Landscape Architecture Design Studio 1

Landscape as Medium *

Landscape is a medium in the fullest sense of the word. It is a material “means” (to borrow Aristotle’s terminology) like language or paint, embedded in tradition of cultural signification and communication, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values.

Landscape is a medium not only for expressing value but also for exchanging meaning, for communication between persons – most radically, for communication between the Human and the non-Human. Landscape mediates the cultural and the natural, or “Man” and “Nature,” as eighteenth-century theorist would say…”

WJT Mitchell
Landscape and Power

Introduction
Developing a critical understanding of landscape as medium is fundamental to the practice of landscape architecture. According to WJT Mitchell in the opening passage above, landscape mediates the cultural and the natural. Mediate defined in Merriam-Webster as occupying a middle position; acting through an intervening agency.

Through the mediating act of construing and constructing landscape, nature and culture are joined, not in simple combination, but something more.

Medium (me·di·um) n.

1 a : something in a middle position b : a middle condition or degree : mean

2 : a means of effecting or conveying something: as
   a (1) : a substance regarded as the means of transmission of a force or effect (2)
   : a surrounding or enveloping substance (3) : the tenuous material (as gas and
dust) in space that exists outside large agglomerations of matter (as stars)
   <interstellar medium>

b plural usually media (1) : a channel or system of communication, information,
or entertainment — compare mass medium (2) : a publication or broadcast that
carries advertising (3) : a mode of artistic expression or communication (4) :
something (as a magnetic disk) on which information may be stored

c : go-between, intermediary

* This syllabus builds upon the studio syllabus, content and sequence previously developed by Tony Mazzeo.
**Studio Polemic:**
The first landscape architecture studio of the core studio sequence dwells in the middle, the space between theory and practice, drawing and ground, form and performance, artifact and effect. We will work simultaneously with the virtual [the drawing medium] and the real [the landscape medium]. Our studio works will be highly specific in material spatial form and at the same time engage the efficacious aspects of landscape.

As landscape architects, our first responsibility is endowing the human environment with legibility and delight through the *shaping and forming* of the landscape medium. Making legibly alluring design gestures that allow novel and ethical interactions between people and their environment, requires the designer to address issues of scale, context, and spatial organization.

**Studio Objectives:**
The first studio in the “core” landscape architecture studio sequence will take the form of an ongoing series of *studio projects*, aimed at giving physical form to the landscape medium. As already mentioned above, we will work from the middle, the space between the theoretical and technical aspects of landscape architecture. We will place particular emphasis on the relationship between drawing and the production of landscape space. The studio has two primary objectives:

**Objective I: Practice**
*To develop the conventions of landscape architectural design thinking through drawing, collage, and model*

The first objective is about learning and practicing the discipline of landscape architecture, which at its most fundamental understanding, is a discipline where the physical world of time and matter and the virtual world of ideas and concepts are first translated into drawings and then translated again as constructed landscapes. While this is a foundational understanding of our practice, it is not a complete definition of our scope; hence theory.

**Objective II: Theory**
*To develop an understanding of landscape as medium*

This second objective is to understand aspects of what it means to project our ideas of landscape onto the physical
ground and into the world. Therefore, the second objective pertains to the development of a theoretical understanding of:

1. What is landscape?

2. What is landscape architecture and what could it be / how does it operate?

3. What is the relevance of landscape architecture in our current cultural situation?

**Studio Learning Outcomes:**
Based on the primary objectives student will:

1. develop a deep understanding of the relationship between drawing/modeling and the actual making of landscape

2. develop an understanding that drawing/modeling is not only a means of communicating design intent, but also a means of generating design thought

3. develop an understanding of landscape as medium and its scope

4. develop a range of representational technique and method at a variety of scales, as well as the principles on which those techniques are based

5. develop a working understanding of when to use what type of representational application as it relates to conceptualizing, developing, demonstrating, and communicating design thought

**Studio Site:**
In this first studio we will work with existing CAP [College of Architecture and Planning] grounds bounded by Larimer Street to the north, Lawrence Street to the south, 14th Street to the east, and Speer Boulevard to the west.

**Studio Approach:**
Our studio method is shaped by the belief that the contemporary landscape project can be so much more than conventional practice allows. Within the “studio” environment, this polemic will be achieved through the critical consideration of the inherited processes, tools, and methods of current practice and the development of feasible alternatives.
The design process itself is made up of unequal parts: method, logic, and intuition; trial and error, repetition, and magic; imagination, passion, and compromise; blood, sweat and tears. Our aim is to help you begin developing a working understanding of your design processes as well as the necessary skills to effectively explore and communicate design thought. In short we will help you find, develop, and exercise your critical voice for construing and constructing landscape.

The method of work within this studio environment will be generative, requiring the use of logic, discovery, device, and invention, in studio and in situ. You will be assigned a number of different design problems throughout the semester. These design problems will be referred to as “projects” and will be described briefly below, and in detail by the instructors at the beginning of each new studio work. Each project will employ a variety of drawing systems, including collage, orthographic projection, parallel projection, perspective and model. Each project performed throughout the semester, with the exception of the final project, will be approached as “work-in-progress.” The final project will take the form of a refinement effort of all the previous projects. Since we will be discussing the development of ideas over an iterative process, it is important that students keep all work – including rough sketches and dead-ends – in an organized fashion throughout the term.

As such, our efforts will eventually evolve a self-contained set of drawings that will be presented at the end of the semester; however developing fluency for re-presenting the landscape medium will be the focus. Our goal will be to build a working vocabulary for developing, expressing, and communicating “landscape thought.”

**Studio Sequence:**
This studio is divided into five different modules. Each module will explore a variety of landscape architectural fundamentals that in sum will provide the foundations of a coherent design methodology that will continue to evolve in the core studios to follow:

1. Reading site, language and abstraction – 3 weeks
2. Developing an abstract garden – 3 weeks
3. Analyzing opportunities and issue identification – 2 weeks
4. Developing your design: threshold, path, place and arrival – 4 weeks
5. Preparing your work for presentation – 2 weeks

**Module 1: Reading Site**
Module 1 will introduce students to some of the many ways we can read sites in order to understand the myriad factors that make up the places we
will manipulate. The emphasis will be on personal observation and discovery supported by collaborative analysis and discussion.

**Week 1:** Site and studio introduced. Transect assignment introduced and initiated.

**Week 2:** Initial transect drawing due. Begin transect concept model.

**Week 3:** Revised final transect assignment due, presentations will be held during class. Introduce module 2.

*Transect Assignment:*
Each student will be assigned one of the topics below with which to organize their transect presentation. Any 2 dimensional form of representation is allowable including but not limited to analytical or expressive hand-drawing, photography, collage, story-boarding and found-object construction. Combinations of these techniques are recommended. These representations will be accompanied by a measured section drawing along the transect. The transect representation should be represented by no less than twelve separate scenes on a 18x24 board. Models will be no larger than 9x12. Topics to be assigned include:

- sky
- ground
- material
- view
- encounter
- enclosure
- texture
- verticality
- horizontality
- context
- intimacy
- sound
- color

*Module 2:*
Having explored the topical field of work in module 2, the next phase in the design process is to practice abstracting and creating forms that produce three-dimensional relationships which attend to the issues associated with that field of work. In addition to working with abstraction, the goal of this assignment is to begin to develop individual and shared languages for understanding the topical fields of work that each student explored in module 1. Each student will create a abstract garden in model form that is organized around the topical field of work from Module 1. These models will also be 9x12.
Week 4: Work in class.

Week 5: Small group peer charrette sessions to further develop garden model.

Week 6: Presentations of garden design strategies in model form. Introduce module 3

Module 3:

In this module, students will start to identify topical fields of work within a the specific landscape that they have been given to manipulate. Being able to critically evaluate a landscape and identify issues, opportunities and constraints is a crucial first step toward a successful design proposal.

Analysis assignment:
Each student will prepare one 18x24 board which outlines their critiques of the space and identifies issues, opportunities and constraints they see in the site. One additional board may be used if necessary. Representation of each issue identified should include at least two different modes of representation, one of which is to include a measured plan, section or elevation. The scale of the drawing should be appropriate to the issue identified and can range from a detail plan to a site section. The final presentation should identify what aspects of the space the students are going to address in their design proposal and the goals they will try to achieve with their design proposal. In addition, develop an image, precedent and tool kit library based on at least three of the terms used in Module 1, presented on one 18x24 board.

Week 7: First draft due.

Week 8: Presentations of critiques and identification of opportunities and constraints. Introduce module 4

Module 4:

Now that students have analyzed the site, the next step is to identify their scope of work and established a design strategy. The previous assignment is meant to assist students in initiating a design strategy which will guide their final design phase. This strategy can be either spatial or procedural. Spatial design strategies take the form of master plans or sections which indicate in broad terms what kinds of activities, materials and spatial devises will be located across the site. Procedural design strategies set out initial starting points and series of subsequent design interventions that build toward a final, formal proposal. These two broad
means of approaching a design problem can also work in tandem, sequentially or in a nested scales. In addition to other representation techniques appropriate to each student’s strategic mode, diagrams will play a crucial role in this module. Final design strategies will be produced on one 18x24 sheet.

Students will work in plan, section, elevation and detail drawings. The mix of drawing types will be determined by the project scope, but each student will produce at least one of each of these. The focus will be on describing the design proposal in measured drawings, but all relevant modes of representation can be used in addition as they are deemed effective for communicating the intent of the design. We will focus on several design concepts in particular; threshold, path, place and arrival.

Weeks 8-12: working and presentation sessions will be determined based on student progress and what is most helpful for the students in their design development. There will be at least one preliminary draft due and the final drawings will be due for presentation during week 11. Final presentations will be on two 18x24 boards.

Module 5:
This module will focus on sharpening the graphics of the final design proposal and revising the design drawings presented in module four as well as putting together one additional board that documents the design process of the studio, including intermediate drafts and ideas as appropriate. To this end, all work from the semester should be preserved for this purpose – including even rough sketches and explorations that were not followed up. Work during this module will consist of individual desk crits.

Final Presentations for Jury Week:
Weeks 13-15: Final presentations will consist of four 18x24 boards that re/define the design proposal and one 18x24 board that documents the design process… as well as curated selections from all prior modules.
Week 16: Documentation and submission of work during the semester.

Studio Culture:
Participation is not only required but critical to the success of the studio. Each student is expected to be present at each studio session for the entire period. Studio periods will take one of several forms: work days, pin-ups, and reviews.

Work Days
On work days we will typically meet as a group at the beginning of each period for a short meeting or lecture. Next, the instructor and/or teaching assistant will meet individually with each student for approximately 15
minutes for a *desk-crit*. You must be prepared each studio session with new work to enter into a discussion with your instructor.

**Pin-Ups**
A number of pin-ups will be scheduled throughout the semester. Typically a pin-up will mark the end of one exercise and the beginning of another. Each student will not only be required to present their own work, but to offer critical review of the work of their classmates as well.

**Reviews**
There will be a formal mid-term review and a final review. Each student will be required to present his or her project to a jury of invited guest and critics, who will offer criticism and direction.

The strength of the studio learning environment is the diversity of its participants. Therefore, we promote working in studio outside of studio hours (as much as possible) and discourage working at home. Please do your best to maintain a respectful, creative, and productive studio environment (see policies below).

**Readings:**
Studio readings will be handed out during the semester. The purpose of these readings is not to become experts in all the given texts, but to become acquainted with the depth of ideas affecting our perceptions of the landscape project in a broader cultural context. Students are strongly encouraged to develop their own polemical ‘lens’ throughout the semester, reading acutely the various texts we will encounter and be prepared to participate in discussions/debates relative to reading topics and studio works.

**Grading:**
A mid-term grade will be distributed after the mid-term review. A final grade will be distributed at the completion of the final review. You will be generally graded on the following, however, a more detailed grading matrix will be provided at the appropriate time:

- Module 1: 20%
- Module 2: 20%
- Module 3: 10%
- Module 4: 40%
- Module 5: 10%
You will be evaluated on the strength of your concepts the skill with which you express them. You will also be evaluated based on being prepared for each studio session, not for how much time you invest (although the two are mutually linked). More than two absences will deduct from your overall grade. Each studio project has a list of deliverables required by each student. A grading rubric will be provided to each student at the beginning of the module. This is the minimum required and we encourage all students to do more than what is listed. No exceptions will be made from this list without our consent and approval. We may not see every student every studio session. If no consultation is needed you are still expected to work in studio, on studio, during the entire 5-hour session. We reserve the authority to request any student to pin-up and discuss their ideas without advance notice.

Course Policies:

**UC Denver Student Attendance and Absences Policy:**
http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/employees/policies/Policies%20Library/OAA/Stud_entAttendance.pdf

**Grades of "Incomplete":**
Incomplete grades are given only in situations where unexpected emergencies or personal circumstances prevent a student from completing the course; students have up to one year (three semesters) to complete course requirements. Your instructor is the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete. Incomplete work must be finished within the time allowed or the “I” will automatically be recorded as an “F” on your transcript.

**Usage of Canvas/Email:** Canvas will be the primary method of communicating about the course. Students are expected to set Canvas to immediately deliver messages and notifications to an inbox that they check at least daily.

**Learning Environment Expectations:** My commitment is to create a climate for learning characterized by respect for each other and the contributions each person makes to class. I ask that you make a similar commitment. The following ground rules apply to all students and are designed to ensure a classroom environment conducive to learning for all students:

1. Pagers, beepers, cellular telephones, and handheld internet devices must be deactivated before class begins and remain deactivated throughout the entire class period.
2. Well-behaved and non-disruptive children will be allowed in class. Please discuss bringing your children to class with me ahead of time.
3. Students who engage in disruptive classroom behavior will be reported to the Office of Student Life for appropriate disciplinary action under the CU-Denver
Code of Student Conduct and, when appropriate, to the Auraria Campus Police for investigation of possible criminal action. The Code of Student Conduct can be found on the CU-Denver website, under Office of Student Life and Student Activities. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, arriving late to class without explanation or apology; leaving class early without explanation or apology; reading a newspaper or magazine; reading a book with no connection to the content of the course; engaging in prolonged private conversations; sleeping in class; eating, drinking, and/or gum chewing; passing notes; being under the influence of drugs or alcohol; harassment or verbal or physical threats to another student or to the instructor; failing to deactivate pagers, beepers, cellular phones, and/or handheld internet devices; bringing disruptive children to class.

Personal Circumstances affecting your work:
If you have personal or academic circumstances that are impacting your work, please see me before this proves detrimental to your progress as a student. If appropriate, please also make use of the Student and Community Counseling Center which is located in Tivoli 454 and provides cost-free and confidential mental health services to help students manage personal challenges that impact emotional or academic wellbeing. You can learn more at the Center at http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/counseling-center or by calling 303-556-4372.

Campus Assessment, Response & Evaluation (CARE)
If you have immediate concern about the behavior or safety of a student at CU Denver, help by making a referral to the campus Assessment, Response & Evaluation (CARE) Team. The CARE team’s purpose is to promote a safe productive learning, living and working environment by addressing the needs of students, faculty, and staff. If you or a classmate are in need of help, please submit a concern at http://www.ucdenver.edu/care or call 303-352-3579.

Electronic Cigarettes (e-cigarettes): The use of e-cigarettes is distracting in the classroom environment not only to the instructor but to other students. The use of e-cigarettes during all classroom activity is prohibited. Any student who does not comply with this rule will be asked to leave the classroom immediately so as to not disrupt the learning environment. Pursuant to the Auraria Campus Smoking Policy, the use of e-cigarettes indoors and within twenty-five (25) feet of any entrance is strictly prohibited. http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/employees/policies/Policies%20Library/Admin/Smoke-Free.pdf

Religious Observances: Inform me in advance if you have a religious conflict with a class attendance and you will be accommodated.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES
Disability Access: The University of Colorado Denver is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who want academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in Academic Building 1, #2116, Phone: 303-315-3510, Fax: 303-315-3515. I will be happy to provide approved accommodations, once you provide me with a copy of DRS's letter. Note: DRS requires students to provide current and adequate documentation of their disabilities. Once a student has registered with DRS, DRS will review the documentation and assess the student’s request for academic accommodations in light of the documentation. DRS will then provide the student with a letter indicating which academic accommodations have been approved.

Academic Honesty and Student Code of Conduct: Students are expected to know, understand, and comply with the ethical standards of the university, including rules against plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and falsification, multiple submissions, misuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty. For suggestions on ways to avoid academic dishonesty, please see the Academic Honesty Handbook: http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/academic_honesty.pdf

Plagiarism is the use of another person’s ideas or words without acknowledgement. The incorporation of another person’s work into yours requires appropriate identification and acknowledgement. Examples of plagiarism when the source is not noted include: word-for-word copying of another person’s ideas or words; the “mosaic” (interspersing your own words here and there while, in essence, copying another’s work); the paraphrase (the rewriting of another’s work, while still using their basic ideas or theories); fabrication (inventing or counterfeiting sources); submission of another’s work as your own; and neglecting quotation marks when including direct quotes, even on material that is otherwise acknowledge.

Cheating involves the possession, communication, or use of information, materials, notes, study aids, or other devices and rubrics not specifically authorized by the course instructor in any academic exercise, or unauthorized communication with any other person during an academic exercise. Examples of cheating include: copying from another’s work or receiving unauthorized assistance from another; using a calculator, computer, or the internet when its use has been precluded; collaborating with another or others without the consent of the instructor; submitting another’s work as one’s own.

Fabrication involves inventing or counterfeiting information—creating results not properly obtained through study or laboratory experiment. Falsification involves
deliberate alteration or changing of results to suit one’s needs in an experiment or academic exercise.

Multiple submissions involves submitting academic work in a current course when academic credit for the work was previously earned in another course, when such submission is made without the current course instructor’s authorization.

Misuse of academic materials includes: theft/destruction of library or reference materials or computer programs; theft/destruction of another student’s notes or materials; unauthorized possession of another student’s notes or materials; theft/destruction of examinations, papers, or assignments; unauthorized assistance in locating/using sources of information when forbidden or not authorized by the instructor; unauthorized possession, disposition, or use of examinations or answer keys; unauthorized alteration, forgery, fabrication, or falsification of academic records; unauthorized sale or purchase of examinations, papers, or assignments.

UC Denver has a license agreement with Turnitin.com, a service that helps detect plagiarism by comparing student papers with Turnitin’s database and Internet sources. Students who take this course agree that all required papers may be submitted to Turnitin. While students retain copyright of their original course work, papers submitted to Turnitin become part of the Turnitin’s reference database for the purposes of detecting plagiarism. Complicity in academic dishonesty involves knowingly contributing to or cooperating with another’s act(s) of academic dishonesty.

**University wide policies that are relevant to the syllabus:**
- Student Code of Conduct
  [http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/standards/students/pages/default.aspx](http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/standards/students/pages/default.aspx)
- Accommodations
  [http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/disability-resources-services/accommodations/Pages/accommodations.aspx](http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/disability-resources-services/accommodations/Pages/accommodations.aspx)
- Academic Freedom
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
  [services/resources/registrar/students/policies/Pages/StudentPrivacy.aspx](http://services/resources/registrar/students/policies/Pages/StudentPrivacy.aspx)
- Attendance
  [http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/employees/policies/Policies%20Library/OA/A/StudentAttendance.pdf](http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/employees/policies/Policies%20Library/OA/A/StudentAttendance.pdf)
- Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures
  [http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/ViceChancellors/Provost/StudentAffairs/UniversityLife/sexualmisconduct/DenverPolices/Pages/DenverWelcome.aspx](http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/WhoWeAre/Chancellor/ViceChancellors/Provost/StudentAffairs/UniversityLife/sexualmisconduct/DenverPolices/Pages/DenverWelcome.aspx)

**Important Dates to Remember and Grade Appeal Policy:**

Academic Calendar

Grade Appeal Policy