New Jersey Institute of Technology – SPRING 2025

ARCH 408: Investigation of the Contemporary Landscape

Instructor: Jeffrey Stevens – jeffrey.stevens@njit.edu

Class Time: Mondays 6:00 pm – 8:50 pm - WEST 210

Office Hours: Thursday 5:30-6:30 or by Appointment

Prerequisites: ARCH 211 or ARCH 381 and ARCH 382

COURSE OVERVIEW: This course is designed to actively engage students in contemporary discourse and design practices in landscape architecture. Through selected readings, presentations, class discussions, and in-class charettes, students will explore historical hinge points and contemporary issues in landscape architecture. The course culminates in an independent research investigation that will be presented to the rest of the class and submitted as a final written report.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Students are expected to read approximately 40 pages per week. In addition to required reading, students will participate in in-class charettes and prepare presentations. During the first half of the semester, students will be introduced to the history of landscape architecture and critical pivot points in the 20th century. In the second half of the semester, students will leverage their shared knowledge to evaluate issues and ideas in contemporary landscape practice. These issues will be explored through presentations and discussions within each class and organized into components of consideration. These components are:

1.) READINGS: Present, discuss, and evaluate selected articles, essays, and other writings that have helped to shape the current discourse.
2.) PEOPLE + PLACES: Present, discuss, and recognize important persons or firms who have defined the contemporary landscape profession. Examples of contemporary landscapes that exemplify current landscape practices.
3.) CHARETTES: Design a landscape for an existing project by experimenting with ideas and methods introduced in class.
4.) GUEST LECTURES: Guest lecturers will present their professional work and/or research. Students will demonstrate their knowledge by engaging with design professionals.
5.) INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROPOSALS: Formulate an investigation of a special topic related to the contemporary practice of landscape architecture.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS REQUIREMENTS: Students will team up in pairs. The two formats for group presentations are as follows:
PEOPLE + PLACES: (approximately 30-minute duration) This will introduce people who have played an influential role in the modern landscape to help position their ideas within the larger framework of the landscape profession by sharing critical examples of their work through a

slideshow presentation.

<u>READING DISCUSSION FACILITATOR</u>: (approximately 45-minute duration) Discussion Facilitators direct the seminar discussion and should find effective ways (visual imagery, provocative questions, etc.) to ensure all seminar members participate. A selection of readings taken from various authors will introduce a variety of points of view. These will cover specific topics within the broad realm of contemporary landscape discourse.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH TOPIC: Each student will independently select a topic to research to expand the scope of thinking about the contemporary practice of Landscape Architecture. This can address some of your academic reasons for taking this elective course. The topic is an opportunity for each student to explore a specific issue or area of interest that might enrich a design studio investigation or other coursework. These findings will be shared with the rest of the class during the second part of the semester.

DESIGN CHARETTES: Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye will be used as a site for the landscape charette. Students will receive digital files and printouts of the Plans and Images to sketch perspectives. Students will be asked to post their Charettes on Canvas, which will be reviewed in class. Students are expected to bring trace paper and design tools to class on these days. A final draft with a brief narrative description will be submitted at the end of the semester.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS POLICY: The instructor is not obligated to repeat any information or provide access to lecture notes or presentation materials to students who arrive late or have unexcused absences. Yet it remains the student's responsibility to learn the material presented. Because attendance is not used as the basis of a grade, participation credit requires active participation in class discussions.

MEANS OF EVALUATION:

20% Discussion Leadership 10% People and Places Presentation
30% Class Participation / Discussion Questions 20% Design Charettes
20% Independent Research Project

GRADE SIGNIFICANCE:

A	Superior	B+	Excellent
B	Very Good	C+	Good
C	Acceptable	D	Minimum
F	Inadequate	AU	Audit
I	Incomplete. Grade deferred--given in rare instances to students who would normally have completed the course work but who could not do so because of special circumstances. If this grade is not removed during the next regular semester, an F grade will result.		
W	Withdrawn	S	Satisfactory
U	Unsatisfactory S or U Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory		
P	Passing for Master's Thesis or Doctoral Dissertation		

LEARNING AND TEACHING CULTURE POLICY: In addition to the overarching values and ethics of the university, the New Jersey School of Architecture (NJSoA) is dedicated to optimism, diversity and solidarity, professional conduct, constructive evaluation and instruction, collaborative community, health and wellbeing, time management and school-lifework balance, respectful stewardship and space management, and well-rounded enrichment. Architecture and design pedagogy is as complex as it is rewarding and as dynamically evolving as the people who learn and teach it. This understanding resides at the core of the NJIT Learning and Teaching Culture Policy: https://design.njit.edu/learning-and-teaching-culture-policy

WEB ACCESS AND SOFTWARE:
<u>CANVAS</u>: This course will utilize the learning management system CANVAS as the repository for all assignment postings, including readings, templates, and additional digital resources. Additionally, all work you produce, including presentation slides, must be uploaded to the appropriate discussion folders and modules. You must have a UCID account with NJIT to access Canvas.
<u>GOOGLE DOCS</u>: Students are required to compose any text written in this class in Google Docs. If a student's work is flagged for AI, the metadata stored in a Google Document records every keystroke, and this can defend against the high rate of false accusations from AI checkers.
<u>OBSIDIAN + ZOTERO</u>: I encourage students to adopt a version of the Zettelkasten method system for taking source notes and extracting permanent notes from readings. This method allows students to make connections across papers, themes, classes, and subjects. Zotero and Obsidian's free software facilitates this method. Efforts toward this methodology will not be graded, but students who adopt this method often reap rewards for years to come.
<u>ZOOM</u>: Zoom will be used in case of emergency and verified student illness. Recording any portion of any class is strictly forbidden.
<u>KEPLER</u>: All files must be resized, renamed, and saved as jpgs and PDFs. The filename should be saved using the following naming convention: <Last name, First name ##.jpg>. Students will not receive their final grade after posting all the required Kepler files. Consult Kepler's FAQ for further details.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The NJSOA maintains that academic integrity and honesty are of paramount importance. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. The NJIT Honor Code will be upheld, and any violations will be dealt with by the department or brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students. All students are responsible for upholding the integrity of NJIT by reporting any violation of academic integrity. The identity of the student filing the report will remain anonymous. All students are expected to adhere to the University Code on Academic Integrity: https://www.njit.edu/dos/academic-integrity and to the Code of Student Conduct: https://www.njit.edu/dos/policies/conductcode/index.php
HCAD librarian Maya Gervits has assembled excellent resources for students use on using images, citing, and plagiarism: https://researchguides.njit.edu/c.php?g=671665&p=4727920

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY: It is a violation of university policy to misrepresent work that you submit or exchange with your instructor by characterizing it as your own, such as submitting

responses to assignments that do not acknowledge the use of generative AI tools. Using AI in any form, including proofreading, needs to be cited. Students will be required to share their original Google Document upon request.

PLAGIARISM: It is extremely important that students familiarize themselves with a proper way to cite visual and intellectual sources. Plagiarism, whether deliberate or inadvertent, will not be tolerated. Simply put, plagiarism is using visual or intellectual material created by others without proper attribution, including AI-generated work. Even the use of one's own material for more than one assignment can also be considered plagiarism. Students should not do so without the expressed consent of all instructors involved.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION: It is the school's moral, ethical, and legal obligation to provide appropriate accommodation for all students with physical and/ or learning disabilities. If students need accommodation related to disabilities, all official documentation must be filed with the Dean of Students and the Disability Support Service Office. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester if accommodation is warranted. Dean of Students: https://www.njit.edu/doss/
Disability Support Service: https://www.njit.edu/studentsuccess/disability-support-services-0/

NAAB STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME OBJECTIVES:
PC.1 Career Paths—How the program ensures that students understand the paths to becoming licensed as an architect in the United States and the range of available career opportunities that utilize the discipline's skills and knowledge.
PC.2 Design—How the program instills in students the role of the design process in shaping the built environment and conveys the methods by which design processes integrate multiple factors, in different settings and scales of development, from buildings to cities.
PC.3 Ecological Knowledge and Responsibility—How the program instills in students a holistic understanding of the dynamic between built and natural environments, enabling future architects to mitigate climate change responsibly by leveraging ecological, advanced building performance, adaptation, and resilience principles in their work and advocacy activities.
PC.4 History and Theory—How the program ensures that students understand the histories and theories of architecture and urbanism, framed by diverse social, cultural, economic, and political forces, nationally and globally.
PC.5 Research and Innovation—How the program prepares students to engage and participate in architectural research to test and evaluate innovations in the field.
PC.6 Leadership and Collaboration—How the program ensures that students understand approaches to leadership in multidisciplinary teams, diverse stakeholder constituents, and dynamic physical and social contexts, and learn how to apply effective collaboration skills to solve complex problems.
PC.7 Learning and Teaching Culture—How the program fosters and ensures a positive and respectful environment that encourages optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation among its faculty, students, administration, and staff.
PC.8 Social Equity and Inclusion—How the program furthers and deepens students'

understanding of diverse cultural and social contexts and helps them translate that understanding into built environments that equitably support and include people of different backgrounds, resources, and abilities.

SC.1 Health, Safety, and Welfare in the Built Environment—How the program ensures that students understand the impact of the built environment on human health, safety, and welfare at multiple scales, from buildings to cities.

SC.2 Professional Practice—How the program ensures that students understand professional ethics, the regulatory requirements, the fundamental business processes relevant to architecture practice in the United States, and the forces influencing change in these subjects.

SC.5 Design Synthesis—How the program ensures that students develop the ability to make design decisions within architectural projects while demonstrating synthesis of user requirements, regulatory requirements, site conditions, and accessible design, and consideration of the measurable environmental impacts of their design decisions

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week 01	**Introduction - No Readings**	
01/27	Agenda:	Syllabus Review
		Charette 01
02	**Landscape and Culture**	
02/03	Agenda:	Reading Discussion
		People: Andre le Norte, Gertrude Jekyll, Fredrick Law Olmstead
03	**Special Topic: Nativist Plants**	
02/10	Agenda:	Reading Discussion
		Review Charette 01
04	**Beaux Arts to Modernism**	
02/17	Agenda:	Reading Discussion
		People: Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, James Rose, Burle Marx
05	**Modernism Origins and Actors**	
02/24	Agenda:	Reading Discussion, Lecture, Charette 02
		People: Lawrence Halprin, Luis Barragan, Thomas Church
06	**McHarg to Landscape Urbanism**	
03/03	Agenda:	Review Charette 02
		Reading Discussion
07	**Drawing and Site Analysis**	
03/10	Agenda	Reading Discussion
		People: SCAPE, Field Operations, turenscape
08	**Ecological Design**	
03/24	Agenda:	Reading Discussion
		Charette 03
09	**Art Based Practice**	
03/31	Agenda:	Reading Discussion
		People: Andrea Cochran, Martha Schwartz, MVVA, Ken Smith,
10	**Charette 02 + Engaging Critically with Landscapes**	

04/07	Agenda:	Reading Discussion, Review Charette 03
		Charette 04
11	**Special Topic: TBD**	
04/14	Agenda:	Review Charette 04
		Guest Lecture
12	**Special Topic: TBD**	
04/21	Agenda:	Guest Lecture
13	**Student Presentations**	
04/28	Agenda:	Students Present their Research Project
14	**Student Presentations**	
05/05	Agenda:	Students Present their Research Project

| 05/13 | ***FINAL SUBMISSION*** |

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