

Designing for People: The Social Basis of Architecture and Urban Design

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Office hours (2 hrs/week or by appointment)

Course Information

Upper-division course; fulfills *social processes* requirement for Architecture major; elective course for other majors; comprised of a twice-weekly lecture and a weekly discussion section (90 minutes each) [could be modified to be 1-hour lecture, 3-times/week or a 3-hour seminar once/week]



Berges de Seine, Paris, France, outandaboutinparis.com | Co-housing, McCamant & Durrett Architects, www.cohousing.com | Classroom, apps.carleton.edu

Introduction

When you arrived to class today, what made you decide to sit where you are sitting? Did you choose a spot next to someone else or not? Why are students and teachers separated in this space, and how do we all know where we are supposed to sit? And why do you have to sit while the teacher stands, anyway? What are the implications of this arrangement? In other words, what does this configuration convey in terms of power relationships or ideas about learning? How does it impact your behavior? What would happen if you decided to stand instead of sit?

This course investigates these and other questions relating to the assumed behavioral norms and (often unspoken) ideas that are embedded into the designed environments—in essence, any place or space that has been impacted by human intervention, including parks, buildings, gardens, streets, and sidewalks—in which we conduct our daily lives. Even empty spaces have social significance because we react to them, imbue them with meaning, and—sometimes—use them for activities that cannot be accommodated elsewhere. Indeed, built forms and the spaces they enclose are active participants in social life, signifying meaning, connoting value, and providing subtle cues for behavior. Said another way, all social life is taken *place* in a physical setting, so to understand cultures and societies past and present requires a careful analysis of built forms and the spaces they create.¹

Rather than study solely built forms (as one might expect in an architecture course) or the people and societies that inhabit them (as is often the case in social sciences), the unit of analysis most meaningful in this course is person-in-environment; in other words, the interaction between people and places.

¹ See Gieryn for more about social life as *emplaced* and McDonogh for the social significance of emptiness.

Look around: think about how this space impacts people's behavior, and how our behaviors shape the space. Imagine that you took a photo of the people in this classroom and then cut out the background. What you'd have is one person standing and a few people sitting, but little understanding of the context, the reasons for these postures and their differences. People sitting down could be at a basketball game, at a movie, or at a church. The person standing up could be waiting at a bus stop, standing at a bar, or riding a crowded subway car. Think about how the behavioral norms of these different contexts might be different than-or similar to—the space in which you sit right now.

In this course, we will explore the significance of built forms in human life at a variety of scales, from city plans to buildings to the designed objects with which our bodies come into contact (e.g., chairs and desks). In other words, we will study how and why people perceive, use, and occupy space, and also consider the broader implications for individual experience, human health, and social justice. To study the social use and implications of the built environment is necessarily an interdisciplinary pursuit; thus, we employ theories and research methods from public health, sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, and sustainability theories to answer the big questions of this course. From a design point of view, this course explores user needs and experiences of built spaces in order to inform the design of spaces that accommodate and celebrate a range of user needs. From a sociological perspective, this course considers the social processes that are both reflected in and perpetuated by built forms.

General Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- **Name** basic person-environment concepts and **understand** how they vary by social group
- **Apply** these concepts to the evaluation of existing environments, using a range of social research methods to investigate the behavioral and symbolic dimensions of user experience
- Use visual and verbal communication techniques to **propose** design alternatives and **articulate** expected outcomes

To aid us in working toward this objective, I organized this course into the following themes, each with a specific goal in mind:

- **Theme 1: People and their environments (*the social use of space*)**
Who uses this space? What behaviors do I see, and how do people make sense of this environment? What are different points of view?
In this module you will learn about basic person-environment concepts and understand how they vary contextually. Through a combination of experiential learning, personal reflection, and observational techniques, you will learn to assess the mutual impacts of designed environments and human behavior.
- **Theme 2: Environments and their people (*programming/design based on user needs*)**
Who might use this space? What would these users need to be comfortable, successful, or healthy? What would a successful design look like from a user perspective?
Armed with an understanding of basic and concepts and techniques central to environmental design research, in this module you will learn how a variety of methods—including observation, interview, and literature review—can help us better understand user needs and experiences in built spaces. Guided by the principles of evidence-based design, you will learn the rationale and process for translating human needs into the design and program of built environments. The centerpiece of this effort is a semester-long ethnography project in which you will employ each of these research methods to study a local site and inform a proposed redesign of the space from the user perspective.
- **Theme 3: Post-Occupancy Evaluation (*assessment*)**

What happens after a place is designed and people begin using the space? Are the assumptions made about user needs and use of the space true? Is this place successful, when, and for whom? Guided by my belief that all designed environments should be evaluated, in this module you will apply the theories and methods you have learned to conduct a Post-Occupancy Evaluation of a campus site (or safety audit). You will also learn to convey your findings and suggestions for improvement using visual and verbal methods.

– **Theme 4: Bringing it all together (reflection on learning)**

What have I learned about how environments are used and experienced? What unmet needs have I identified, and how would I recommend addressing them?

In this final module, we reflect on your findings from the POE and Ethnography project, revisit major concepts from the semester, and consider if/how these experiences might inspire each of us to continue learning and/or working toward a healthier, more just, and stimulating built environment.

Course Textbooks

- *Ethnography for Designers* (Galen Cranz)
- Online reader of articles and lecture notes
- Recommended:
 - *Programming* (Edith Cherry) – part
 - *Inquiry by Design* (John Zeisel) – part

Activities and Assessments

- **Participation and active learning (10%)**
 - Ethnography project, in 6 parts (individual assignment)
 - Post-Occupancy Evaluation project, in 2 parts (team-based assignment)
 - Attendance at office hours, in discussion sections, and/or demonstration of active engagement with course material in lecture and discussion
 - *See below for attendance policy*
- **3 “social factors in the world” assignments (30%)**
 - Over the course of the semester, bring in 3 built examples that illustrate something we discuss in class (for example, innovative uses of space, behavioral cues, safety concerns) using a different source for each; sources include: interviews, personal observation, a journal or newspaper article, a song, a poem, a novel, or a movie
 - *For each: state the source; describe (in 1 paragraph) how it relates to the course*
- **3 “photo-elicitation” quizzes (20%)**
 - Students will be shown an image (during lecture) and asked to respond to a question that relates to the image; good answers will include reference to course themes and key concepts; excellent answers will reference course readings
 - Students will have the opportunity to improve 1 exam grade with written reflection
- **Ethnographic design final report (30%)**
 - Part 7, final report, graded individually
- **Final report for Post-Occupancy Evaluation (10%)**
 - Part 3, final report, graded individually (with consideration peer evaluation)

Course Schedule

Course assignments, lectures, and learning activities will follow the four themes described above. (Q1-3 = quizzes; POE = Post-Occupancy Evaluation; ETH = ethnography project; CE1-3 = current event activity)

Week	Small Group Activity	Large Group Activity	Assignment	Reading
Design Research and Evaluation (needs and impact)				
1	<i>No section meeting (independent reading)</i>	1. Course intro		Cherry: Programming
		2. Levels of analysis		Cranz: Levels of analysis
2	<i>Proxemics, decoding activities; project intro.</i>	3. Basic concepts 1		Hall: Proxemics
		4. Basic concepts 2		Cranz, E4D, Ch. 1-5
3	<i>Observation activity and introduction; site selection</i>	5. Social groups	ETH1 assigned; CE1 assigned	Whyte: Sitting space
		6. Observation (Q1)		Zeisel & Bechtel: Observation
Identifying User Needs and Translating Into Design (design)				
4	<i>Interview and taxonomy activities; assign interview</i>	7. Ethnography	ETH1 due; ETH 2/3 assigned	Cranz, E4D, Ch. 6-8
		8. Affordable housing		Davis: Arch of aff. housing
5	<i>Housing needs/taste activity; lit review how-to</i>	9. Co-housing	ETH2/3 due; ETH4 assigned	McCamant & Durrett: co-h
		10. Literature review		Jackson: Urban design/health
6	<i>Healthy office design activity; operationalization</i>	11. Offices and cafes	CE1 due; ETH5 assigned	Gehl: life between buildings
		12. Healing gardens		Marcus: Therapeutic gardens
7	<i>Cognitive mapping activity; perception; public spaces</i>	13. The city, parks	ETH4 due; CE2 assigned	Childress; also Wolch/Byrne
		14. The campus (Q2)		Lynch: Cognitive mapping
8	<i>Carbon footprint activity; circular economy; systems</i>	15. Vulnerable pops	ETH5 due; ETH6 assign	Steinfeld: Universal design
		16. Sustainability		Jones: The psych. of sustain.
Evaluation of Designed Environments (evaluation)				
9	<i>Design activity: sustainable park/full service high school</i>	17. Design activity	CE2 due; ETH7 assigned	Cranz & Boland: 6 th model
		18. Intro to POE		DeClercq: POE; Zimring POE
10	<i>POE methods intro; group formation; proposals</i>	19. Intro to project	POE1 assigned; CE3 assigned	Zeisel: method chapter
		20. Fieldwork		TBD
11	<i>Ethnography poster evaluation, selection</i>	21. Initial findings	ETH6/POE1 due; POE2 assigned	Tufte: visual data
		22. ETH posters (Q3)		Hamilton: EBD
Synthesis (reflection)				
12	<i>Share POE results; semester reflection and evaluation</i>	23. POE results	CE3 due; POE2 due; POE3 assigned	Cranz, <i>the Chair</i> , Ch. 6
		24. Reflection on learning, 10-year plan		Marcus: housing as if people mattered
13	--	--	POE3 and ETH7 DUE by final date	

A Note on Discussion Sections

Designed as a complement to (and predecessor of) course lectures, weekly discussion sections provide a forum for you to: explore primary course themes and key readings in a smaller group setting; become acquainted with theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the built environment; and relate each of these ideas to your own experiences and the research you will undertake this semester. To achieve these goals, we will engage in an active learning process that includes small and large group discussions, brief activities and writing exercises, and visits to other buildings on or near campus. Given the essential role our weekly section plays in facilitating collective understanding of and engagement in the this course, weekly attendance, active participation, intellectual curiosity, and openness to respectful discussion are valued and expected of every member of section. *Specific expectations and responsibilities are further articulated below.*

Student Expectations and Responsibilities

Grading: Your (active and consistent) participation in this class is worth 10% of your overall course grade; as noted above, participation can take a variety of forms. Quizzes, which comprise 20% of your grade, are scheduled on 3 dates throughout the semester—be sure to mark these in your calendar and be present in class for each quiz because *no make-up quizzes will be offered* (unless arranged in advance with instructor approval). For each assignment, collectively comprising the remaining 70% of your grade, you will be given a detailed rubric that will more fully articulate the goals, expectation, and grading criteria for the assignments. We want each student to do well in this course, so if you don't understand something, please ask! Because the two major assignments—the ethnography and POE projects—are sequenced by weekly due dates, it is imperative for you to complete each assignment milestone in a timely manner. To assist you to this end, *we will not accept late assignments* (unless arranged in advance with instructor approval).

Attendance: Attendance in discussions is mandatory; thus, we will take attendance at each section meeting. If you need to miss class, it is your responsibility to (a) let your instructor know in advance and (b) follow up with a classmate to review any material or announcements missed during class.

Tardiness: All students are expected to be in section no later than 10 minutes past the listed start time for the class (“Berkeley Time”). If you are not in class by this point you are considered tardy. Three tardies will be considered one absence.

Participation: To be an active contributor to class discussions, it is essential for you to: attend section and lecture meetings each week; complete all required readings and assignments; and be prepared to share your personal observations or questions about the materials with which we engage. In my experience, class discussions and group activities are the most interesting, equitable, and fruitful when everyone participates fully; thus, participation and active listening are appreciated and will be noted and graded.

Ground rules: Each of us comes to this section with a unique perspective—including personal experiences and personality types—so to create a welcoming and supportive environment for us all, we will spend time during our first section meetings developing and agreeing upon a set of ground rules for our section.

Basic ground rules may include:

- *Right to pass*
- *Step up/step back*
- *Respect*

Email and communication: If you have a quick, non-urgent question, I recommend that you find me before or after lecture to discuss the matter in person. If you have a question that requires a short response, email is the best way to communicate with me. During the week (Monday – Friday) I will get back to you within 48 hours. If you email me during the weekend I will respond to your email by the following Monday. If you have a question that will require substantive conversation, please come to my office hours to discuss.

Electronics policy: *Studies have shown that students who take notes by hand typically retain more information than those who take notes on a computer (Bunge, 2015). In other words, technology use impacts learning!* Laptops and cell phones are not allowed in lecture, except in the following circumstances: (a) in-class presentations requiring the aid of a computer/projector; (b) instructor-approved internet research to look up information pertinent to class discussions. To adhere with Berkeley's guidelines for appropriate conduct, please do not add me as a “friend” or contact on Facebook or other social media sites.

Academic honesty: In this course you will have ample opportunity to learn new concepts and express your ideas in written assignments. In the university environment, the truthful representation of your ideas as your own is of the utmost importance. Plagiarizing or claiming someone else's ideas or work as your own is a serious offense and can

be grounds for dismissal from the university. To avoid academic dishonesty, be sure to use appropriate citations when quoting someone else's words, phrases, or ideas. If you are unsure of what needs or constitutes a citation, please ask.

For additional information about citations and Berkeley's code of academic honesty, please visit:

- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- Berkeley's Guide to Citations: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/citations.html>
- Overview of Berkeley's Academic Integrity Policy: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity>

Special accommodations: Please let me know if you require any special accommodations; this can apply to student athletes, student parents, students in the Disabled Students' Program, or any other status that might interfere with attendance and timely completion of assignments. If you are aware that you will miss class at any point this semester, please let me know by the second week of the semester (the week of our first section meeting).

Helpful Hints for a Successful Semester

During our first class meetings we will spend time discussing strategies to succeed in this course. I encourage you to use the free space below to record any ideas you find particularly useful—and revisit this list often throughout the semester.

References

- Bain, K. (2004). *What the Best College Teachers Do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bunge, S. (2015). The Science of Learning: An Overview for GSIs. (Keynote address, GSI Teaching & Resource Center, Spring 2015 Teaching Conference). Accessed 6/18/15 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Kh7P-wl1Fs>
- Gieryn, T. F. (2000). A space for place in sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 463-469.
- McDonogh, G. (1993). The Geography of Emptiness. In R. Rotenberg & G. McDonogh (Eds.), *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Space*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.