

# ADVANCED URBAN DESIGN

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## ADVANCED URBAN DESIGN\_\_2017

Course Number: URPL-GP 4680  
Term: Spring 2017  
Meeting Days: Monday, 4:55 pm—6:35 pm  
Location: 194 Mercer Street, Room 304  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30 pm—4:30 pm, Fridays, 10:00 am—12:00 pm  
and by appointment

**Course Description.** This 7-week intensive course will focus on the urban design implications of a new housing typology that is appearing in many urban areas across the United States—the multifamily, micro unit apartment building. While the design of the micro units, the formal qualities of the buildings in which they are located, and construction technologies used to build them have generated a great deal of interest in the architecture and real estate communities, urban designers have been largely silent. And yet, it is precisely because of certain negative effects on the urban realm that certain cities, such as Seattle, have passed legislation (2014) limiting these types of new residential buildings and requiring more design reviews. This course will research, analyze, and make specific design recommendations for future developments of micro dwelling units with the explicit goal of enhancing the neighborhoods and cities where they are located.

Cities such as Boston, Seattle, Denver, and Washington, DC, provide important case studies for this course, as each of these cities already has multiple, fully-occupied, micro unit buildings. New York City offers two distinct built examples—one is a new building, another is adaptive reuse. In New York, the architecture/development team for the new building required a mayoral override of existing zoning requirements to develop the city's first micro unit building, Carmel Place, whose first residents occupied their apartments just last year, in 2016. The same year, the office sharing company, WeWork, launched its own version of micro dwelling units in lower Manhattan, called WeLive. Other cities have created special zones or "innovation" districts to support the introduction of this new housing typology. Important white papers prepared by NYU's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy and the Urban Land Institute highlight the rapid growth of these new buildings and their potential to ease the demand for affordable urban housing. And the popular press provides frequent updates on the state of various initiatives.

Through direct research and analysis, this course will engage the current state of micro unit development, identifying challenges and opportunities. In addition to readings, field trips to relevant

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building sites, combined with guest lectures with recognized experts in this emerging field, will supplement our course.

**Urban Analysis.** This new housing typology produces ripple effects throughout the urban realm, some of which are now just being seen. These new buildings or retrofits must engage, by necessity, the many systems that already structure urban life in any city. But, at the same time, these new buildings can create opportunities by “connecting the dots” between seemingly separate systems. While traditional urban design might focus first on streets and buildings and the connective spaces between them, this class will also explore the design of urban systems. Whether we look at familiar systems, such as transportation, parking, minimum room sizes, and zoning, or other less, evident systems, such as water, electricity, waste, or telecommunications, the class will take as its challenge an understanding of systems that can be affected by strategic interventions.

**Urban Design.** Students are asked to immerse themselves into design research, with the goal of understanding the many interlocking issues that emerge from any urban design proposal. Students will engage demographic data, regulatory frameworks, and urban systems in order to see how seemingly local problems also connect to regional, national, and often global issues. The aim of this advanced urban design course is to produce a set of new ideas, action items, physical improvements, and ultimately, design proposals.

**Course Format.** The format of the course will be a mix of instructor presentations, discussion sessions, guest lectures, field trips, studio work, and design reviews. Students will be asked to use a range of digital design tools, including SketchUp, ARC GIS, Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, Photoshop and Powerpoint. Following a brief “inventory” of digital design experience, we will determine whether additional digital tutorials will be beneficial.

Students are asked to prepare each assignment prior to class, to be uploaded to the designated Dropbox before 12:00 pm on the designated days. Certain presentations will be discussed in class each week in a workshop format. Workshops are intended to promote both sophisticated visual and verbal exchanges. Learning to design, as well as talk about design, are both critical skill sets for practitioners.

**Studio Archive.** Students will be asked to create and manage a studio “archive” for the duration of the course. Because information gathering is a critical part of the design process, there is a need to create easily-accessible folders to make the various pieces of information available to all students. Googledocs, DropBox, Slack, or other management systems will be discussed.

**Attendance Policy.** Attendance and punctual arrival in class is expected; students are expected to stay for the entire class period. Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and project schedules. If you miss a class or work assignment due to the observance of a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the work within one week after the absence. Please contact me before class if you expect to miss class for a religious observance. Failure to attend class without previous approval or a doctor’s note will result in a lower final grade for the course.

**Hardware and Software.** All students will be expected to use the Adobe Suite of programs and Rhino. Our class takes place in a computer-enhanced classroom, but if you have your own laptop, you may wish to bring it to each class. We cannot overstay our “reservation” in the classroom, but I expect that

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some students will wish to continue working in nearby lounges or computer labs.

If you would like to purchase a license to the Adobe creative suite, it is available through the NYU computer store. NYU Net ID is required.

<https://www.bookstores.nyu.edu/computer.store/software.prices.html>

NYU computer labs offer a wide range of software and hardware at each site, along with hours of operation. <http://bit.ly/2iLvfbj>

Lynda provides many tutorials for the Adobe Suite products. If you're not familiar with Illustrator, here is a basic introduction. <https://www.lynda.com/Illustrator-tutorials/What-Adobe-Illustrator/370378/412041-4.html>

**Statement on Personal Communication Devices and Technology.** Paying attention to what is going on in class is expected. Therefore, it is my policy that you refrain from all personal digital communication during class time. Practically speaking, that means “no texting” and “no emailing” and “no social media” during class. It is not acceptable to “minimize” social media or entertainment windows while working on your computer in class. We are all wired to the hilt and the constant feed is both energizing and debilitating. Please contact me before class if you have a special situation that would be affected by this policy. I refer you to this 2014 article by NYU Professor of Media, Culture and Communications Clay Shirky for some up-to-date research. His article is entitled, *Why I Just Asked My Students to Put Their Laptops Away*. <http://bit.ly/1WFbJQs>

**Statement on Academic Integrity.** Academic integrity demands that all work you submit is your own. You are required to credit any sources, including borrowed images, which have contributed to the development of your ideas. Presenting ideas, words, and images as your own without acknowledging their source is considered plagiarism. Submitting the same or substantially similar work for two different classes is also plagiarism.

**Learning Objectives.** Building on the skills introduced in Introduction to Urban Design, this course will concentrate on developing a design methodology that includes the use of digital, analytic, and graphic tools to expand students' knowledge. Students will engage two short introductory exercises, followed by an in-depth project for the remainder of the course. For the introductory projects, students will work individually; for the longer project, students may work individually or in teams of two. The learning objectives of this course include:

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## **Critical Thinking**

- develop sophisticated skills of “looking”
- develop in-depth awareness of the built environment
- gain knowledge of visible and invisible urban design elements and systems
- explore relationships between buildings, open space, and systems
- interrogate established urban forms and processes

## **Applied Research**

- identify urban design challenges and opportunities
- use data and demographic information to analyze and bolster urban design proposals

## **Visual Communication**

- develop documentary and analytic drawing skills
- understand tools urban designers use to study form, space, surfaces, systems
- compose information on page to establish a point of view
- develop diagramming and digital modeling skills
- prepare and deliver sample presentation to city agency or local constituency

## **Verbal Communication**

- refine public speaking
- state clearly and succinctly a point of view
- prepare and deliver sample presentation to city agency or local constituency

## **Course Grading Guide**

The grading for this course is on a “portfolio” basis, which means that you will receive comments and grades throughout the course; you will be allowed to revise any part of your work for re-grading until March 27<sup>th</sup>.

Establishing grades for projects of a creative nature is a more complex matter than grading in other academic areas. While each project contains certain quantifiable elements by which it may be evaluated, a significant portion of each grade is derived from a broader, more subjective set of issues.

Grading for this course is broken into four components for each given mark:

- 1/4 grasp* (understanding the ideas and issues of the assigned project);
- 1/4 process* (the consistent and rigorous development and testing of ideas);
- 1/4 participation* (contribution of ideas, questions, engaging with the material and your classmates on a regular basis);
- 1/4 resolution* (demonstration of competence, completeness, and finesse through representation).

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## **Grade Descriptions**

### **A/A- : excellent**

Work surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues research, concepts, and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class.

### **B+/B/B- : above average**

Work is thorough, well researched, diligently pursued, and successfully executed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in sustained effort to resolve projects. Demonstrates potential for excellence.

### **C+/C/C- : average**

Work meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication or rigor.

### **D+/D/D- : below average**

Basic skills including writing, research, graphic skills, verbal clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required skill set and knowledge base.

### **F : failure**

Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. Note that this grade will be assigned with excessive unexcused absences.

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## Course Schedule

### January 23, 2017

#### Week One\_\_

- Introduction to course
- Class lecture and discussion
- Issue Project 1

### January 30, 2017

#### Week Two\_\_

- Class discussion, Field trip to My Micro, Carmel Place
- Interim review, Project 1
- Class discussion

### February 06, 2017

#### Week Three\_\_

- Submit Project 1
- Guest lecture, John Infranca, Suffolk University, Boston, MA
- Class discussion
- Issue Project 2

### February 13, 2017

#### Week Four\_\_

- Guest lecture, Jessica Yager, Executive Director, Furman Center
- Submit Project 2
- Class discussion
- Issue Final Project

### February 20, 2017 President's Day Holiday

### February 27, 2017

#### Week Six\_\_

- Class lecture and discussion

### March 06, 2017

#### Week Seven\_\_

- Interim review, Final Project

### March 13, 2017 Spring Break

### March 20, 2017

#### Week Nine\_\_

- Final Presentations