecture of the topic for presentation to the entire class. Location of urban space shall be confirmed with instructor before Spring Recess. The papers will be posted to blackboard as a primer on current urban design issues.

Course Grading:
- Project #1 – 20% of final grade
- Project #2 – 20% of final grade
- Project #3 – 40% of final grade
- Research Paper/Class Discussions – 10%

Readings
There are no textbooks for this class. Instead, supplementary reading handouts will be posted to blackboard every second week will be drawn from contemporary news reports and critical journals to provide background. These readings will be discussed in the following class session. Class participation during discussions is highly recommended. I reserve the right to raise or lower the final grade one-half letter grade to reflect participation. In addition some of the following books are suggested reading and will be referred to by the Professor during the semester. Students should make themselves familiar with these titles.

The Elusive City, Five Centuries of Design Ambition and Miscalculations, Jonathan Barnett, originally published 1986 by Harper & Row. 210 pp

Towards a New Architecture, Le Corbusier translated from the French by Frederick Etchells first published in 1927 by Architectural Press London 269 pp

Collage City Colin Rowe & Fred Koetter, originally published in 1978 MIT Press 185pp

A View From The Compidoglio, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown originally published in 1984 by Harper and Row. 154 pp

The Architecture Of The City, Aldo Rossi, translated from Italian by Joan Ockman and Diane Ghirardo, 1984 MIT Press 208 pages

Course Outline 2009

January 20
Week 1 – Introduction - The Aerial Photo and The Computer
Course schedule and grading requirements will be explained. Instructor’s background and recent work will be presented. Class exercise in visualization and analysis will be given during class and homework assigned. The idea of diagramming in urban design will be presented by the professor.

January 27
Week 2 – Design Process – The Camera and the Sketch
Steps in a typical design problem will be explained by way of reviewing the exercises handed out in the previous week. Students will see examples of design presentations that document existing conditions, analyze opportunities and constraints, develop alternative approaches, and forge consensus between stakeholders. Freehand and measured drawing techniques will be explained to enable students to record notes in class sketchbooks as well as techniques for taking photographs and using the photographs analytically and for design purposes.

February 3
Week 3 –Urban Programming – Assignment 1
Urban space programming will be explained through mapping techniques, stakeholder interviews and writing of use scenarios. Methods of presenting program ideas will be discussed.
Assign Project #1 – Astor Place Streetscape
A two-week project exploring the design of sidewalks, public space and changing building uses within the area of Astor Place will be explained and assigned. Students will be required to visit the site and record activity observations in their sketchbooks and photograph key issues for presentation at the next class session.

February 10
Week 4 – Streets and Scale – lecture by guest landscape architect
The design of streets and plazas will be discussed using historic and contemporary examples. Students will learn how to describe urban spaces graphically in plan and section form, and to use drawings to compare the character of these spaces. Students will be required to visit urban spaces in New York City and document the physical qualities of the space for presentation at the next class session.

February 17
Week 6 – Project Review – Astor Place Streetscape
Student teams will present their project designs to the class.
Assign Project #2 – Urban Campus
A 3 week project will be assigned, focusing on the concept of an urban campus. Students will develop plans for a proposed Biotechnology Campus in New York City. Traffic patterns, adjacent community development and security and access issues will be part of the design problem.

February 24
Week 5 – Landscape and Environmental Factors – lecture by guest landscape architect
The importance of environment (sun, shade, wind) and natural landforms will be discussed on program activities and physical design. Recent examples of landscape and park design will be presented. Topics for papers will be discussed and short progress presentation of Assignment #2 will be required from each group.

March 3
Week 7 – Buildings and their urban types
Building design typologies for commercial uses, housing and cultural facilities will be discussed. As it relates to the campus assignment students will generate massing and building type alternatives to understand how entry, image, scale and access issues are affected. Height, zoning, and contextual issues will be discussed in terms of the larger neighborhood contexts. Progress presentation required from each group.

March 10 Project Review – Biotech Campus
Week 8
Student teams will present their project designs to the class.
Last chance for discussion of papers

March 17
Week 9 – NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS (papers are due March 21st digitally)

March 24
Week 10 – Infrastructure and Urban Design – Guest Lecturer Jeffery Raven
Impact of regional transportation and urban utility infrastructure will be discussed. Impact of stormwater drainage, power generation, parking and mass transit access will be explained in the context of urban redevelopment. Masdar, Abu Dubai will be presented among other examples of global urban design under a sustainable model.
Assign Project #3 – Newark and New York
A five-week project exploring in depth a regional relationship between these two cities: and a new identity and gateways for Newark. There will be a choice of sites and issues for the teams to choose from

March 31
Week 11 - Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse – Lecture by guest urban designer
Historic buildings and districts can be important tools in anchoring urban design plans and developing strong communities. Examples of adaptive reuse of existing buildings and their impact on adjacent development will be discussed. Each team will present a progress presentation of Project #3. Historic and adaptive reuse will be discussed related directly to the design project.

April 7
Week 12 – Urban Renewal and Waterfront Planning
Large scale projects often emphasize regional connections and the logistics of movement. Land use, street network and public realm decisions are important factors in the development of large scale urban design projects. Students will review recent
waterfront design efforts and discuss their transformation into valuable urban amenities and show how they relate to their project. Each team will make a project presentation of their progress.

April 14
Week 13 – Sustainability and Investment
New technologies in reclaiming brownfield lands, urban ecologies, and land and resource conservation are examples of sustainable principles impacting urban form. Students will review green design concepts and recent urban projects incorporating sustainable principles and present the sustainability strategy for their projects.

April 21
Week 14 – Implementation and Process
Community consensus building, public agency processes, and funding sources often have greater impact on the realization of an urban design project than the initial design itself. Examples of both large-scale and small-scale projects will be discussed where significant changes occurred during their design and construction. Students will make presentation of the phasing strategy to their project as well as the goals and objectives for each of the design strategies.

April 28
Week 15 – Final Project Review – Newark New York
Student teams will present their project designs to the class

May 5
Week 16 – READING DAY – NO CLASS

May 6-12
Week 17 – FINALS WEEK – All students will be given an opportunity for discussion of their work during the term and their interests.

End of Document – supplemental information will be handed out in class and posted to blackboard throughout the term.