Climate change is holding a grip on our future. Scientific projections draw a grim picture. If we don’t act now, the world will drown and burn at the same time – the end is near.

However, designers and planners are optimistic.

Our goal is to make the world a better place. Smart planning decisions and felicitous designs shall pave the way. Community participation is our approach to bring the public along. But what if the community does not share our point of view? If people don’t want to be saved? Is there an individual right to making wrong decisions?

The current discussions about the most appropriate approaches toward the pandemic and toward climate change are both circling around the question about the relationship between scientific findings and individual freedom. Our seminar will “ground” these questions in the topics of nature, landscape, and design. One American narrative about nature is shaped by the idea of virgin land as space for opportunity, the aesthetic perception of beautiful nature as promise of individual freedom and growth. Environmentalism is the juxtaposing American narrative; resources are limited, and we must limit individual choices to make a human future possible. These two opposing narratives shape our perception of places, and with that, the actions we take.

The first half of the seminar will introduce aspects of a theoretical framework about the reading (semiotics) and interpretation (hermeneutics) of places. A discussion about the judgments of beauty (aesthetics) will prepare consideration about taste and social structure, leading toward an analysis of diverse narratives on nature and landscape in western thinking. The second half of the semester invites students to develop individual research papers, exploring Fear, Free Choice, and Felicitous Design.
Components

Lectures
A series of lectures will provide a context for readings and discussions. They will address both, landscape as a physical object and landscape as a cultural symbol. Lectures will further foster discussions on how the various possible interpretations of landscape relate to the disciplinary core of Landscape Architecture Theory and to other theories in the arts, humanities, and sciences. We will explore how such theories relate to environmental design and the nature, essence, meaning and communication of space. A recap at the end of the lecture section will evaluate how much you were able to engage with the material.

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 then 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 to the according Canvas discussion. These questions will be distributed to support the discussion in class.

Discussions
Guided by the readings, the discussions will complement the lecture material. You are requested to submit reading questions for discussion on Canvas.

Further, 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. Average length between 4000 and 5000 words. The paper will be developed in five steps (see contribution). When developing your paper, imagine that your reader is a person who really wants to understand you. Please don’t consider this paper as just an assignment do get over with, but as an opportunity to develop a new idea. It is all about what you want to say.

The paper needs an introduction, why your question is important, what your goal is and how you will reach this goal. Each subchapter needs an introduction and a link to the next chapter, finally a conclusion explaining what the reader has learned and how this contributes to the topic of the class. Also, citations don’t speak for themselves. Explain why a citation is important for your train of thought, you may want to repeat a quote in your own words.
Contribution

**Reading Question**
Prepare your reading questions and post them to the according Canvas discussion, prior to the listed date of the class.

**Paper Step 1 Outline**
Choose a topic for your research in the context of *Fear, Free Choice, and Felicitous Design*. Your choice is hopefully guided by the overall class theme, contributing to the overall discussion of the group. This choice might help fostering your individual research interest to be pursued in your master project, however, simple double dipping with 550:582 is not appropriate.

In an initial text, you will describe why you chose 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.

1 page

**Paper Step 2 Draft**
You will document the research on your chosen topic in a comprehensive paper. Please submit a draft of this paper to Canvas and directly to two of your classmates for peer review.

8-12 pages, WORD file, including diagrams/images, and literature list.

**Paper Step 3 Peer Review**
A proper review consists of productive written comments on the text. Use the word review function. Please submit the completed review to Canvas and directly to the author.

**Paper Step 4 Draft to Professor**
Revised paper to professor. Subsequent improvements are highly encouraged.

**Paper Step 5 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.

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

**Paper Step 6 Final Paper**
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 *MLA manual of style* for any document you produce.
Classes

Faculty presented overview of general theories and approaches

1/20 Introduction: The role of theory for landscape research, planning, and design.

1/24 Fear, Free Choice, and Felicitous Design

1/27 Meaning/Semiotics

2/3 Meaning/Hermeneutics

2/7 & 2/10 Judgments of Beauty

2/14 Good Taste and Success

2/21 European Landscape

2/24 American Landscape


2/28 Post-Industrial Landscapes,

3/3 Suburbia and New Urbanism


Further reading suggestions

Fear


Choices


Design


Seggern, Hille von; Werner, Julia: Grosse-Bächele, Lucia (ed.) 2008: Creating Knowledge. Innovation Strategies for Designing Urban Landscapes. (German/English) [Übers.: Rachel Hill …]. · Jovis Verlag, Berlin


Girot, C. Freytag, A. Kirchengast, A. Krize-necky, S. Richter, D  2013: Topologie/Topology. (Pamphlet 15) gta publishers Zurich
Except for circumstances truly beyond the student’s control, all assignments are due at the dates and times specified throughout the semester. Contributions 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 grade step 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.

Attendance and participation in all lectures and class discussions are essential for success. More than three unexcused absences will result in a step reduction in your semester grade. 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. Changes will be announced in the scheduled lecture periods. It is your responsibility to stay informed!

### Due Dates and Grades

**Step 1 Outline (5%)**  
February 17: 1-page paper submission and 4 min headline presentation in class

**Lecture Recap (10%)**  
March 10: brief written test on lecture material in class.

**Step 2 Draft (not graded)**  
March 21: 8-12 pages with images, (WORD) “It shall feel like a final paper!” Submitted for peer review by classmates.

**Step 3 Peer Review (10%)**  
March 29: Peer review using WORD review function back to author and professor.

**Step 4 Draft to Professor (10%)**  
April 5: Revised paper to professor  
April 15: Professor’s review back to author

**Step 5 Presentation (20%)**  
Student lead sessions scheduled from 3/12, to 5/4

**Step 6 Final Paper (30%)**  
4/30 Submit the complete 10-15 pages with images  
5/4 Combined seminar documentation

**Participation (20%)**  
I class discussion and reading question.

### Fine Print

Except for circumstances truly beyond the student’s control, all assignments are due at the dates and times specified throughout the semester. Contributions 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 grade step 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.

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### 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.

**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.