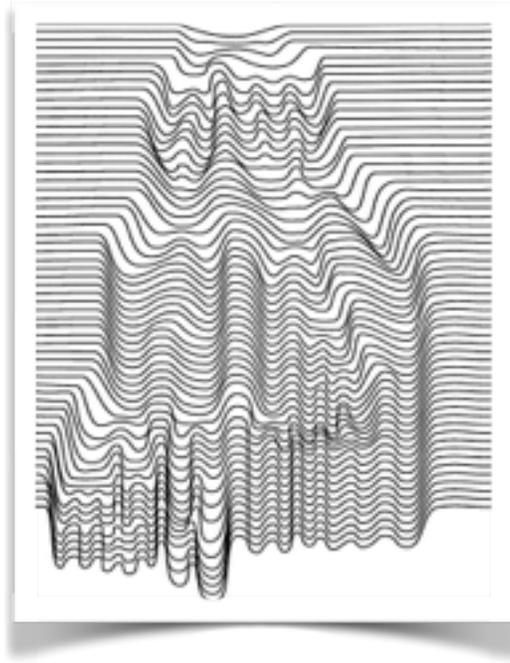


ALTERNATIVE INFRASTRUCTURES: FINDING NATURE IN URBAN DESIGN

Class meets Mondays from 2:00 to 5:50pm

Instructor: Briana Meier Office Hours: Tuesdays by appointment

Email: meier@uoregon.edu



*“We are going to associate the external world with surprises and events,
rather than with simply “being there”.*

- Bruno Latour

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

“Nature and the modern city are often perceived as opposites, separated by firm barriers.” (*City of Flows*, Maria Kaika) Through an examination of urban design theory, history and contemporary urban form, this course questions the common understanding of cities as divided from nature. The course draws from readings and conceptual frames in urban planning and design, philosophies of place and geography discourse to provide a transdisciplinary account of the ways in which cities and nature conceived of as separate, linked, one and the same and/or at odds with each other.

This course takes as a starting point the claim that a defining element of environmental studies is active engagement with real-world socio-environmental situations. Through lecture, in-class discussion, regular field exercises and a series of three field trips, students will encounter theory, practice and firsthand experience of the built environment. The course is intended to provide theoretical and real-world grounding in contemporary urban planning and design for non-design/planning majors. It is also intended to provide all students with some conceptual and empirical tools to be able to engage critically with the material aspects of the communities in which they live. The course provides an introduction to planning and design theory and practice and is appropriate for students without a design background.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who invest their time and effort fully in meeting course expectations and requirements should be able to do the following by the end of the term:

- Understand basic urban design theory and history,
- Articulate socio-economic-political factors influencing contemporary urban form,
- Recognize and critique conceptions of nature and city as separate from each other,
- Articulate viable courses of action for addressing environmental concerns in the built environment,
- Participate in an informed manner in local planning and design efforts, and
- Contribute meaningful ideas to public discourse about urban environmental issues.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

- Lecture
- Large group discussion
- Small group discussion
- Field exercises
- Possible guest speakers

COURSE TEXTS AND ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Required texts:

A course reader will be available.

Students are expected to obtain of the course reader and to bring the print version of texts to every class, including discussion section. All readings are subject to change. The instructor will provide advance notice of any change in the reading assignments. Supplementary readings, if used, will be distributed electronically in advance of class. You are expected to bring print copies of any electronically distributed reading to class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCALE

Attendance and Participation: 10%

C3 - Planning/Design Commission Meeting Analysis: 15%

Discussion Leader Assignment: 10%

Field Trip and News Article Reflection Essays: 30%
(2 at 15% each)

Urban Design Analysis: 20%

Final Project: 20%

A - 94-100	C+ - 77-79
A- - 90-93	C - 74-76
B+ - 87-89	C- - 70-73
B - 84-86	D+ - 67-69
B- - 80-83	D - 60-66

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: Students are permitted one unexcused absence. Students are expected to be active participants in class discussion. Three late arrivals or early departures will be considered an absence. No attendance 'make-up work' will be provided for missed classes. If you need to be absent for health reasons or for family emergencies, please notify me ASAP, but before the class that you will miss. Students who miss more than three class periods, including discussion section, will have their grades lowered by one letter grade. Students who miss more than five class periods, including discussion section, will not be eligible to pass the course.

Participation: This course will be highly interactive and will include various opportunities for active engagement during each class session, including exploratory writing, organized discussions, small group work, question and answer sessions, and so on. Activities that

include writing may be collected and reviewed as part of your participation grade. It is therefore essential that you come to class prepared to engage the instructor and your peers and to contribute your thinking and voice to class activities. Your participation will be graded based on the consistency and thoughtfulness of your contributions, and on your alert and respectful interaction with others in the class. As stated above, you must bring print copies of all readings to each class.

Field-Trips: This course will include three required field trips, as well as multiple walking field exercises during the longer Wednesday afternoon sessions. An all day field trip to Portland will be scheduled at the beginning of the term in order to best accommodate most students' schedules. Students are expected to participate in all field trips and field exercises. Students whose schedules do not allow participation in the Portland field trip must make alternative arrangements with the instructor by the second week of class.

Classroom-Community Connection (C3): Planning/Design Commission Meeting

Recently, the Environmental Studies Program has infused civic engagement opportunities throughout the Environmental Studies and Environmental Science curricula through the C3 initiative. Students in this course will attend at least one public hearing of a local planning or design commission. Students may attend a meeting in Eugene or another community. In-person attendance is required. In addition, students are expected to make direct contact by telephone or email with at least one commission member or staff person and to ask at least one question regarding the meeting topics. Students will be expected to incorporate responses into a three page analysis of the substance and process of the public hearing. Detailed assignment instructions will be provided.

Team Presentations

Working in teams of two or three, students will take turns facilitating a class discussion based on readings assigned for the day. The primary aim of student presentations is to launch an engaging and fruitful discussion, not to summarize or lead the discussion. Students are expected to provide the instructor with a handout that includes questions and appropriate quotations from the texts at least one week prior to assigned presentation dates. The instructor will provide timely feedback and students will be expected to incorporate the feedback into the class presentation.

Urban Design Analysis

This project will be due mid-term. Students will choose their own topics. Topic descriptions will be turned in by week four and the instructor will provide feedback. Additional instructions will be provided.

Final Project

The final project will be due finals week. An outline will be due in advance and the instructor will provide feedback to students on the outline. Additional instructions will be provided.