

Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico
ArqPoli – M.L.Arch. Program
San Juan, Puerto Rico

LA 6240

José Juan Terrasa-Soler,

M.Sc., M.E.S., M.L.Arch.

**Contemporary Issues in
Landscape Architecture**

Instructor

Tel. 787 630 6688

Fall Trimester 2013

jterrasa@post.harvard.edu

Wednesdays, 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm

www.enviroidesignstudio.com

ArqPoli, Room 401

Office hours by appointment

Landscape is at the heart of all experience.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Issues in Landscape Architecture is a graduate seminar designed to explore the most important current topics in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. The course is an elective in the Master of Landscape Architecture degree program and primarily intended for students in this program. Fourth- and fifth-year students in the Bachelor of Architecture degree program with a strong interest in landscape architecture are also welcomed. It is recommended, but not required, that students interested in the course have had an introductory course in the recent history of landscape architecture or architecture and two design studios.

The course will be conducted in a seminar format. Students will examine and critically discuss important theoretical texts and landscape architectural projects. Students are expected to complete assigned readings and discuss them actively in class. The students will also study, analyze, and present in class landscape architectural works that represent the variety of issues confronted in contemporary practice.

PEDAGOGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce the most important contemporary topics in the field of landscape architecture.
2. Provide a theoretical framework for issues of landscape architectural practice today.

3. Promote a critical reading of important theoretical texts written in the last 50 years.
4. Develop an ability to examine critically recent works of landscape architecture.
5. Develop an understanding of the relationships between theory and contemporary landscape architectural practice.

TEXT

We will use the following text as a basic source of readings in landscape architectural theory, supplemented by several readings from other sources (included in the Bibliography). The text is available from Amazon.com and must be acquired and brought to class:

Swaffield, Simon, ed. 2002. ***Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader***. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. [Referred to as “TLA” in the assigned readings list].

PROJECTS

The following landscape architectural projects will be studied in the course. The designer is in parentheses and the particular aspect of the project to be emphasized is mentioned in *italics* after the project reference:

1. Allegheny Riverfront Park, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Michael Van Valkenburgh) – *methodology*
2. Bamboo Garden, Parc de la Villette, Paris (Alexandre Chemetoff) – *language/meaning*
3. Ben Gurion International Airport Garden, Lod, Israel (Shlomo Aronson) – *meaning/language/cultural product*
4. Children’s Park and Pond, San Diego, California (Peter Walker) – *language/cultural product*
5. Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park, Emscher, Germany (Peter Latz) – *reclamation/cultural product*
6. Fossar de les Moreres, Barcelona (Carmé Fiol) – *meaning*
7. Fresh Kills Parkland, Staten Island, New York (James Corner, Field Operations) – *landscape urbanism*
8. Guadalupe River Park, San José, California (Hargreaves Associates) – *infrastructure/landscape urbanism*

9. Igualada Cemetery, Igualada, Spain (Enric Miralles & Carmé Pinós) – *meaning*
10. Interpolis Garden, Tilburg, The Netherlands (Adriaan Geuze, West 8) – *language/cultural product*
11. Jackson Meadow, Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota (Shane Coen) – *ecological design/context*
12. Jacob Javits Plaza, New York (Martha Schwartz) – *cultural product*
13. Miller Garden, Columbus, Indiana (Dan Kiley) – *language/cultural product*
14. MoMA Rooftop Garden, New York (Ken Smith) – *cultural product*
15. Municipal Ocean Swimming Pool, Leça de Palmeira, Portugal (Alvaro Siza) – *language/cultural product*
16. Parque Xochimilco, Ciudad de México (Mario Schjetnan) – *infrastructure/art vs. science/ecological design*
17. Sea Ranch, Sonoma County, California (Lawrence Halprin) – *ecological design/context*
18. Seaside Community, Seaside, Florida (Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk) – *language/cultural product*
19. Sydney Olympics Campus, Homebush Bay, Sydney, Australia (Hargreaves Associates) – *infrastructure/ecological design*
20. Tunnel-Footbridge, Lancy, Switzerland (Georges Descombes) – *infrastructure*
21. Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (Kathryn Gustafson) – *reclamation/cultural product*
22. Yokohama Portside Park, Yokohama, Japan (Hiroki Hasegawa) – *meaning/method*
23. The High Line Park, New York City (James Corner, Field Operations) – *infrastructure/landscape urbanism*

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Date	Topic	Assigned Readings
14-Aug-13	Introduction to the course. What is landscape architecture?	
21-Aug	Landscape architecture and other design disciplines. The “expanded field” of landscape architecture. Landscape architecture vs. engineering. Planning vs. “design.”	Meyer 1997; France 2003
28-Aug	The role of theory in landscape architecture. The “why” and “how” of landscape architectural practice.	TLA 1-21
4-Sept	Is landscape architecture an art or science/technology? Beauty, truth, good, and evil. <i>Presentations: MoMA Rooftop Garden; Xochimilco; Interpolis</i>	TLA 21-31; Olin 1997; Terrasa-Soler 2007b
11-Sept	The design process in landscape architecture. <i>Presentations: Allegheny; Jacob Javits Plaza; Ben Gurion; Miller Garden; Yokohama</i>	TLA 33-72
18-Sept	Meaning in landscape architecture. <i>Presentations: Bamboo Garden; Municipal Ocean Swimming Pool</i> PROSPECTUS DUE	TLA 73-121; Terrasa-Soler 2007e
25-Sept	Landscape as language and cultural product. Landscape architecture as social/cultural criticism. <i>Presentations: Children’s Park; Igualada; Fossar</i>	TLA 123-170
2-Oct	Ecological design / sustainable design – I. <i>Presentations: Sea Ranch; Westergasfabriek; Duisburg-Nord</i>	TLA 171-206; Arvidson 2004
9-Oct	Ecological design / sustainable design – II. Globalization vs. Regionalism. <i>Presentations: Seaside; Jackson Meadow</i>	Meyer 2000; TLA 207-219
16-Oct	Infrastructure as landscape / landscape as infrastructure. <i>Presentations: Sydney Olympics; Tunnel-Footbridge at Lancy</i>	TLA 220-230; Brown 2007
23-Oct	Landscape urbanism. Conclusion. <i>Presentations: Fresh Kills; Guadalupe River Park, The High Line</i>	Waldheim 2002; Birnbaum 2010; Allen et al. 2004
28-Oct	RESEARCH PAPER DUE, 10:00 AM @ ArqPoli	

EVALUATION

Grades will be determined as follows:

1. Attendance = 5%
2. Participation = 15%
3. Reading Assignments = 15%
4. Sketchbook = 5%
5. Research Paper = 30%
6. Project Analysis Presentations = 30%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Regular, on-time attendance to all seminar sessions is expected. Absences (justified or not) beyond two (2) are sufficient cause for a failing grade in the class.

Regular, significant participation in the seminar is also expected. Students are required to complete all reading assignments and prepare to actively contribute to the seminar discussion. Each week one or two students will be in charge of leading the discussion. These assignments will be given at the beginning of the course. All students, however, are expected to participate in the seminar discussion.

READING ASSIGNMENTS AND SKETCHBOOK

Brief, weekly, written assignments will be prepared and handed to the instructor at the beginning of each class. Each weekly text should be about a page in length and should raise questions about and critique the assigned readings for that week. The texts should not be a summary of the readings but reflect a **critical analysis** of the readings. These exercises are intended to help the student engage the readings and as preparation for class discussion. The collection of reading assignments will accumulate to form a Response Journal.

Students are also required to maintain a sketchbook in which they will explore **visually** the theoretical issues discussed in class. The sketchbook can take any form and the images can be produced in any medium. Diagrams, collages, and photomontages could be particularly useful. All entries, however, should have the date and a title. The instructor will collect the sketchbooks from time to time to review them. The sketchbooks will be collected at the end of the course and graded.

RESEARCH PAPER

Each student will develop a short research paper that will explore the relationship between contemporary theory and practice in landscape architecture.

- First-year students in the M.L.Arch. program are encouraged to critically reflect on their early experience as designers and the relationships between their personal attitudes toward nature and culture, their design approach, and the different theoretical positions discussed in class. Their research should explore a compelling body of theory and its relationship to their own early experience as designers.
- All other students will use a designer, a project or a body of theory as point of departure with the objective of studying the interrelationship of theory and practice in landscape architecture today. The papers must be research-based and critical in nature; mere descriptions of a subject or personal reflections and ramblings **are not acceptable** and will not get a passing grade. Students are strongly encouraged to select subject areas that relate to their own theoretical and design interests.

All students are encouraged to select the topic of the paper early in the term and consult with the instructor on the topic and potential sources. Students should use this requirement as an opportunity to explore and develop their own perspectives on design, design methodology, and theoretical frameworks for contemporary landscape architectural practice in the Caribbean.

The paper must be fully referenced, double-spaced, and about 10 pages long. Images should be used only if necessary to explain a point of the argument. Digital sources are only acceptable if properly referenced. A *prospectus* of the paper, including proposed title, a brief description of the research proposed, and a preliminary bibliography, will be handed to the instructor on the date indicated in the Schedule. The final research paper is due on the date indicated in the Schedule.

PROJECT ANALYSIS PRESENTATIONS

Each student will study in detail two of the projects proposed for analysis (see “Projects” above). The study will take the form of a precedent study. Students should pay particular attention to that aspect of the project specified in *italics* after each project reference in the project list above. For example, the person studying the Allegheny Riverfront Park (Pittsburgh, PA, by Michael Van Valkenburgh) will pay particular attention to the design *methodology* employed in the project. The projects will be assigned by the instructor at the beginning of the term.

The analysis will be presented to the class on the date specified in the Schedule and using PowerPoint, Acrobat or similar presentation software. The oral presentation

must be about 20-30 minutes long. The presentations will serve as a starting point for class discussions on each of the projects analyzed. The analysis must include reference photographs, concept drawings, diagrams, plans, section-elevations, detail drawings, perspectives, models, and any other kind of representation that could help convey the problem/program, context, concept, design development, and final realization of the project. An idea of how the project is used today (if completed) must also be conveyed. The students must also explain how the particular aspect specified in the project list above is expressed in the design and how the project relates to the theoretical issues to be discussed that week.

Each student must develop at least 1 drawing of their own that investigates some aspect of the project. The new drawings could, for example, take the form of new diagrams or new perspectives based on existing project documentation. The new drawings can be executed in any medium, including digital media, but they **must be original**.

In addition to the oral presentation, the students will deliver to the instructor a hard copy of the presentation in full color and a color copy of each of the new drawings, at their original scale, on the day the oral presentation is given to the class.

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