UST 608: Urban Design Seminar

Instructor: Gregory SJ Soltis
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Dates & Times: Mondays from 6:00-9:50 beginning January 16, 2017 Classroom: UR 241 (MB 0236)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course deals with Urban Design through:

THEORY (lecture + practice) – The study of the fundamental theories and concepts central to the practice of urban design from a planning perspective. Throughout the semester we will explore the intersection of the political, economic and social with the actual practice of creating place from the perspective of a design professional. Place within the context of this class constitutes the built environment from the street at the city block level, the realm of the neighborhood, and up to the full scope of the city. We will also consider other scales of design (such as graphic, industrial, interior design, etc.) and how they contribute to and relate to urban design. Lectures will be based on the required texts for the course - Redesigning Cities: Principles, Practice, Implementation by Johnathan Barnett, The Image of the City by Kevin Lynch, and Atlas of Cities by Paul Knox and Richard Florida. Supplemental readings will be provided by the instructor through Blackboard.

STUDIO – The development and implementation of graphic design skills for the purpose of analyzing and designing urban spaces. Students will receive a general background in design process.

- Studio time will consist of two primary components:
  - The fundamental concepts of design will be explored in class through studio exercises.
  - Basic hand drawing skills will be developed
COURSE GOALS

This course provides students with conceptual, practical and technical knowledge. At the end of the semester, students will have:

+ Broad familiarity with the practice of urban design
+ The ability to understand and interpret the urban built environment
+ Introductory knowledge of key design principles and tools
+ Experience with the design process
+ Improved analytic, graphic, and presentation skills

*Talk to the Instructor as soon as possible if you are having trouble keeping pace with the class.*

COURSE FORMAT, ASSIGNMENTS, AND GRADING

COURSE FORMAT/ ATTENDANCE

The class includes a mix of lectures, discussions, in-class exercises, documentary films, guest speakers, and student projects and presentations. To receive maximum credit for assignments, you must address all of the requirements and submit work on-time. Due dates are listed with the assignment descriptions below and on the Weekly Agenda. Late work will be penalized ½ of a letter grade for every day late (i.e. a project worthy of a B+, but turned in one day late, will receive a B).

This course uses CSU’s Blackboard system to disseminate information, including readings not included in the textbook. Contact the University Help Desk (216-687-5050) or the Center for E-Learning (http://www.csuohio.edu/elearning/) for issues with Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS

STUDIO

In Class Studio Exercises (15%) Attendance at all classes is required. Students will complete and review design exercises with the instructor in a group setting. Students will be given full credit for the completion of each in class exercise. These include a Hand Drawing Skills Seminar that will be taught in sections throughout the semester. Text for the hand drawing skills seminar will be available in pdf format on Blackboard after the first class period unless otherwise noted by the instructor. We will learn computer drawing skills as well and you will be required to purchase a subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud.

Sketchbook and Reflective Journal (15%) DUE each class for discussion. Sketchbooks will be reviewed each class through the presentation and discussion of one sketch by each student. Throughout the semester you will practice sketching and reflective journaling. These important
skills require you to observe urban space; decide why and how it is interesting; determine what urban design principles are either expressed or ignored by the space; and translate that to paper via sketches and thoughtful written insight. **You must purchase and use a sketchbook and pencils.** Any sketchbook that is at least 5x7 will do but you may wish to use a larger one – just make sure it has plain (i.e. unlined, ungraphed) paper. I prefer spiral binding – it is easier to use in the field. You can purchase a sketchbook at most art supply stores, including Blick Art Materials (Mayfield and Coventry in Cleveland Heights), Michael’s and Pat Catan’s. By the end of the semester, your sketchbook must include no less than fifteen (15) sketches of urban space. Additionally, you must write brief (one to two sketchbook pages) reflections on the urban space you sketch. You are encouraged to bring your sketchbooks with you on any field excursions we take.

I will check your sketchbooks at the beginning of each class and for a final grade on April 24th. By the midterm you should have seven or eight sketches to be on track. I will return your sketchbook to you in class on May 1st. **You will be graded on the thoroughness and completeness of your sketchbooks, your progress in developing sketching skills throughout the semester, the diversity of urban perspectives you capture, and the thoughtfulness of your reflections.**

**THEORY**

**Class Participation** Students should complete all assigned readings prior to class and come prepared to participate.

**PROJECTS**

**Photographic / Sketch Essay** (5%) DUE 1/30, with in-class presentations. One of the essential tools of understanding and interpreting the urban built environment is observation. For this assignment, you will choose a neighborhood, district or corridor and complete a photographic essay documenting its built environment. You must visit the location, observe it, and decide what elements makes it a great place to you. Then, using photography and one hand drawn sketch or map, document those features and prepare a graphic representation telling the story of the place’s physical character. A graphic representation can include both images and text, but must not depend on a dense narrative. During class on February 3rd, each student will present their photographic analysis and essay. **You will present using Powerpoint and are limited to 20 seconds per slide. Additionally, you will turn in the photographic essay using no more than five 8.5x11 sheets of paper (single-sided).** The Powerpoint slides and paper submission do not have to be identical. **You will be graded on the thoroughness of your observations, the clarity of your graphic representation, and your in-class presentation.**

**Rural – Urban Transect Essay** (5%) DUE 2/13, with in-class presentations. The transect is comprised of a series of zones that transition from sparsely populated agricultural and natural lands to the dense core of major metropolitan areas. Using the transect designed by new urbanists Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company as your guide, you will document the transition along one of our metro areas main thoroughfares using photographs and figure – ground
You will present by pinning up your drawings for review by the class and discussing the nature of each place you chose along the transect.

**Neighborhood Analysis (20%)** DUE 2/27, with in-class presentations. Complete a design analysis of a neighborhood of your choosing. You should focus on the area’s design elements, following the ideas of Kevin Lynch, Edmund Bacon, Gordon Cullen and other course readings. During class on February 22nd, you will present your analysis during a pin-up session and are limited to 10 minutes. Additionally, you will turn in (also on February 27th) a hard copy of your analysis on 8.5x11 or 11x17 sheets of paper (single-sided). The submission must present your analysis graphically. You can include both images and text to do so, but should not use a dense narrative. You will be graded on the thoroughness of your analysis, your in-class presentation, and the clarity of your graphic representation.

**Public Transport Essay (5%)** DUE 4/10, with in-class presentations. Good public transportation is probably one of the most important elements of a well functioning city. You will use public transportation for a time we determine in class and report your findings. You will present your findings with photographs and maps in PowerPoint format.

**Design Project (35%)** DUE 5/8 Using the skills and knowledge gained throughout the semester, you will complete an individual, mini-design project for a neighborhood site of your choosing within Cleveland, an inner ring suburb, or town center within the Cleveland-Akron-Canton metro area. The place you choose must be urban in nature. The project involves the following due dates and steps:

- Site selection and rationale (DUE: 1/23): Submit a one-page written description of your site (location, neighborhood, boundaries, etc.) and your rationale for choosing this location. You will also submit a list of stakeholders. Remember: your design project site will be the same neighborhood used in your midterm neighborhood analysis.

- Desk critiques ongoing (1/30-2/27): Be prepared to discuss your initial analysis of your site. This can include any or all of the forms of analysis learned throughout the semester (i.e. photography, image mapping, etc.). You will develop a thorough understanding of your site throughout the semester and have identified a “design problem” that your project will correct or improve. A desk critique involves one-on-one discussion with the instructor and is a chance to ask questions, discuss sticking points, and gain feedback on your work. Use this opportunity to further your ideas!

- Desk critique (3/16): Be prepared to discuss your initial design concept. You should have alternative ideas that address the “design problems” you identified.
A final presentation on 5/6: We will dedicate part of the last class and the final exam time to student presentations. We will work out the order of presentations and exact timing by the midpoint of the semester, but you should generally plan on speaking for no more than 10-15 minutes, leaving time for questions, comments and critique. **You will present your site, analysis, design problem, and recommended solution.** The presentations will utilize Microsoft PowerPoint and will communicate your ideas graphically (rather than textually).

Final submission on 5/6: Along with your presentation you must submit a printed document of your design project. The document must include the following sections:

1. Introduction to the site: location, general description
2. Design analysis of the site
3. Design problems: including how you identified the problems and why they are a problem.
4. Design alternatives: rough sketch/draft of various ideas
5. Design solution: your final recommendation, graphically represented using the tools and knowledge gained throughout the semester.

The document should be well-designed and prepared as a graphic presentation of your ideas. This is not a traditional research paper and it should not be text-heavy. Rather, your text and images should work together to form a cohesive whole that both visually and textually explains your site and design solution. We may choose to do presentation boards in lieu of a paper format.

**ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING**

**YOUR FINAL GRADE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:**

**STUDIO**

In Class Exercises 15 %
Sketchbook 15%

**THEORY IN PRACTICE**

Photographic / Sketch Essay 5%
Rural – Urban Transect Essay 5%
Neighborhood Analysis 20%
The “I” grade is given when the work in a course has been generally passing, but when some specifically required task has not been completed through no fault of the student. An “I” grade can be assigned by the instructor when all three of the following conditions are met:

1. Student is regularly attending/participating in the class and has the potential to pass the course;
2. Student has not completed all assignments and has stopped attending/participating for reasons deemed justified by the instructor; and
3. Student has notified the instructor prior to the end of the grading period. X Assigned by the instructor when an attending/participating student has stopped attending/participating without notification and has not completed all assignments for reasons that cannot be determined by the end of the grading period.

An “X” automatically becomes an F if not resolved by the last day of instruction of the following semester. An “X” also will be reassigned by the University Registrar when no grade is submitted by an instructor.

**Grading scale** is as follows:

- **A** 92.51—100
- **A-** 89.51—92.50
- **B+** 87.51—89.50
- **B** 82.51—87.50
- **B-** 79.51—82.50
- **C+** 77.51—79.50
- **C** 69.51—77.50
- **D** 60—69.50
- **F** < 60

*NOTE*: This syllabus, and the course assignment due dates are subject to change at the Instructor’s discretion. You will be notified by a Blackboard Announcement of any changes.
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Cheating or collaborating on assignments, plagiarism (copying others work in any form without proper reference and citation), or any other form of academic misconduct is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Consequences for academic misconduct are based on university regulations, and are grounds for a grade of “F”.

The CSU Student Handbook defines plagiarism as “Stealing and/or using the ideas or writings of another in a paper or report and claiming them as your own. This includes but is not limited to the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement.”

Please refer to the university student handbook for further information, including penalties for plagiarism at http://www.csuohio.edu/studentlife/conduct/acadregs.html.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

“Educational access is the provision of classroom accommodations, auxiliary aids and services to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their disability. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services at 216-687-2015. The Office is located in UC304. Accommodations need to be requested in advance and will not be granted retroactively.” Students should notify the instructor as soon as possible if they have been granted an accommodation through the Office of Disability Services.

REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL READING MATERIALS

The following required texts can be purchased at the CSU bookstore, or online. It is also available at the University library or through the Ohiolink library system:

REQUIRED:

*The Image of the City* by Kevin Lynch

*Public Places Urban Spaces* by Matthew Carmons, Steve Tiesdell, Tim Heath and Tanner OC
OPTIONAL:

*The Genealogy of Cities* by Charles P. Graves

Atlas of Cities by Paul Knox and Richard Florida

Grid/Street/Place: Essentials Elements of Sustainable Urban Districts by Nathan Cherry

Other required course readings may be found on CSU’s *Electronic Course Reserve (ECR)*, on Blackboard, or on the Internet, as directed by the course schedule below. CSU’s ECR is available at the following website: [http://scholar.csuohio.edu/screens/m_course.html](http://scholar.csuohio.edu/screens/m_course.html)

SUPPLY LIST

1. Adobe CS subscription
2. Sketchbook (8.5 x 11 or larger with spiral binding)
3. Roll of trace paper
4. Drafting dots or drafting tape
5. Pack of multicolored sharpie pens
6. Pack of multicolored Paper Mate Flair pens
7. Micron / Prismacolor (or some other brand) technical drawing pens. Get sized 01, 03, 05 and 08
8. Circle Template
9. Adjustable triangle and/or 45|45|90 triangle and 30 |60 |90 triangle. Make sure your triangles have beveled edges.
10. Either a Rolly Ruler or a T-Square
11. Optional – engineer’s scale and an architectural scale