

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

URPL – GP 2680.001

Special Topics in Urban Design

Spring 2024

URBAN DESIGN VISUALIZATION TOOLS & NEIGHBORHOOD CHALLENGES

Instructor's Information

Professor	Louise Harpman
Email	louise.harpman@nyu.edu
Office	1 Washington Place, Room 607
Office hours	Tuesdays, 2:00 pm—4:00 pm, in person or via Zoom Make appointments HERE

Instructor	Joanna Simon
Email	jsimon732@gmail.com
Office hours	By appointment

Course Information

Lectures	Mondays, 4:55 pm—6:35 pm at Bobst LL146
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Overview

It is the goal of this special topics course, Urban Design—Visualization Tools & Neighborhood Challenges, to engage as spatial analysts, urban designers, and advocates for real-time design challenges. During the first half of the semester, the course will introduce students to visualization techniques in a series of linked exercises; in the second half of the semester, students will further develop these visualization and design tools as they address challenges and opportunities in a rapidly-changing New York City neighborhood. Instructor Joanna Simon will teach the first half of the course while Professor Louise Harpman will teach the second half. The shared goal of this course is to equip students with tools, techniques, and conceptual frameworks to evaluate and create urban design proposals. Using New York City as a living laboratory, students will develop methods to visualize and analyze current urban design conditions with the goal of producing new design proposals that create a more livable city.

Visualization tools

During the first half of the semester, students will complete seven weekly tutorials and two projects. These tutorials will focus on industry standard tools and visualization practices, encouraging students to develop effective ways to communicate design intentions. Each week will focus on a new design concept in order to work through the foundations of a strong design portfolio and a visually cohesive presentation.

Neighborhood challenges

During the second half of the semester, students will learn about the history of urban design and changing priorities within the field, while simultaneously coming to understand current urban design challenges in the Hunts Point neighborhood of the South Bronx. After the completion of a shared research project at the beginning of the second half of the semester, students will select one area within Hunts Point as their primary design focus, identifying challenges and opportunities.

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.

Students are expected to upload work-in-progress or completed assignments on Sunday nights before 10:00 pm to the Brightspace site 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.

Course structure

The structure of this urban design course encourages collaboration, innovation, and learning-by-doing as we advance through a series of projects. One goal of this course is to foster an environment where students can come together in an open frame of inquiry, ready to offer questions and proposals that can be developed and discussed among classmates, faculty, and visitors.

The importance of making incremental progress and keeping up with the assignments cannot be overstated, as each skill set builds upon the previous one. Through meetings with the instructors, conversations with classmates, and class presentations, each student will refine their work throughout the semester.

Learning happens in and out of the class period and classmates will become some of

your best resources. Talk to them. Look at their work. Invite them to evaluate your projects. Above all, commit to your own educational process.

Course websites

Brightspace will serve as the primary online portal for this course. On the Brightspace site, you will find our syllabus, readings, assignments, lectures after they are delivered, class videos and other links. Please familiarize yourself with the assets within our course portal. In addition, we will use a dedicated folder in Google Slides and may also communicate via Slack.

Studio archive

Students will create and manage a studio “archive” during the second half of the course. Because information-gathering is a critical part of the design process, we will create easily accessible folders within Brightspace to make information available to all students.

Learning objectives

This advanced topics course will concentrate on developing a methodology that includes the use of digital, analytic, and graphic tools to expand students’ knowledge of urban design. The learning objectives of this course include:

Critical thinking

- develop skills of “critical looking”
- develop in-depth awareness of the built environment
- develop methods to assess urban forms and processes
- gain knowledge of visible and invisible urban design elements and systems

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 and deliver sample professional presentation

Applied research

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

Grading

You will receive feedback when or soon after you show your design work in class. You will also receive grades and instructor comments at the end of each project. Grading for each project includes specific learning objectives, as set out in the grading rubrics. Final grades for this course are on a “portfolio” basis, which means that you may revise and resubmit any work for re-grading until May 9, 2024.

¼ grasp	(comprehends ideas and issues of the project);
¼ process	(develops and tests ideas with consistency and rigor);
¼ participation	(contributes ideas, questions, thoughtful commentary);
¼ resolution	(demonstrates completeness and refinement of the project)

Grade descriptions

- (A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, sophisticated, and well presented. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.
- (A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological, analytical, and representational frameworks, and meets professional standards.
- (B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound, legible. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.
- (B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Work at this level demonstrates competency in most key course objectives but understanding of some important issues and skills is less than complete. Methodological, analytical, or representational approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough.
- (B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student. Work at this level meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is incomplete. Methodological, analytical, or representational work performed in the course is minimally adequate.
- (C/-/+) Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student. Work at this level does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological, analytical, or representational work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.

- (D/F) Fail: Work fails to meet minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas.

Inclusion

We strive to foster a sense of community in and outside of the classroom and hope to offer a welcoming space where individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations, body types and abilities are treated with respect. It is our sincere belief that the diversity students bring to the classroom is a source of inspiration, strength, and knowledge. If, at any point, you feel that these goals are not being met or could be improved, please reach out to either instructor. We want to make our classes and our school an inclusive and equitable environment for everyone.

Hardware and software

Digital design tools may include Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop; Cadmapper; ArcGIS, QGIS, R, and SketchUp. Students may use their own computers or those at the computer labs on campus.

Statement on personal communication devices

Paying attention to what is going on in class is expected. Therefore, it is our policy that students refrain from all personal digital communication during class time. Practically speaking, this means no social media, no phone calls, no texting. To paraphrase our NYU Vice Provost Clay Shirky, class is a place where you have the luxury of focus. Please contact the instructor before class if you have a special situation that would be affected by this policy.

Statement on food and beverage consumption

Drinks may be consumed during class, but please don't eat during the class period.

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 as part of Wagner Student Policies.

All work you create for this class must be your own. You are required to credit any sources, including borrowed or artificially-generated text or images (see below) which

have contributed to the development of your ideas or final products. Presenting ideas, words, objects, images and sounds as your own without acknowledging their sources is considered plagiarism. If you are unsure about what is expected and how to abide by the academic integrity policy, please ask us.

Students may use tools such as GPT-4, ChatGPT, Dall-E 3, Midjourney or similar programs to help generate design ideas as long as **their use is properly cited** for any and all work submitted for grading, review, or discussion in class. The **MLA provides very helpful examples** for citing generative AI.

If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic integrity code, please consult with us.

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 may diminish your final grade by ½ letter grade per occurrence; excused absences are allowed for medical reasons, family emergencies, and religious holidays.

Religious holidays sometimes conflict with class and project schedules. If you expect to miss a class or work assignment due to a religious observance, please let us know in advance. You will be given an opportunity to complete the work within one week after the absence. This link gives information on [NYU's Policy on Religious Holidays](#).

Late assignments

Students are expected to upload work-in-progress to Brightspace and Google Slides the night before each stated due date. Late projects and papers may be penalized.

Statement on class recordings

Certain class sessions may be recorded and these recordings will be available to members of the class. Class recordings may be used as a learning tool, e.g. to revisit discussion topics, to assist students with different language backgrounds and abilities, and/or to provide reasonable accommodations for students. Recordings are only to be used for work related to this course and are not to be shared without the explicit consent of the instructor. There is no “hybrid” or “remote attendance” option for this course.

Student accessibility

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. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester.

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 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 us if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable us to assist you more directly with relevant resources or referrals.

Course schedule

Week 1 01/22

Introduction to Illustrator - Basics, Annotation & Imagery

Students will learn the basics of Illustrator and learn how to annotate and edit an image.

[Required reading](#)

[Required viewing](#)

Week 2 01/29

Illustrator & QGIS - Data and Mapping

Students will explore new datasets and learn the process of editing a map in Illustrator.

[Required reading](#) to be completed before class:

Assignment 1 Issue

Week 3 02/05

Illustrator - Perspective Drawing

Students will learn the foundations of 1 point perspective drawing in Illustrator

[Required reading](#) to be completed before class:

Week 4 02/12

Illustrator - Axonometric Diagrams

Students will use previous lessons to create maps, migrate layers to Illustrator and explode axonometric diagrams.

Assignment 1 Due

Week 5 02/19

No Class | Presidents Day

Week 6 02/26

Photoshop - Existing Conditions and Proposals

Students will learn how to edit images in photoshop, add annotation and use generative fill to make site proposals. **Assignment 2 Issue**

Week 7 03/04

Sketchup - 3D Modeling

Students will learn the basics of 3D modeling using Sketchup.

Required reading to be completed before class

Week 8 03/11

Presentation Strategy and Design Reviews

We will use our final class in this 1/2 semester to discuss a cohesive presentation design and review student work.

Assignment 2 Due

Week 9 03/18

Spring Recess

Week 10 03/25

Introduction to Urban Design & Neighborhood Challenges

We will use the first class of this 1/2 semester to discuss the arc for the remainder of the term, weekly themes, and urban design challenges and opportunities in the Hunts Point neighborhood.

Assignment 3 Issue

- We will discuss required readings during class.
- Students will select research topics and locations as part of Assignment 3.

Required readings to be completed before class:

Hunts Point Vision Plan. City of New York, 2004.

Hunts Point Forward: A Vision Plan for the Future. NYC Economic Development Corporation, 2022.

Week 11 04/01 "Reading the City"

This unit gives an overview of the vocabulary, basic principles, and history of urban design. When we look at different areas within a city, how are priorities and issues made legible?

Assignment 3 Due

- We will discuss required readings during class.

- Students will present and discuss their research completed as part of Assignment 3.

Required readings to be completed before class:

Kevin Lynch. "The City Image and Its Elements." *The Image of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960: 46-91.

Janet Abu-Lughod. "The Islamic City: Historic Myths, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance." *The Urban Design Reader*, eds. Michael Larice and Elizabeth MacDonald. London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 13-24; originally published in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1987.

Alex Krieger. "Territories of Urban Design." *Urban Design Futures*, eds. Malcolm Moor and Jon Rowland. London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 18-28.

Issue Assignment 4

Week 12 04/08 "What Shapes a City?"

This unit looks into the forces—economic, legal, social, environmental—that shape a city. How do different neighborhoods within a city develop their unique character and identity?

- We will discuss required readings during class.
- Students will present and discuss their progress as part of Assignment 4.

Required readings to be completed before class:

Kevin Lynch. "What is the Form of a City and How is it Made?" *A Theory of Good City Form*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981: 37- 51.

Jonathan Barnett. "Zoning, Mapping, and Urban Renewal as Urban Design Techniques." *An Introduction to Urban Design*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982, pp. 57-75.

Peter J. Larkham and Michael P. Conzen. "Agents, Agency, and Urban Form: The Making of the Urban Landscape." *Shapers of Urban Form*. New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 3-23.

Week 13 04/15 "The City and its Publics"

This week focuses on how public spaces, including streets, sidewalks, parks, and plazas, form connective tissue within cities.

- We will discuss required readings during class.
- Students will present and discuss their progress as part of Assignment 4.
- [Field Trip—to be confirmed]

Required readings to be completed before class:

Jane Jacobs. "The Uses of Neighborhood Parks." *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1961, pp. 94-114.

Jan Gehl. "Life, Spaces, Buildings – And in Said Order Please." *Urban Design Futures*, ed. Malcolm Moor and Jon Rowland. London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 70-75.

Karl Kullmann. "Landshape Urbanism: The Topography of Public Space." *Companion to Public Space*. Eds. Vikas Mehta and Danilo Palazzo. London: Routledge, 2020, pp. 46-58.

Week 14 04/22

"The Global City"

This unit introduces the concept of the "global city" and how mass migration, free flow of capital, and politics have contributed to our understanding of these places.

- We will discuss required readings during class.
- Students will present and discuss their progress as part of Assignment 4.

Required readings to be completed before class:

Greg Clark. "Understanding Global Cities." In *Global Cities: A Short History*. Brookings Institution Press (2016): 91-116.

Yasser Elsheshtawy. "Spectacular Architecture and Urbanism." *Dubai: Behind and Urban Spectacle*. London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 133-170.

Swati Chattopadhyay. "Urbanism, Colonialism, and Subalternity." *A World of Cities: Urban Theory beyond "the West."* Eds. Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne London: Routledge, 2011, 75-91.

Justin McGuirk. "Failing the Informal City: How Rio de Janeiro's Mega Sporting Event Derailed the Legacy of Favela-Bairro." *Architectural Design* vol. 86, no. 3(2016): 40-47.

Week 15 04/29

"The Resilient and Inclusive City"

This unit connects urban design to positive public health outcomes, enhancing mobility for all city residents, mitigating urban destruction from extreme weather events, and environmental justice.

- We will discuss required readings in class.
- Students will present and discuss their progress as part of Assignment 4.

Required readings to be completed before class:

Clarke, Patrick. "Urban Planning and Design." Sustainable Urban Design: An Environmental Approach. Eds. Adam Ritchie and Randall Thomas. London: Taylor & Francis, 2014; 12-20.

Newman, Peter, Timothy Beatley, and Heather Boyer. "Foster Inclusive and Healthy Cities." Resilient Cities: Overcoming Fossil Fuel Dependence (Second Edition). Washington DC: Island Press, 2017, 89-106.

UN Habitat. "Equitable Access to Urban Mobility." Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility: Global Report on Human Settlements. London: Routledge, 2013; 107-128.

Week 16 05/06

Assignment 4 Due

**Final
Presentations**

Changes to this schedule may occur based on opportunities/contingencies that might arise during the semester; a revised schedule will be issued if needed.