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In the first part is taught all the Theory of Gardening, it being necessary, as everyone knows, to learn the Theory before the Practice, which is no more than Sequel and Execution of the Consequences and Certainties drawn from the former.

-Dezallier d'Argenville

The Theory and Practice of Gardening, 1709

Course overview

This course situates contemporary design ideas in their historic precedents and theories, and uses those intellectual roots as a means of reading, understanding and critiquing contemporary practice.

Lectures and readings will examine themes in landscape architectural theory, including theory as an inquiry in landscape architecture, and theories of context, form, making, use, and meaning. Students will analyze a modern or contemporary project through three of the five theory lenses discussed to understand the project as a theoretical as well as physical inquiry.

The course is open to all UO students, and fulfills the theory requirement for landscape architecture majors.

Course objectives

Through readings, lectures, discussions, and analytical projects, students will understand landscape architecture as cultural production, and be able to situate works of landscape architecture within cultural discourse. The course aims to increase students' ability to discuss and write about landscape architecture (their own and others' designs) within a cultural context of ideas and critiques; improve their ability to situate contemporary projects in a historic lineage of thought; enrich their own design skills; and enhance their critical thinking and writing skills.

Course Format

Class meets twice weekly for two hours. Classes will typically be structured around three modules:

Reading discussion: drawing out themes and questions from the readings

Workshop: in-class work to further students' critical and analytical skills, including verbal and graphic analysis of landscape architectural works

Lecture and case study: clarifying and synthesizing the class session topic