Introduction to Urban Design
URPL-GP.1620, Fall Semester 2015
Wednesdays, 6:45-8:25pm
Meyer 102

This course will concentrate on design, research, interpretation and analysis of urban spaces in New York City, with discussion of the region, the country and abroad. The introductory nature of the course necessitates overview of a broad range of topics rather than in-depth exploration of each topic. However, all course materials and work will relate to the forces that shape urban form. By the end of the course, each student will develop an awareness of the built environment and the critical elements required for successful place making. Learning throughout the semester will be project-centered with hands-on application of physical planning and design. Students will focus on planning process during the first half of the semester and development for the remainder.

Contact Information

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Format
The format of this course will be a mix of instructor presentations, discussions based on assigned readings, student presentations, field observation, and studio design work. Lecture will not be a recitation of required reading, but a time to connect this background information to current design approaches, professional practice, and the discipline of urban design. The goal is that each student should begin including spatial analysis as an integral part of the overall planning and policy process. Ultimately, class time will be an opportunity for students to present their progress on assigned project work, receive input from colleagues, and critiques from faculty.

Urban Design Lab
Immediately after class, all students will participate in Urban Design Lab sessions. Sessions will be held in Computer Lab, TISCH LC19 from 8:35 to 9:35PM or as advised. Attendance at and participation in lab sections are required and will be factored into your final grade for the course.

The Urban Design Labs will typically focus on skills that will aid you in completing the projects and assignments that are required for the course. The purpose of the Urban Design Labs is not to produce experts in any specific software
package, but to acquaint you with their basic use and functions and explain how certain computer programs may be of use in completing the assignments. Responsibility for learning the skills introduced in the labs rests with individual students. Digital media is a useful tool for communicating ideas, but may be supplemented with hand drawing and/or sketching.

**Sketchbooks**

All students are required to keep field notes in a sketchbook and will be encouraged to develop their own ability to sketch freehand. Notes, sketches, paste-on graphics, and photographs may be kept in the sketchbook. You are encouraged to record ideas for your ongoing course projects and reflect on class discussions as you begin to use New York City as your daily laboratory. Sketchbooks will be collected and reviewed by your professor. Full credit will be given for this review provided you make a legitimate attempt to actively use it throughout the semester.

**Class Participation**

Every student is expected to materially participate in advancing class discussions. Participation may affect your final grade by up to one-half a letter. The classroom environment should provide a forum for all participants to feel comfortable contributing. A lively exchange will make a more fulfilling experience for all.

**Attendance**

Attendance at all classes is mandatory and every student should arrive to class on time. Frequent absence and/or tardiness to class or lab sessions will be reflected in your final grade. In the case of emergencies, please speak with your professor to make appropriate arrangements. Instructors understand that demands of the workplace, family, health, and religious beliefs may necessitate limited absences. These issues will be accommodated on an individual basis provided that students address them openly with faculty.

**Urban Design Projects and Assignments**

Two Urban Design Projects must be completed by each student over the course of the semester. The projects will be based on realistic professional assignments and will focus on design issues such as scale, program, context, building types, infrastructure, and environmental factors. For both projects, students will be required to work in teams, with each group presenting their work for the entire class or a panel of guest critics selected by your professors. Presentations should be graphic in nature and include images, diagrams, illustrative drawings, and/or models. A project brief will be distributed before each assignment that will contain specific information and instructions about each project.

- **Project 1: Urban Public Space Redesign**
  - Due: October 14, 2015

- **Project 2: Large Scale Development**
  - Due: December 9, 2015

For each project, you will be required to submit electronic copies of your assignments through NYU Classes or via email at the discretion of your instructor. Under no circumstances will assignments or projects be accepted late for full credit unless prior arrangements have been made. Assignments that are not turned in on time are subject to a full letter grade penalty for every day they are past due. When submitting via NYU Classes, please leave adequate time prior to deadlines to upload your work. A lack of internet access is not an acceptable excuse for failing to turn an assignment in on time.
Required Materials

Art Supplies
- Sketchbook (Moleskine variation no smaller than 5.5”x8” and suggested 8”x12”)
- Sharpie Fine Point Marker – black
- Sharpie Medium Point Market – black
- Pilot Razor Point Pen - black, red, blue, green
- PaperMate Flair Pen – black, red, blue, green
- White tracing paper – 18” roll
- Engineering Scale (not an architectural scale)
- Prismacolor Markers (set of 12 or 16 colors)

Art supplies may be purchased at any location, but Pearl Paint, Utrecht Art, A.I. Friedman, or The Art Store will carry all of the required items.

Recommended Software
Over the course of the semester you will be asked to produce maps, diagrams and drawing of your design proposals. The following software packages will assist you in accomplishing those tasks. There are versions of these programs available in NYU computer labs, but they may not be the most current version and you will have to plan accordingly to accomplish the tasks on time. Lack of access to a computer lab and/or software conflicts is each student’s (or group’s) responsibility and are not acceptable excuses for late projects.
- (Google/Trimble) SketchUp Pro
  - An educational license of SketchUp is available for purchase ($50). The license is good for one year, and can be applied towards the purchase of a fully licensed version. Go to: http://www.sketchup.com/industries/edu/students.html for details
- Adobe Creative Suite or Creative Cloud (membership)
  - Educational pricing is available through the NYU Bookstore and is a significant discount from a regular commercial license

A portion of your final presentations may require purchase of large format prints and presentation boards as follows:
- Foamcore board (30”x40”) white or black
- Laserjet printing services for presentation boards
Grading
Grades are determined according the Wagner guidelines and scale. Please refer to the Academic Policies page on the school’s website for details and the School’s policy on academic integrity. Under no circumstances are students permitted to present work as their own when completed by others.

- **Project 1**
  35% of Final Grade
  Interim Project 1 assignments will be included in the final presentation grade. Each interim assignment accounts for 10% of the final grade.
  - Interim Assignment 1A
  - Interim Assignment 1B
  - Interim Assignment 1C
  - Interim Assignment 1D

- **Project 2**
  50% of Final Grade
  Interim Project 1 assignments will be included in the final presentation grade. Each interim assignment accounts for 10% of the final grade.
  - Interim Assignment 2A
  - Interim Assignment 2B
  - Interim Assignment 2C
  - Interim Assignment 2D

- **Sketchbook and Participation**
  15% of Final Grade

Guest Lectures
We have invited several guest lecturers to present to the class. We will notify the class as soon as they are confirmed.

*Note: All assignments, schedules and lecture topics are subject to change at the instructors’ discretion.*
PROCESS

**Class 1 | 2 September 2015**
- Observation
- Introduce Project 1
- Assignment 1: Observations + Research

**Class 2 | 9 September 2015**
- Analysis
- Assignment 1 Due
- Assignment 2: Analysis

**Class 3 | 16 September 2015**
- Assessment + Program Development / Vision
- Assignment 2 Due
- Assignment 3: Assessment + Program Development

**Class 4 | 23 September 2015**
- Planning Approaches + Conceptual Design
- Assignment 3 Due
- Assignment 4: Alternative Plans

**Class 5 | 30 September 2015**
- Alternative Plans
- Assignment 4 Due
- In-class Critiques
- Assignment 5: Final Presentation

**Class 6 | 7 October 2015**
- Plan Refinement
- In-class Critiques

**Class 7 | 14 October 2015**
- Project 1 Presentations
- Assignment 5: Final Presentations

DEVELOPMENT

**Class 8 | 21 October 2015**
- A History of Urban Design 1
  - Guest Lecture with John Fontillas, AIA
  - Project 2 Design Brief Issued

**Class 9 | 28 October 2015**
- A History of Urban Design 2
  - Guest Lecture with John Fontillas, AIA

**Class 10 | 4 November 2015**
- Zoning and Land Use

**Class 11 | 11 November 2015**
- Building Types

**Class 12 | 18 November 2015**
- Site Planning
Class 13 | 25 November 2015
Special Topics in Urban Design

Class 14 | 2 December 2015
Final faculty Critiques and Production

Class 15 | 9 December 2015
PROJECT 2 FINAL PRESENTATIONS
PROJECT 1 | NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SPACE

The first seven weeks of Introduction to Urban Design will center on an in-depth exploration of the PROCESS of urban design. The pedagogy for accomplishing the first project will be a project-centered exercise culminating in a formal presentation on 14 October, 2015. The class will be divided into groups of 4 or 5 students, with each group assigned a different area of Broadway between 17th street and 41st street.

Under the Bloomberg Administration, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) undertook a major redesign of some of the streets under its jurisdiction. With the goal of providing more space for pedestrians and bicycles, they waded into a realm of public space design that had only previously been the purview of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC DPR). Since the first ‘Street Plazas’ were installed, DOT has largely relied on temporary modifications to the street to create safer pedestrian and bikeways as well as a new type of public space within the city. The success of the DOT Street Plazas is proven in how well they are used, and how quickly they have become cherished elements of their neighborhoods. However, the temporary nature of their design means there is much room for improvement.

Your assignment is to produce bespoke permanent designs for these Street Plazas that relate to the specific needs of their surrounding contexts. As a group, you must re-imagine and re-design a section of Broadway as a permanent (rather than temporary) intervention. You will be responsible for assessing and documenting the existing conditions of the site; analyzing constraints as well as opportunities; developing a theoretical program and vision based on your observations; developing a conceptual planning framework; developing alternatives and options; and (finally!) presenting a coherent design that enhances the character of the surrounding community and balances the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

By way of background information, this article (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/30/nyregion/turning-the-citys-wheels-in-a-new-direction.html?pagewanted=all) gives a good primer on the development of DOT Street Plazas over the past decade. Please read it and be prepared to discuss at the beginning of next week’s class.

Each group will be assigned one of the areas of Broadway listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site A</td>
<td>Broadway</td>
<td>35th-41st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site B</td>
<td>Broadway</td>
<td>32nd-35th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site C</td>
<td>Broadway</td>
<td>25th-32nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site D</td>
<td>Broadway</td>
<td>22nd-25th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site E</td>
<td>Broadway</td>
<td>17th-22nd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROJECT 1: ASSIGNMENT A | BROADWAY STREET PLAZAS | OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH
Existing Conditions Documentation

For your first assignment, work as a group to document the existing conditions of your space. For now, you can focus on the physical aspects, but you should always be making observations about human behavior when researching or documenting a space. Human behavior and sensory observation will be the focus of Assignment 2.

Using the base maps provided (download from NYU Classes), you should record the physical attributes of your site including (but not necessarily limited to):

- Trees
- Traffic Lights
- Trashcans
- Traffic Direction
- Sidewalk and street widths
- Bike lanes
- All building uses (including those within 100’ of corners)
- Food carts
- Bike Racks
- Lampposts
- Street signs
- Seating
- Landscape areas
- Configuration of existing street plazas
- Doors, entrances, loading docks, etc...
- Sidewalk cafes
- Subway entrances
- Bus stops
- Anything else you think is of note

All elements that you record on your base maps should be measured and/or paced and drawn to approximate scale.

Photographic Documentation

As you are documenting the physical attributes of your site, also make sure to photographically document the conditions of your site. This is a useful tool that can save a great deal of time by preventing you from having to go back to the site to confirm details. Take pictures every time you visit the site. Compare your photos with your group members, and use them to talk about things you noticed while you were there. There is no such thing as taking too many pictures.

Research

Each group must do some historical research related to their site and/or neighborhood. What can you tell us about the primary era of development in your neighborhoods? What can you tell us about historical uses vs. current uses? What are the historical populations vs. current populations? What are the historical forces that shaped your place/corridor? The questions to be answered here are endless. The Museum of the City of New York, The Bowery Boys Podcasts, and the New York Public Library digital archives are great places to start.

Once you’ve done your historical research, each group must also do some research about recent trends in or around your particular site. Look at reports published by The City of New York, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Local Development Corporations (LDCs), Historic Preservation Organizations, NGO’s or any other data based publication you can find. Demographic, socioeconomic, and economic data are especially useful.

Wikipedia is not research.

Existing Conditions Map

Each team must produce a composite existing conditions map of their site. To do this you should use trace paper to transfer information from the multiple observations that you recorded to get a single map that gives the viewer a sense
of the physical conditions of your site. It is not important that every piece of information makes it onto the final version of your map. Editing the information to get the point across is as important a skill as making observations.

First, trace in pencil the attributes that you want to record on your existing conditions map. Then use different pens and/or markers to give your map some texture. For example, a bench should be drawn with the lightest pen weight/thickness while city blocks and building outlines would get a heavier pen weight/thickness.

Come up with a system of icons to describe the relevant attributes of the site, and make sure to include a legend on your final base map.

When drawing your existing conditions base map, make sure to lift your pen up between every line segment. This will help you think about what you are drawing, and it will also make your map look much more orderly.

**Figure Ground Map**

Each team must produce a “Figure Ground” or “Noli” map of their site. This can largely be done by tracing all the building outlines and open space areas (generally, area owned by parks).

Use this as an example: [http://relearningrepresentation.blogspot.com/2012_04_01_archive.html](http://relearningrepresentation.blogspot.com/2012_04_01_archive.html)

Once you’ve produced your Figure Ground/Noli map, take some time to see what the map is telling you about the difference between built space and unbuilt space. What generalizations do this type of map help you make?

**Land Use Map**

Each team must produce a Land Use map for each parcel/building within 100’ of Broadway. You should research these by direct visual observation and you can confirm them using ZoLa or OasisNYC.

Use this as an example: [http://archpaper.com/uploads/water_street_arcades_01.jpg](http://archpaper.com/uploads/water_street_arcades_01.jpg)


Once you’ve produced your land use map, take some time to see what the map is telling you about the different types of land use surrounding your site. What generalizations do this type of map help you make? Do you see any correlations between the physical observations you made and the land use? Are there any postulates about causal relationships that you might want to try and confirm with direct observation at a later date?

**Existing Conditions Presentation**

Each team needs to prepare a 5-minute presentation using your existing conditions site plan, figure ground map, land use maps, and photos to describe the salient characteristics of your site. You should also give us some background about your site both historic and current trends that you’ve been able to identify. You may use PowerPoint to present your work to the rest of the class. If you chose to use physical drawings to present your work, please bring tape to secure them to the board, and make sure the writing/symbols are large enough to be read from the back of the room.

Be prepared for questions from your professors as well as any discussion generated by members of other groups.
Maps on NYU Classes
Digital (.pdf and .ai) basemaps of each project area have been uploaded to NYU Classes. These base maps are at a scale of 1:100 when printed at 11”x17”. If you print on a piece of paper smaller than 11x17”, and click “fit to page” it will not be at a scale of 1:100. So, when printing, make sure that you are cognizant of the effect that your printing has on the scale of the drawing.

This base map is the only one that will be provided by your instructors. If you need a base map at a finer scale, you can use the one provided by zooming/printing/enlarging to get a base map that is at the scale you desire. As your proposal becomes more specific, you will need base maps at larger scales (i.e. 1:10, 1:20, 1:30, etc...). You can achieve this by applying a zooming factor when printing from a PDF or AI.

Example 1:
Create a base map at 1:50 from a provided base map at 1:100.

\[
\frac{100’}{50’} = 2 \text{ (this is your zoom factor)} \\
= 200\% \text{ (expressed as a %)}
\]

Print the provided base map at 200% to get a base map at 1:50’.Voila!

Example 2:
Create a base map at 1:30 from a provided base map at 1:100.

\[
\frac{100’}{30’} = 3.33 \text{ (this is your zoom factor)} \\
= 333\% \text{ (expressed as %)}
\]

Print your provided base map at 333% to get a base map at 1:30’.Voila!