The Art of Landform

Time	Location	Credits
M W F	Lawrence	6
1 - 4:50 pm	307 / 308	

Instructor

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Description

In this studio-based approach to learning topographical and site engineering skills, we'll explore how landscape architects and artists create function, space, and meaning through the development of landforms and spatial programming. There are social, ecological, and artistic consequences inherent to the shaping of terrain. Designed topographies create specific experiences that relate to a programmatic intent. The manipulation of earth also creates a platform for ecological and other processes to unfold.

This course will introduce concepts and methods of grading, drainage, and topography through direct engagement with a design brief. Students will develop an original design proposal for a topographically enhanced, aesthetic and functional space. Technical exercises, field exercises and readings will complement the studio work.

The purpose of this course is to engage technical knowledge and exercises directly with the creative process and to go through all the phases of a design studio in a concentrated manner: design research, development, and realization. At the same time, readings on the design process, group discussions, and feedback sessions will allow students to develop their own voices as designers.

As this is an experimental approach to the subject matter, students will be asked to evaluate their experience at several points during the course.

Curricular Context

This class is required for first-year MLA (First Professional MLA) students.

Course content and Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course with a passing grade, students shall be able to understand and demonstrate skills and knowledge that allow them to:

- link topography to design.
- employ grading terminology and graphic standards to design projects.
- manipulate the contours and landforms.
- perform slope analysis and calculations.
- create earthwork designs.
- successfully and clearly develop site programming.
- engage the conceptual phases of the design process.
- articulate unique design concepts through plans, sections, illustrations, and text.
- present a design concept articulately and concisely graphically.
- present a design concept verbally.
- develop confidence and a personal 'voice' as a designer.

Studio Format

The term is organized as follows:
Weeks 1-3: Design Research and Analysis (precedents, site analysis)
Weeks 3-6: Design Concept Articulation
Weeks 6-10: Final Design Development and Refinement

Class meeting times are primarily structured around design critiques, class discussion, lectures, project work, site visits, and occasional guest presentations. Outside of class time, students are expected to analytically review selected readings, research similar project typologies both past and present, execute site visits, develop designs for intermediate assignments, and prepare for midterm and final reviews.

Grading

Consistent with all Department of Landscape Architecture studios, this studio is graded Pass/No Pass. This grading policy is intended to encourage critical inquiry and risk-taking that pushes the boundaries of contemporary landscape architectural practice. Formative feedback will be provided by the instructor, studio guests, mid-term and final reviewers. Summative feedback based on achievement of the course learning objectives will be provided by the instructor during exit interviews in Week 11.