



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

URPL-GP 2680.001
Special Topics in Urban Design
Spring 2022

“CITY STREETS and URBAN LANDSCAPES”

Instructor Information

Professor Louise Harpman
Email louise.harpman@nyu.edu
Office Hours Friday, 9:30 am—11:30 am, and by appointment, via Zoom

Course Assistant Information

Instructor Joanna Simon
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Course Information

Lectures Mondays, 4:55 pm—6:35 pm at 194 Mercer Street, Room 306A
Digital Design Labs Mondays, 8:35 pm—9:35 pm at 12 Waverly Place, Room L120

Overview

This course, City Streets and Urban Landscapes, will immerse students in a study of established and emerging urban design priorities for city streets. Streets and sidewalks operate as the most public of our city’s public spaces, at once forming connective tissue between different locations while also creating borders and boundaries. Using New York City’s streets as a living laboratory, students will develop methods to evaluate the many different publics served by city streets with the goal of producing design proposals that promote livability, ecological resilience, and social justice.

Streetscapes are among the most territorialized urban spaces, as multiple city and state agencies exercise jurisdiction over their design and approved uses. Still, within these regulatory frameworks, a high degree of design innovation has taken hold. Streets are dynamic networks that embed design as well as social, political, ecological and technological priorities. The archaeological record indicates that roads were originally developed to support wheeled surface transportation. Contemporary streets remain dedicated to transportation, to be sure, but the streetscape also engages most every other essential system that allows for dense, urban human habitation including fresh water, sewerage, trash and recycling collection, telecommunications, and emergency services. Streets also support the habitats of many non-human occupants such as plants and

animals and a focus on ecological, climate-conscious design is an additional priority for this course. Extreme weather events highlight the streets' role in stormwater management, further underscoring the urgency for redesigning the street as an urban landscape.

Urban Design Focus Areas

It is the goal of this urban topics course to engage as urban designers, spatial analysts, and advocates for real-time urban design challenges. After two introductory assignments to develop design and visualization skills, students will select one area from the list below—or a different street with instructor approval—as their primary design focus.

1. Open Streets:
 - a. Alphabet City, Avenue B, Manhattan
 - b. Jackson Heights, 34th Avenue, Queens

2. Streets adjacent to active developments:
 - a. Sunset Park, 2nd Avenue corridor, Brooklyn
 - b. Greenpoint, Commercial Street, Brooklyn

3. Wide streets:
 - a. NoHo/LES, Bowery above Delancey, Manhattan
 - b. Long Island City, 21st Street between Queensboro Bridge Lower Roadway and Broadway, Queens

4. Streets under an elevated roadway:
 - a. Sunset Park, 3rd Avenue, Brooklyn
 - b. Marble Hill, Broadway, Bronx

For the final project, students (working individually or in teams of two) will prepare streetscape designs for their selected site along with proposals for possible implementation scenarios, extending strategies already familiar to you as urban planners.

Urban Analysis and Urban Design

Since the pandemic took hold in March 2020, urban designers all over the world have focused on the redesign of city streets. Streets have retained their dominance as vital transportation corridors for motorized vehicles, but they have also adjusted to accommodate more and different modes of transportation including bicycles, scooters, mobility devices and person-powered delivery carts. Delivery vehicles have dominated some streets as they “set up shop” to organize their associated unloading and distribution regimes. Pedestrians of all ages remain key users of city streets, and we have seen many initiatives that promote a rethink of city streets to support play, pets, plants, protest, conversation, art, entertainment, education, dining, exercise, and commerce. Streets are not—and never were—simple.

Through direct research and analysis, this course will engage the current conditions and proposed initiatives for the selected Urban Design Focus Areas, identifying challenges and opportunities street redesigns are already “in play” throughout the city and it is important that we educate ourselves about pilot projects that may or may not be near our

Focus Areas. Proposals for dedicated bus lanes, bike lanes, wider sidewalks and dedicated delivery zones already garner significant attention, while less evident systems like surveillance, sanitary sewers, stormwater management, waste and recycling collection, and bioremediation are also active areas of investment, all of which become opportunities for urban designers and planners.

Many systems structure urban life within a city, and students will be encouraged to assess direct and indirect effects of selected systems. Students are asked to immerse themselves into design research, with the goal of understanding the many interlocking issues that emerge within their selected Focus Area. Students will engage demographic data, regulatory frameworks, and urban systems in order to see how seemingly local problems might also connect to citywide and regional issues. It is my hope that students will discover ways to “connect the dots” between seemingly separate systems that may not have been previously identified. The aim of this advanced urban design course is to produce a set of new ideas, action items, and ultimately, urban design proposals.

Course Format

Developing critical ways of “seeing” the city, learning to think like an urban designer and building a range of digital design tools to communicate design intentions are shared priorities for this course. The format of the course will be lectures followed by digital design laboratories. The “lectures” will be devoted to instructor presentations, guest speakers, field trips, student presentations, and discussions. The “digital design labs” will focus on data analysis and visualization skills that link directly to the course assignments.

Each student will complete two introductory assignments, which will lead into one longer final assignment. Students will work individually on the first two assignments and may work singly or in pairs for the final project.

Students are asked to complete and upload each completed assignment or work-in-progress on Sunday nights, no later than 11:55 pm, to the Brightspace assignments tab and also to a dedicated Google Slides file. Certain presentations will be discussed in class on Mondays in a “review” format. Reviews are intended to promote both visual and verbal exchanges, as both design and design discourse are key skills for practitioners to master.

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. We will build our archive within Brightspace.

Learning Objectives

Building on the skills from your foundation courses, this topics course will concentrate on developing a design methodology that includes the use of digital, analytic, and graphic tools to expand students’ knowledge. Students will complete two introductory exercises, followed by an in-depth project for the remainder of the course. For the introductory assignments, students will work individually; for the longer project, students may work individually or in teams of two. The learning objectives of this course include:

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
- develop methods to assess 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 urban design practitioners, academics, city agency, and/or community members

Verbal Communication

- refine public speaking
- state clearly and succinctly a point of view
- prepare and deliver sample presentation to urban design practitioners, academics, city agency, and/or community members

Hardware and Software

Students will use a range of digital design tools, including Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop; Cadmapper; and SketchUp. Students are highly encouraged to use their own laptops for this class. You may also make use of the many on-campus computer labs.

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.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this

class are required to read and abide by NYU's and Wagner's Academic Code. [NYU Academic Integrity Policy](#) All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner Academic Oath and the student-written Code of Professional Responsibility. [Wagner Student Policies](#)

Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, please consult with me.

Attendance policy

Punctual arrival and staying for the entire class period is expected. Your presence—actual and intellectual—is essential to the success of this course. More than two (2) unexcused absences and more than two (2) late arrivals to class will diminish your final grade by one half-letter grade for each occurrence; excused absences are allowed for medical reasons, family emergencies, and religious holidays.

Religious holidays sometimes conflict with class and project schedules. If you miss a class or work assignment due to a religious observance, you will be given an opportunity to complete the work within one week after the absence. Please contact me, preferably ahead of time, if you miss class for a religious observance. This link gives information on the University's policy. [NYU Policy on Religious Holidays](#)

Late assignments

Students are expected to upload work-in-progress to Brightspace and Google Slides the night before every class meeting. Late projects and papers may be penalized.

Students with accessibility needs

Academic accommodations are available for students who need them. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980 or mosescsa@nyu.edu) for further information. Their new website includes many features to support online learning. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester.

Statement on mental health

Our aim is for students to be as successful academically as they can, and to help them overcome or manage any impediments they may experience. Any student who may be struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980 or mosescsa@nyu.edu). If mental health assistance is needed, please call NYU's 24/7 Wellness Exchange hotline (212-443-9999). Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to assist you more directly with relevant resources or referrals.

Statement on health protocols

Consistent with the University's public health advisories, please remind yourselves of the policies relating to masks. All members of the NYU community—students, faculty,

administrators, staff, visitors, vendors, and affiliates—are required to wear masks at all times while indoors on the University campus or while participating in University-sponsored activities off-campus. [NYU Policy on Face Coverings](#)

- All students must be correctly masked throughout the entire class period. Masks must cover your nose and mouth at all times.

Allowable Masks

Disposable masks (surgical or medical procedure masks)
KN95 masks
KF94 mask
N95 masks

Masks That Are Not Acceptable

Masks with one-way valves or vents
Bandanas, scarves, and face covering made with other repurposed clothing items
Cloth masks, except as a second layer over a disposable mask

- Students should not leave during the class period, except in the case of an emergency.
- If you are not feeling well – even with mild symptoms – do not come to class. Be sure to email me if you're unwell and stay in touch so that you can keep up with the material.

Statement on food and beverage consumption during class

Consistent with the University's health protocols, no food or drinks may be consumed during class.

Course Grading Guide

The grading for this course is on a “portfolio” basis, which means that you will receive comments and grades for each assignment throughout the course; you will be allowed to revise your work for re-grading until May 13, 2022.

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. Each assignment will have an associated grading rubric to help clarify the evaluation criteria.

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

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

Grade Descriptions

A/A- : excellent

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

B+/B/B- : good

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.

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

- 01/24 Week 1
Introduction and course overview
Lecture
Class discussion
Field Trip: City Streets
Issue Assignment 1 // Crossroads
- 01/31 Week 2 (Mulberry Conference Room)
Lecture
Class discussion
Interim Review Assignment 1
- 02/07 Week 3
Interim Review Assignment 1
Guest lecture: Kelly McGuinness
Transportation Planner
Sam Schwartz
- 02/14 Week 4
Guest lecture: Gloria Campbell
Project Manager, Transportation
NYC Economic Development Corporation
Due Date Assignment 1
Issue Assignment 2 // Interlocking Systems
- 02/21 Week 5
No class / Presidents' Day
- 02/28 Week 6
Lecture
Class discussion
Interim Review Assignment 2

- 03/07 Week 7
Class discussion
Interim Review Assignment 2
- 03/14 Week 8
Spring Recess
- 03/21 Week 9
Due Date Assignment 2
Guest Lecture: Quilian Riano
Founding Principal, DSGN AGNC
Assistant Dean, Pratt Institute School of Architecture
Issue Assignment 3 // Priorities and Proposals
- 03/28 Week 10
Guest Lecture: Danny Harris
Executive Director
Transportation Alternatives
Interim Review Assignment 3
- 04/04 Week 11
Guest Lecture: Kasey Colander
Senior Director
Tishman Speyer
Interim Review Assignment 3
- 04/11 Week 12
Guest Lecture: Daniel McPhee
Executive Director
Urban Design Forum
Interim Review Assignment 3
- 04/18 Week 13
Guest Lecture: Joanna Simon
Cartographer
Apple
Interim Review Assignment 3
- 04/25 Week 14
PRE-FINAL CLASS PRESENTATIONS
- 05/02 Week 15
Due Date Assignment 3
FINAL CLASS PRESENTATIONS
- 05/09 Week 16
Class discussion