URBN 6611  studio II  spring 2016  langhorst  syllabus  page 1 of 9

URDN 6611 - 001  Spring 2016  mon, thu, 1.00 – 6.00 pm  7th floor studio

Instructor:
Joern Langhorst,  Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture
joern.langhorst@ucdenver.edu  phone: 303.315.1023  office: 320 W
office hours by appointment

between “green” and “gentrification” –
new infrastructure and alternative futures
for urban renewal

The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule at any time to accommodate
learning opportunities and needs, or conflicts with departmental and university events
.introduction:
This studio will investigate urban renewal - one of the most heralded and most contentious issues and processes that shape post-industrial cities. To this end, it will take a close and critical look at “green infrastructure” and “gentrification” as key elements, instruments and phenomena. It will explore their interrelations within urban renewal processes, using the framework of social and environmental justice, and identify and examine strategies and tactics for urban design.

It will look at the urban drainage basin roughly framed by I-25, I-70, Downtown, and City Park, an area that includes some of the most rapidly and radically changing neighborhoods in Denver. This already rapid pace of change will be exacerbated by the I-70 corridor proposals currently debated.

It will focus on rethinking stormwater infrastructure as a strategic and tactical tool to bring about meaningful change, incorporate urban vacant land, and develop both design and regulatory responses to generate urban (re-)development that is socially and environmentally just. To that end, it will address disadvantaged and disenfranchised demographics in general, and the homeless in particular in the context of urban renewal.

Consequently, the studio will take a critical position towards the pervasive contemporary rhetorics of “green”, “sustainable” and “resilient” cities.

Underlying this investigation is an understanding of infrastructure as a set of dynamic nested cultural, economic, social, ecological and technological systems, and the notion that all forms of use and occupation are inherently temporal.

The manipulation of infrastructure, literally taken as the "structure underneath" or structure that supports human life and activities plays a key role in delineating patterns of development and redevelopment and the distribution of economic and cultural activities. As such it is front and center of highly contested situations at the intersection of human activities and non-human processes, considering geophysical, ecological, cultural, social and economic forces and factors. Numerous authors have identified infrastructure as the biggest challenge and biggest opportunity for the design and planning disciplines.

The concept of infrastructure will be investigated as a critical base for the inception, evaluation and implementation of strategies, tactics and interventions, as a tool that interfaces with the ongoing processes that "make" city, landscape and place, and engage the relationship between humans and environment.

The studio will be based in an axiomatic understanding of the design and planning process as discursive, i.e. “design as argument”. All design and planning decisions have to be rigorously research- and fact-based. The studio will develop “Alternative Future Scenarios”\textsuperscript{1} – a scenario-based method that is based in a rigorous analysis and

\textsuperscript{1} Steinitz, C. 1990. A framework for theory applicable to the education of landscape architects (and other design professionals). Landscape Journal 9: 136-143 and Steinitz, C. 1995. Design is a verb, design is a noun. Landscape Journal 14: 188-200

The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule at any time to accommodate learning opportunities and needs, or conflicts with departmental and university events.
interpretation of current and future conditions and performances, and will include strategies and tactics for physical change, change of use and occupation, and policy.

**background:**
Post-industrial cities and landscapes are both result and bellweather of boom-and-bust economies. They produce some of the most radically changing landscapes, moving from intense activity and use to abandonment and neglect, and conversely are subject to rapid and spectacular redevelopment. Changes in the physical environment often have spectacular and iconic qualities – e.g. the massive voiding and depopulation of vast tracts of housing in Detroit, the iconic industrial ruins of rust-belt cities, and the swaths of destruction left by natural and man-made disasters. Others are often overlooked within the existing urban fabric - they are camouflaged by temporary and unregulated uses, and tucked away in comparatively inaccessible areas, often they are in plain sight but not obvious. They exist through a range of scales, and are, independent of their current condition, already accommodating and influencing conditions and processes, from microclimate to stormwater, from property value to development potential. As such, they are already acting as infrastructure.

Often less visible – but no less influential – are the attendant demographic changes – from affording opportunities to disenfranchised or disadvantaged demographics to their displacement – such landscapes are both result and agent of the "unevenness" that characterizes urban conditions around the globe.

Until recently, landscape architecture, urban planning and design have been based in perceived certainties – certainties that in the post-Fordist structural and cultural shifts have been identified as being rather elusive. As a result, there are attempts to develop models that are more responsive to and reflexive of the fluid conditions and processes that characterize many contemporary urbanizations, and attempts to engage the processes of urbanization that seem to occur outside or in opposition to many planning and design endeavors. The need to engage this intrinsic open-endedness and uncertainty in a critical manner that allows for flexible and context-sensitive proposals remains a key challenge.

The notion of "landscape as agency" that has significantly influenced contemporary discourses in Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Landscape Urbanism seems to be most obviously realized in the concept and realities of infrastructure.

The understanding of infrastructure as the sum total of the diverse structures and processes that enable human culture to exist in urban conditions, and the need to develop infrastructure that is responsive to changing demands and conditions will be guiding the investigations taken on in this studio. In any context of infrastructure the notions of function and performance are of critical importance – without function, there would be no such thing as infrastructure. In that sense it characterizes function and performance in its purest sense, and is the most obvious expression of the idea of "landscape as agency" – at least if it is to be assumed that landscape is indeed the

---


The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule at any time to accommodate learning opportunities and needs, or conflicts with departmental and university events.
most basic form of infrastructure. "At its most basic, landscape is the literal surface upon which all the objects and activities of nature and culture take place".\textsuperscript{6}

This discourse is very much located in the emergent "field" of "landscape urbanism" and "ecological urbanism" – a contemporary approach that will be critiqued in this studio. A key contention of this approach is that all landscape (and place, as well as any attempt to change it) is ultimately temporary. As such, the ability to understand and engage the temporal aspects of landscape and place becomes central, but conversely proponents of this approach have been accused of fetishizing process over form and result. At the same time, "New Urbanism" suggest a particular urban morphology and infrastructure as panacea. Both approaches claim to be able to generate "green", "ecological", "sustainable" and "resilient" cities. The studio will take a critical look at such claims in the context of social and environmental justice, and look in particular how disenfranchised and disadvantaged demographics benefit.\textsuperscript{7}

This studio will provide students with the skills, critical understanding and theoretical bases necessary to understand the role of infrastructure in the processes of urbanization, and to engage in and interface with those processes in a critical, reflective and ethical manner.

To that end, the studio will introduce readings that form a theoretical basis for the understanding of key ideas, methods and processes relevant to the manipulation of landscape and infrastructure in an urban context. They will also provide a basis to develop the studio project while understanding how it is located in larger contexts of social, cultural, economic and ecological issues and processes, and inform the criteria used in the analysis, evaluation, development and implementation of the studio project(s). As it is typical for emergent and project / issue based fields ad practices, theoretical and practical methods are borrowed from a range of other fields, disciplines and professions, and almost always create multi-, cross- and interdisciplinary settings. This studio will contribute to the student's ability to operate within that context.

It is the instructor's expectation that students will not be satisfied with just learning the skills, but in the best traditions of graduate education and reflective practice continue to critically interrogate the ideas and frameworks posited in this studio.

\textbf{.studio project:}

The studio will investigate and reimagine existing stormwater infrastructure as a central element in the development of alternative urban renewal approaches that will allow for Denver to continue to develop and meet current and future challenges in an efficient, ethical and responsive manner. It will propose physical changes to the existing stormwater system as a key strategy and tactic for urban renewal, evaluate their impacts on urban systems and human experience, and develop attendant policies to ascertain a socially and environmentally just outcomes. To this end, all proposals will have to address current and future demographics, with a particular emphasis on the homeless and other disenfranchised and disadvantaged demographics.

The project will occur in four phases:
- the mapping, identification, categorization and analysis of urban conditions,

\textsuperscript{6} Raxworthy, J & Jessica Blood (ed.) The Mesh Book: Landscape / Infrastructure (Melbourne: RMIT Press, 2004), 13
- the identification and analysis of patterns, systems and performances on a range of scales,
- the development of a range of alternative future scenarios involving stormwater infrastructure, identifying their physical and performative qualities and agencies, and the changes necessary
- development of strategies and tactics for the implementation

A critical understanding of the types, characteristics, qualities and performances of different infrastructural systems will be developed through the project and supported by readings, lectures etc. Particular emphasis will be on understanding the connection between infrastructure and the past, present and future processes of urbanization, as well as the relationship between form and performance.

**Class format and teaching philosophy**

This class is a studio, combining theoretical explorations with practical applications and clarifying the relations between the two. *It focuses on a theory of practice, and not on the practice of theory.* The fields of activity, criticism, analysis and invention engaged in during the studio project can be categorized as procedural, substantive, behavioral and normative.

The pedagogical approaches are closely linked to Donald Schoen’s idea of the “reflective practitioner”, emphasizing critical, creative and reflective thinking.

The success of this studio depends highly on the student’s – your – participation and rigorous, critical engagement with the material and project. The instructor strongly believes in the discursive character of design and planning as a critical practice and theoretical inquiry – to participate in this discourse requires solid preparedness and broad open-mindedness as well as the ability to give and receive critical review. As any design endeavor is essentially an open-ended experiment, I expect students to be both critical of premises, processes and products, as well as rigorous in crafting their arguments and evaluating their proposals. All work produced in the studio will be of the highest craft, made with quality materials and utmost diligence, high effort and careful work. If a student is insufficiently prepared the instructor reserve the right to not engage in or immediately terminate a desk-crit, presentation or other activity that provides feedback to the student until the student has adequately prepared for the review, presentation, etc.

The studio will provide a series of frameworks and engage in critical inquiries. The success of the projects will depend highly on the student’s ability to self-organize and motivate. In other words, you are in the driver’s seat – the instructor will provide the critical feedback.

The ability to work in a team and engage in a critical, respectful and constructive discourse is paramount to any success in both this studio and design practice in general.

The studio project will consist of both group and individual components. This approach is necessitated by the nature of the project, and provides learning opportunities that will prepare students to perform within a variety of settings that are typical for highly complex, challenging and contested projects in the “real world”.

For this to be successful it is tantamount for students to fulfill the tasks associated with their elected or assigned role and be pro-active and cognizant of the needs of the overall process and project. In other words, the project will only be as good and strong as its weakest component. The willingness to be flexible and respond to changing demands as the project develops, to share knowledge, skill, ideas, time and effort in a highly enthusiastic, energetic and intensely rigorous intellectual manner, aside from and beyond assigned tasks, is a key part of this studio exercise.

---

8 see Lang, Jon.: Creating Architectural Theory, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co), 1987
The instructor fully realizes that this poses many possible challenges. It is critical for students to communicate as early as possible, to ask questions if and as necessary and so address issues with the instructors before they become unworkable or unduly burdensome.

**studio objectives and learning outcomes**

The studio will explore and investigate the dynamic and complex qualities of infrastructure within a range of scales in the context of urban design and under the framework of social and environmental justice. This studio will contribute to students achieving the following learning outcomes of the Urban Design degree:

**Design excellence**: Students will be able to produce cohesive and comprehensive statements about the preferential design of the built environment, employing practices that lead to conceptual, analytical and formal transformation of existing problems into preferred solutions, while remaining attentive to germane content knowledge, professional and ethical criteria.

Specifically, students will be able to:

A. Identify, organize and assess existing physical, social, economic, political, cultural and regulatory constraints and opportunities.

B. Identify, unpack and reassemble the various layers, flows and systems of infrastructure (both natural and human-made) impacting a project area.

C. Rigorously evaluate alternative physical design strategies before selecting technically sound solution that addresses site and program.

D. Develop cohesive, foundational design solution that resolves extant conflicts or contradictions by responding to the identified contextual constraints, opportunities and processes.

E. Objectively evaluate alternative design responses presented by other students.

**Communication skills**: Students will be able to work individually or in groups to effectively and efficiently convey ideas using verbal, visual and graphic communication techniques appropriate for a wide variety of professional, academic and layperson audiences.

Specifically, students will be able to:

A. Write an organized, compelling and grammatically correct argument or thesis supported by well-documented research.

B. Prepare and present organized, professional, engaging confident and compelling verbal presentations that explain complex ideas and concepts to a wide variety of audiences.

C. Construct a well-organized, legible, coherent and convincingly laid out visual presentation that explains complex ideas and concepts in an efficient and effective manner.

D. Clearly articulate and document the iterative process of developing design ideas.

E. Constructively critique the work of others while actively listening to, seeking out, and responding to constructive criticism from peers, instructor and other experts.

F. Act as a respectful member of groups or teams, considering multiple viewpoints and strategies.

**Substantive knowledge**: Students will develop a critical understanding of the histories, theories and practices of urban design and its role in shaping both built environments and societal relations.

Specifically, students will be able to:

B. Identify the social, economic and political forces that shape the built environment.

F. Demonstrate an understanding of the conventions, standards and applications pertaining to the production of design plans.

**assessment**

Assignment of letter grades is based on University of Colorado Academic Policies and Regulations. To measure student work, the instructors will examine attendance, participation, production (effort and timely completion of projects), and quality of work.

Rubrics specific to projects and the class will be handed out.

*The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule at any time to accommodate learning opportunities and needs, or conflicts with departmental and university events*
Timely presence and active participation in juries, presentations, desk critiques and all studio work is required.

Students will be given a mid-term grade. Students with questions about their grade are encouraged to meet with their studio instructor to better understand how they can improve. The final grade will be given at the end of the semester.

.requirements

One hundred percent presence, participation, passion, persistence, and production are essential to your success in this design studio. Attendance in studio is mandatory; the faculty will drop grades for missed classes, unless cleared with instructors in advance or due to extenuating circumstances. Students should anticipate to work beyond studio hours, as demonstration of progress is expected at each new class. If meeting a requirement is not possible it is imperative that the student notifies her/his professor as soon as possible to discuss the issue.

Rubrics for major projects will be handed out; other projects may use checklists or other verbal and written evaluation methods. Letter grades will be assigned at mid-term and on major projects, as well as at semester end. Again, students are encouraged to discuss their evaluations with the instructors, since these discussions have proven to provide the most comprehensive and constructive feedback.

Please note that late work will result in a lower grade (1/2 letter grade per day – no exceptions outside the extenuating circumstances laid out in the student handbook – see fine print at the end of this document). Late work will only be accepted if you have previously contacted the professor, otherwise the assignment receives a failing grade. Plagiarism also results in a failing grade and will be reported to the appropriate University authorities.

.readings

tba. Most readings will be made available through Canvas. Please ensure that you have access. The following are recommended to gain an understanding of the studio topic and provide background:

Almy, Dean, "Center 14: On Landscape Urbanism", The Center for American Architecture and Design, The University of Texas at Austin, 2007


Raxworthy, J. & J. Blood (eds), The MESH Book: Infrastructure/Landscape, (Melbourne: RMIT

The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule at any time to accommodate learning opportunities and needs, or conflicts with departmental and university events
Press, 2004)


.schedule
A schedule that presents key dates to the best current knowledge of the instructor will be posted online on blackboard and continuously updated. While I am trying hard to stick to the schedule as close as possible, there will be unforeseeable developments and learning opportunities that will require us to change this schedule.

.the fine print: policies, rules, and regulations:

.students with disabilities
Students with disabilities who want academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 177 Arts Building, 303-556-3450, TTY 303-556-4766, FAX 303-556-2074. 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. Once you provide me with a copy of DRS’s letter, I will be happy to provide those accommodations DRS has approved.

.absences, tardiness, assignments and papers
Except for documented health or disability reasons and family emergencies, or other life incidents, I will not accept excuses for absences, tardiness, missed or papers not submitted. Documentation of disability or health related issues must be provided to Disability Resources and Services, 177 Arts Building, 303-556-3450, TTY 303-556-4766, FAX 303-556-2074. Please contact the instructors as soon as possible if you know that you might miss class or not make a deadline so that we can discuss arrangements.
Classes begin and end on time. 2 unexcused absences will be allowed before an academic penalty of one half grade reduction is imposed. Papers, projects, or any other required assignments that are turned in late will receive one half grade reduction for every day they are late. Any student who fails to turn in papers or other assignments will receive either a zero (0) or an F for the work missed.

.plagiarism
Sadly, plagiarism is a serious concern in Academia. Students are expected to know, understand, and comply with the ethical standards of the university, including rules against plagiarism. Plagiarism is the use of another person’s ideas or words without acknowledgement. The incorporation of another person’s work into yours requires appropriate identifications and acknowledgement. Instructors expect students to be familiar with and use proper citation formats, such as MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, APA etc. The following are considered to be forms of plagiarism when the source is not noted: 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

The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule at any time to accommodate learning opportunities and needs, or conflicts with departmental and university events
The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule at any time to accommodate learning opportunities and needs, or conflicts with departmental and university events.

basic ideas or theories); fabrication (inventing sources); submission of another's work as your own; and neglecting quotation marks when including direct quotes. The use of precedent in design projects is not just legitimate, but oftentimes necessary and will greatly enhance the quality of your projects. Project precedents will need to be referenced properly, similar to textual sources. Instructors will report cases of plagiarism to the appropriate departmental, college and university committees and assign a failing grade to the paper or assignment. If there are any questions or uncertainty regarding plagiarism and proper referencing practices, please contact any of the studio instructors immediately.

.classroom decorum

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 remain deactivated throughout lectures, discussions and presentations. Outside of those times and within studio they should only be used for communications pertinent to or necessary for the studio work.

2. 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 children to class.