Theories of Landscape Architecture

Graduate Program in Landscape Architecture

16:550:553 3 credits
Spring Semester 2015,
Mondays, 12:35 pm - 1:55 pm
Thursdays, 12:35 pm - 1:55 pm
Blake Hall 148

Instructor: Dr. Wolfram Hoefer
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Office hours posted at Blake 115

Nothing is more practical than a good theory. Theory helps us to understand and improve our actions. Theory is created through thinking. Progress in theoretical thinking is made by critical reflection of existing theories, adding to the existing body of knowledge. This course discusses theoretical aspects of the disciplinary core of Landscape Architecture as an academic as well as a professional field. It further presents relevant theories for understanding interdisciplinary relations with fine arts, humanities and biological and environmental sciences.

This year we will relate our discussions to international urbanism, and how evolving ideas about the city influence the interpretation of landscape across the globe.

Each student will take responsibility for one particular aspect related to that by leading class discussions and a thorough critical reflection in writing. This will enable students to define individual research interests and pursue them in relation to the existing body of theoretical knowledge.
Components

**Lectures**
A series of lectures will provide a context for readings and discussions. They will address theoretical aspects of the disciplinary core of Landscape Architecture as an academic as well as a professional field and present its interdisciplinary context. Lectures will further foster discussions on how this disciplinary core of Landscape Architecture Theory is related to other theories in the arts, humanities and sciences and how such theories relate to environmental design and the nature, essence, meaning and communication of space.

**Readings**
The lifeline of this seminar is an active and creative discussion. Due to the very diverse background of the student body in this graduate seminar, some texts might occur to be more relevant to your interests than others, however, you are expected to read and prepare all material assigned for a class. This includes that you prepare at least one question per reading. Feel free to elaborate a little on that question and please post it at least four hours before the class meeting on SAKAI. These questions will support the discussion in class.

**Discussions**
Guided by the weekly reading, the discussions will complement the lecture material. You are strongly advised to bring a print of the assigned reading with your personal marks and underlines to the classroom. This will help to address questions and insights that occur while reading the text. Each student is expected to take responsibility for one seminar discussion through leadership in preparation and class discussion. It is suggested that the topic of the discussion is related to your research paper.

**Papers**
In addition to active and engaged discussions, all students will contribute to the class via a paper. The paper will be developed in four steps (see contribution). The topic of the paper might be chosen from the list of class discussion topics. Literature listed is to be considered a starting point and you are strongly encouraged to provide additional readings. You are invited to incorporate aspects of your own academic and professional experience and further pursue your individual research interest. Or you may prefer to investigate a new topic; even a point of view questioning positions you have always agreed upon. The goal of the papers is adding to the existing body of knowledge in Theory of Landscape Architecture, reflecting the diversity of backgrounds presented in the course and at the same time allow a comprehensive overview over our field.
**Contribution**

**Reading Question**
Prepare your reading questions and post them on SAKAI prior to the class as shown on the due date.

**Paper Step 1 Outline**
Choose one topic for your research paper considering the provided list. Your choice might be guided by interests that you already bring into the class room or you might rather try something new. This choice might help fostering your individual research interest to be pursuit in you master thesis or final project. In a short initial text you will describe why you choose the topic, define at least one research question and list additional literature. We will discuss these questions in class and will then develop a mutual agreement on the analytic context of your research and how it will be delineated from your peers work.

**Paper Step 2 Draft**
You will document the research on your chosen topic in a comprehensive paper. A submitted draft of this paper (word document) will be reviewed by two of your class mates: peer review.

8-12 pages, including diagrams/images, WORD file

**Paper Step 3 Peer Review**
A proper review consists of productive written comments on the text. Use the Word review function.

**Paper Step 4 Presentation**
You will prepare the class discussion of the topic acknowledging the reading questions of your peers. You may introduce your thoughts with a presentation, using media as appropriate. The reading for that period will be selected by you. Please make sure that chosen additional literature is available to the class at least one week prior to your presentation.

Your classmates are expected to engage in a lively discussion about the topic and give productive comments on you verbal presentation. The outcome of that seminar session and the comments by your peers shall guide you when revising your paper.

20 minute verbal presentation, preparation and leading of the class discussion

**Paper Step 5 Final**
The final version of the paper will be part of our course documentation. The layout shall reflect the standards of a design program. Please make an effort to relate your topic to the overall theme. Submit the complete 10-15 pages with images as InDesign file (the complete package folder!) and as PDF.

Please follow the Chicago Manual of Style for any document you produce. All written contributions by students to the success of the class will be placed on SAKAI/assignments.
Classes

Faculty presented overview of general theories and approaches

1/23 Introduction: The role of theory in the design process
Open discussion.

1/30 International Urbanism 1

2/3 Meaning/Semiotics

2/6 Meaning/Hermeneutics

2/10 & 2/13 Judgments of Beauty

2/17 Good Taste and Success

2/24 European Landscape

2/27 American Landscape

3/3 Asian Landscapes

3/6 Hispanic Landscape

Ross, Michael 2010: Claiming Latino space. cultural insurgency in the public realm. In: Hou, Jeffrey ed.:Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities

3/10 Post-Industrial Landscapes,

3/13 International Urbanism 2
Suggested topics and readings for student lead discussions

This list does not match with the number of students enrolled in the class. In a collaborative process we will outline the individual topics and assign the readings. The first of 12 student lead sessions will be 3/23, the last will occur on 4/30.

Meaning and Form

Treib, Marc; Must Landscapes Mean?; in Theory in Landscape Architecture; Simon Swaffield; 2002; University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. p.89-108.


Space and Experience

Goldfinger, Erno 1994: The Sensation of Space In: The Art of Enclosing Space,


Bachelard, Gaston 1958: The Poetics of Space;


Nature versus Culture Myth


Language and Representation


Ecological Design


Global versus Local Experience

Except for circumstances truly beyond the student’s control, all assignments are due at the dates and times specified throughout the semester. Projects that are incomplete on the due date should still be submitted on the date it is due to receive at least partial credit. Any work submitted late will be penalized a letter grade for each day past due. Working beyond a due date is both unrealistic in a professional setting and unfair to your classmates in this course.

If you encounter any personal circumstances that inhibit your ability to fulfill the requirements of this course, you should immediately contact the instructor. In addition, any student with a special need, circumstance, or disability, should make an appointment to see me during the first week of classes.

Departmental policies allow for three excused absences. Four or more absences will automatically lower your final grade by one letter. Content missed due to an excused absence will be made available however, any missed quizzes or in-class assignments will not. In addition, an excused absence does not prolong an assigned due date for any assignment.

All information in this syllabus and course schedule is subject to change throughout the semester and will be announced in the scheduled lecture periods. It is your responsibility to stay informed!

**Grade Rational**

**A – Outstanding** – This not only means fulfilling the requirements, but impressing and going beyond the initial expectations of the project. The student has demonstrated a superior grasp of the subject matter coupled with a high degree of creative or logical expression, and strong ability to present these ideas in an organized and analytical manner.

**B – Very Good** – The student has demonstrated a solid grasp of the material with an ability to organize and examine the material in an organized, critical, and constructive manner. The projects and in class performance reveal a solid understanding of the issues and related theories or literature.

**C – Acceptable** – The student has shown a moderate ability to grasp concepts and theories for the class, producing work that, while basically adequate, is not in any way exceptional. This performance in class display a basic familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques.

**D – Unacceptable** – The work demonstrates a minimal understanding of the fundamental nature of the material or the assignment with a performance that does not adequately examine the course material critically or constructively. Students cannot graduate from the Landscape Architecture program with 2 D’s in required 550 classes.

**F – Failure** – The student has demonstrated a lack of understanding or familiarity with course concepts and materials. Their performance has been inadequate. Failure is often the result of limited effort and poor attendance which may indicate that the student is not in the proper field of study.

**Due Dates and Grades**

**Step 1 Outline (10%)**
February 16: 1 page paper submission and 4 min headline presentation in class

**Step 2 Draft (not graded)**
March 23: 8-12 pages with images, (WORD) “It shall feel like a final paper!” Submitted for peer review by class mates.

**Step 3 Review (10%)**
March 30: Peer review using WORD review function back to author and professor. The grade given is considering the quality of the review, not the quality of the paper itself.
April 6: Revised paper to professor
April 20: Professor’s review back to author

**Step 4 Presentation (20%)**
12 student lead sessions scheduled from 3/23, to 4/30

**Step 5 Final Paper (40%)**
4/30 Submit the complete 10-15 pages with images as InDesign file (the complete packaged folder!) and as PDF.
5/4 Combined seminar documentation

**Participation (20%)**
Active participation in class discussion and on time contribution of reading question.

**Fine Print**

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