

11:550:301 Social and Cultural Aspects of Design
Monday + Thursday, 10:20-11:40. Blake Hall room 128
(Some classes will be held outdoors @ The Yard.)

Spring, 2024
3 credits



Holly Nelson hgrace@sebs.rutgers.edu
Associate Professor of Practice
Office hours by appointment



This course satisfies Core Learning Goal: Writing in the Discipline (WCd)

Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

Program Goals

1. **Explore** space and spatial relationships.
2. **Understand** socio-cultural environments.
3. **Communicate** (written): Produce a professional case study analysis report.

Course Description

This course engages students in the complex relationship of people and the environment. Our discussions focus on the design and use of everyday environments as expressions of individual, community, and civic society. We consider how the environment shapes our everyday life and how we shape the environment.

Students are introduced to environment-behavior research and invited to explore ethical debates related to inclusion, participation, diversity, and sustainability. We approach social and cultural aspects of design through various frames such as context (city, home, street, etc.), physiology and particular groups' needs (elderly, physically disabled, children, immigrants, etc.), power dimensions (economic, law, environmental justice), race and ethnicity, and gender. We explore our own assumptions about what *should be*—which may or may not align with normative theories that influence environmental design. Contestation in public space, cultural expression, community memory, and user-initiated spaces complicate perceptions of public space and who is the public.

Course methods and theories are from the social sciences (psychology, geography, anthropology, and sociology) and environmental design (urban planning, landscape architecture, and architecture). Readings and films introduce students to “classic” and contemporary materials. Students learn methods for gathering information about users' wants and needs that may inform design. Using this social research, students produce a final report about a campus space that combines graphic elements and text to support their claim as to whether or not the space is inclusive.

Theories include:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Personal bias | Environmental determinism | Empowerment |
| • Territoriality | Normative theory | Participation |
| • Personal space/ proxemics | Environmental justice/social justice | Safety/ belonging |
| • Cultural landscape | Universal design | |

People in space: different user groups

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| • Class/economic status/poverty | Children/ youth | Gender |
| • Immigrants | Race/ethnicity | Homeless |
| • Seniors/elderly | Mobility/ ADA | Vulnerable populations |

Evidence and analysis:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Ethics in Research | Interview | Ethnography |
| • Self-reflection | Activity settings/ behavior diagrams | Participatory methods |
| • Observation | People mapping | |
| • Survey/ questionnaire | Case Study | |
| • Census | | |

Communication: clear, professional reports that summarize issues and findings.

- Diagrams, maps and other graphics
- Coordination of graphic and text
- Synthesis of group discussions (sharing perspectives, critique)
- Writing: peer critique

Classroom discussion (talking with one another) is an important aspect of the course and a part of the course grade. Whereas in studio, students share design ideas and perspectives, in this course, sharing perspectives can highlight how people use space differently and experience different degrees of belonging. Discussion-based reflective group exercises address designer bias and assumptions in several different contexts. Discussion grading is based upon:

1. *Reflecting about self and others* – Students reflect critically on their own and others’ perceptions and biases.
2. *Framing problems using diverse perspectives* – Students identify and explore social and cultural aspects of design using information that may be unstructured and which comes from diverse sources.
3. *Communicating values* – Students identify, ground, discuss, and communicate assumptions and normative values related to the social and cultural aspects of inclusive design.
4. *Imagining solutions and their consequences* – Students frame solutions to make a campus space more inclusive based upon observation, analysis and other social research.
5. *Applying concepts in the real world* – Students apply conceptual knowledge to specific contexts, and, in parallel, apply practical skills (such as techniques for analyzing social environments) to deliver the required end products.

Discussion is an important component of the projects.

The final project determines if The Yard at Rutgers is an inclusive public space. Students compile several types of social research for the final project: systematic site observations and a site user survey for determining who uses the site, combined with the use of demographic statistics for determining who does not use the site. Sharing and discussing findings in small groups provides a basis for determining patterns and broadening understandings.

Course Materials

Selected annotated readings provide opportunities to share perspectives. Several documentaries form the core course content, supplemented with shorter videos, visualize different environments related to course concepts and theories. All course materials are available on Canvas.

Course Preparation, Attendance, and Engagement

The course engages students in active learning through discussion, exercises, and assignments, including site visits for continued social analysis and observation. Students should come to class prepared to be full participants in discussions and activities. Plan ahead for the course; read the syllabus and major project assignments.

There is a strict attendance policy. Students are expected to arrive on time and attend the entire class period. If a student misses required site visits, they are expected to make them up on their own in a timely fashion. The only acceptable absences are health and family emergencies, and both require students to contact the instructor BEFORE

the absence. Following school policy, absences due to illness should also be reported: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> , although *reporting your absence does not mean you are excused unless you provide documentation (doctor note, etc.)*. More than 4 unexcused absences will result in a grade drop.

Assignments and Grading

All work must be turned in to Canvas on or before the due date. Late work will not be accepted as on time unless prior written arrangements have been made with the instructor. Otherwise, late assignments will be accepted with reduced points based upon number of days late. Repetitive late assignments reflect a larger issue and will result in significant grade reduction.

This is a writing course. Students must submit work for feedback and revision. Comments posted on Canvas are expected to direct student revision. Proper academic writing is expected, including proper referencing.

Participation Points **100**

Attendance + thoughtful participation in group & class discussions

Project Points **300**

PR1: Environmental Autobiography 10%

PR2: Movie Project: Gentrification, Public Housing, Homelessness, Surveillance of Public Space 24%

PR3: People Portfolio (visualized report about an everyday place) 66%

Academic Integrity Policy. Every member of the community bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld. Only through genuine partnerships among students, faculty, staff, and administrators will the University be able to maintain the necessary commitment to academic integrity. Please look at the full description at <https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf> . The website includes definitions of cheating, plagiarism, paraphrasing, multiple submission, fabrication, facilitating cheating or plagiarism, denying others access, and fair use of citations and common knowledge.

Final Letter Grade use the following scale:

x > 90	A
90 > x > 87	B+
87 > x > 80	B
80 > x > 77	C+
77 > x > 70	C
70 > x >	
60	Dx < 60 F

While the assignment of grades is ultimately the purview of the instructor, the department uses the following guideline for understanding appropriate grading in its courses:

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 displays 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.

301 SCHEDULE		
PR1 Environmental Autobiography		Assignment
Th 1.18	Course + Envi AutoB Overview The cultural landscape—History becomes physical <i>Film: Figure in a Landscape: A Conversation with JB Jackson 47m).</i>	Environmental Autobiography, Part 1 Annotated Reading: <i>Environmental Preferences</i>
M 1.22	Lecture: Power in the Landscape <i>Klinenberg: Palace of People</i> Reading: Mitchell, <i>Landscape, Part 1</i>	Environmental Autobiography, Part 2 Reading: Mitchell, <i>Landscape, Part 1</i>
PR2: Power in the Landscape		Assignment
Th 1.25	Gentrification. <i>My Brooklyn</i>	Movie PPT
M 1.29	Surveillance. <i>The Feeling of Being Watched</i>	Movie PPT
Th 2.1	Homelessness. <i>Dark Days</i>	Movie PPT
M 2.5	Public Housing. <i>The Myth of Pruitt-Igoe</i>	Movie PPT; Movie selection
Th 2.8	Breakout: PR2: Movie Themes (20m) Start: <i>Crip Camp</i> (to 1:01:00)	Work on presentation
M 2.12	Belonging: <i>Crip Camp</i> (42m) Breakout: PR2: Movie Themes (35m)	Finish <i>Crip Camp</i> + belonging questions Complete PR2 Presentation PPT
Th 2.15	Movie Presentations	Reading: <i>The Atlantic</i> Belonging questions
PR3 People in Space Portfolio Schedule		Assignment
M 2.19	Universal Design & Spatial Rights Lecture Movie Presentations	Reading: ASLA UD Guidelines
Th 2.22	<i>Film: Social Life of Small Urban Spaces 58m</i> Project 3: People Portfolio Overview	Reading: Soja--spatial justice
M 2.26	Site Visit: The Yard: Context -- University, City	PR3: Context Plan + Notes Reading: NB & Research Chart
Th 2.29	Lecture: What Makes a Good Public Space? Reference & In-text citations Workshop	
M 3.4	Lecture: Space @ Human Scale: Prospect-Refuge, Territoriality, Proxemics Breakout: Activity Settings PPT + in-class exercise	Annotated Reading: <i>Body Language</i> In-class Activity Setting Research NB
Th 3.7	Activity Setting presentations Start to fill in NB research chart <i>Activity Settings @ The Yard exemplars</i>	
SPRING BREAK 3.9-17		
M 3.18	Site Visit: The Yard Map—Reading the Landscape (Site Context + People)	Visit The Yard: Activity Settings/ People in Groups
Th 3.21	Report Format + Exemplars Lecture: Gender terminology <i>Film: How to Build a City for Women (23m)</i>	
M 3.25	Site Visit: The Yard—Gender Maps + Other nearby gathering spaces	Gender Maps, Other Spaces + Activity Settings Annotated Reading: <i>Invisible Women</i>
Th 3.28	Lecture: Demographics & Surveys + questions Spider Diagrams & Survey Questions	
M 4.1	Site Visit: The Yard--Mapping Race/ Ethnicity + Activity Settings	Race/Ethnicity Maps + Activity Settings Annotated Reading: Elijah Anderson, <i>The White Space</i> Draft Group Survey Questions
Th 4.4	Breakouts: Survey Questions—4 categories	
M 4.8	Site Visit: The Yard—Access/Mobility, Age	Access/Mobility Maps + Age Maps + Activity Settings PR3 Surveys Go Live
Th 4.11	Demographics Workshop Layout: Map Matrix	Map Matrix: Demographics Charts

M 4.15	Matrix Workshop—compare 3 types of research, UD, Spatial Rights, Group Discussion	Prepare Group Presentation
Th 4.18	Asset Mapping, Design Guidelines PPT Matrix Presentation	Present Matrix Asset Map
M 4.22	Matrix Presentation Class Discussion	Present Matrix Design Guidelines
Th 4.25	Report Format Survey Peer Review (Intro/Background)	Peer review: <i>bring prints to class</i> Intro/Background section + design guidelines
M 4.29	LAST CLASS: Overview Focus Groups: Share to martel@sebs.rutgers.edu	Focus Groups Workshop, as needed
PEOPLE PORTFOLIO DUE 5.9		



Portfolio Group Activity

STUDENT WELLNESS SERVICES

Just In Case Web App <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a university mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932- 1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space