



Comte de Rochambeau and George Washington

Praxis Studio OD Spring 2025, 5 Credits

Tuesday, 2:00 – 7:00 pm  
 Wednesday 3:50 - 5:15 pm  
 Thursday, 2:00 - 5:00 pm

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 Office hours by arrangement

## **Revolution, Open Space, and the Narrative of Democracy**

Public space has an important role to play in the functioning of our democracy. In public, we can discuss our points of view, argue in favor of (or against) decisions to be taken and find a compromise that works best for all. As we celebrate 250 years of the American Revolution, in this studio we will examine how the right to the public space was established through history and how that right is relevant for today. We will take a section of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail in Westfield, Union County as our case study. The design task is “to create an enduring and accessible outdoor space that combines recreation and history.” Physical public space is essential in the functioning of our democracy. Today, public spaces take different

The revolutionary troops walked through the Town of Westfield







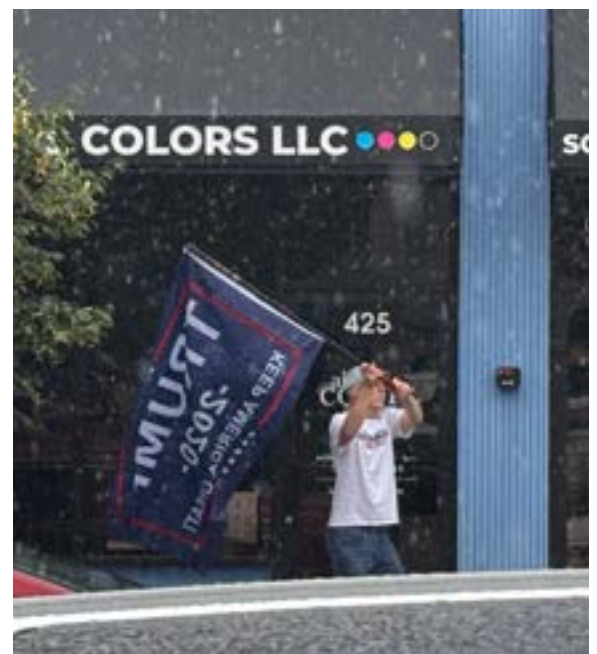
No Kings demonstration in Highland Park

## The Theme

forms. While social media platforms and other digital ways of public discussion have become more prominent, main streets or town plazas continue to fulfill important functions in pursuance of public discourse.

Landscape architects have the competence to shape physical space and explore how the form and function of public space can contribute to our democratic discourse. We understand how the meaning of a place can influence a conversation; how personal interaction can add to the meaning and how design can highlight existing meanings or add new layers.

Our case study will be the Town of Westfield in Union County, a wealthy town with a rich history, including a section of



The second demonstration October 2025

The other point of view.







Westfield has an attractive and vibrant downtown.

## The Place

the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail. The 700 miles of land and water routes were followed by the allied Continental and French armies between 1780-83, passing through Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and what is now Washington D.C. This march led to the American-French victory over British forces under Lord Cornwallis at the siege of Yorktown, Virginia, and essentially ended the War for Independence. The National Historic Trail also includes the allied troops' return march and water routes and related reconnaissance expeditions of the officers. Today, the Westfield section of that historic path became Mountain Avenue, South Avenue West, and Broad St. Our client is the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route New Jersey (W3R-NJ), a non-profit organization that



Colonial period Miller-Cory House Museum

9/11 Memorial, Westfield







Mindowaskin Park, Westfield

## The Task

was “formed to promote, preserve, and commemorate the march of the French and allied expeditionary forces through New Jersey.” They reached out to us with the goal “to create an enduring and accessible outdoor space that combines recreation and history.”

The members of this organization are engaged residents who care about history and its meaning for our society. In the studio we will go beyond the traditional enactment approach of historic events. Instead, we will ask questions that are relevant for the community in the twenty first century:

- What are other layers of history currently present in the public realm of Westfield? That includes monuments, markers and historic designations.
- The revolution happened in the fields, on the farms, and on the roads. What is today’s role of public space in political discourse? What is the contribution of landscape architecture?
- Considering celebrating 250 years of the founding of the United States, what is the role of public space for our democracy?

We will approach these questions in class discussions, teamwork and individual designs. The outcome will be a variety of design interventions in the public realm that contribute to the discourse about space and democracy.



## The Product

Work products will be defined in the final syllabus, but may include:

- Inventory and analysis mapping
- Story Maps
- Collages
- Drawings
- Models
- Installations