

LA 489/589 Landscape Architecture Design Studio

Mt. Pisgah Summit Design and Planning

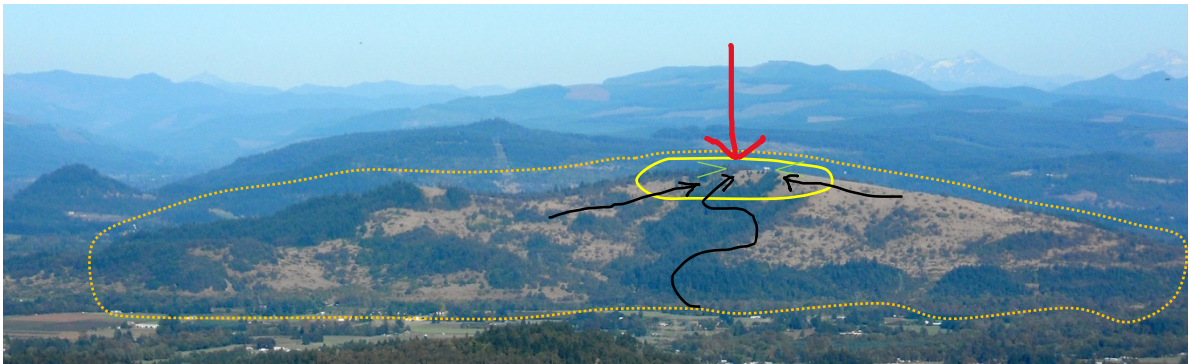
Envisioning solutions for a beloved public commons

Department of Landscape Architecture • University of Oregon • Winter 2019

Prof. Bart Johnson, Dept. of Landscape Architecture • Office hours: Wed. 10:00 AM -12:00 PM or by appt.

• 541-346-2235 • bartj@uoregon.edu

MWF 1:00-5:00 PM • LA 310 • 6 credits • Grading P/NP



Mt. Pisgah is an iconic landscape of the south Willamette Valley – loved for its views and trails, and prized for its rare habitats, including oak savanna, upland and wetland prairie, and floodplain forest. The Pisgah summit is the magnet for most people who use the site -- a regional, geographic and cultural landmark that draws people from near and far. Total visitation to the Howard Buford Recreational Area (HBRA), of which Mt. Pisgah is the centerpiece, now exceeds 400,000 visits/year (~50,000 unique people), *10 times higher than 25 years ago*, and nearly on par with Crater Lake National Park.

The Pisgah summit is also a sensitive habitat for plant, animal and insect species who are vulnerable to impacts from the very people who come to enjoy them. The summit landscape is relatively fragile and, because there have been no improvements to accommodate large numbers of visitors, it is being inadvertently “loved to death” by the thousands of people who visit at all times of the year, and in all kinds of weather.

The primary goal of this studio is for students to apply a toolbox of site investigative techniques and design processes for spatially explicit conflict resolution in a public natural area. These tools are intended to bridge critical inquiry and intuition, and to become a part of your lifelong process of learning by designing.

In this studio, we will:

- Assess the summit landscape and its role in the larger Mt. Pisgah visitor-use and habitat networks;
- Develop integrated site-scale and landscape-scale recommendations to protect the site and improve its value for both native species and different human user-groups;
- Focus our inquiries on understanding Mt. Pisgah as an integrated socio-ecological system (SES) whose fate is determined by intertwined human and natural processes.



Our clients are not only the many human user groups – hikers, equestrians, birders, trail runners, management volunteers, dog owners, event managers and more– but the native species who have made this place home for thousands of years, from prairie wildflowers to native bumble bees, vesper sparrows, black bears and cougars.



Students will apply techniques from environment-behavior observation and spatial mapping to understand why, how, where and when people use the site; assess their impacts in relation to other site priorities, and develop innovative proposals for how visitor use can be channeled through site design and management to fulfill user goals without degrading site ecosystems. We will work with different user groups to understand their desires and motivations, as well as their perceptions of conflicts with other user groups or ecosystem management processes. The latter include active habitat restoration, prescribed burns, tree removal and more.

We will also be anticipatory – examining projections for increased visitor use, climate change impacts, and the potential expansion of the 2,200 acre (900 ha) HBRA, with its with its 17 miles (27 km) of trails, to include the 1,270 acres (500 ha) Willamette Confluence area, currently owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy.

We will engage not only different HBRA user groups, but also key actors in its planning and management, including Lane County Parks, the Friends of Buford Park and the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum. We will meet with design and planning experts with rich professional experience dedicated to serving Mt. Pisgah and its vision. We will ground our work in past and current plans and policies, including the 2018 HBRA Habitat Management Plan and the 1994 HBRA Master Plan, to align our recommendations to these governing documents.



Processes and Tools

Theory:

- *Apply insights* from geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s theories of sense of place and place attachment, and from Rachel and Stephen Kaplan’s theory of how restorative experiences can be derived from linking exploration, understanding and meaningful action. *These will help us build bridges between the affections and experiences that different people and user groups have formed for Mt. Pisgah, and to link those visions to deeper understandings of the needs of its diverse species and ecosystems.*
- *Use socio-ecological systems (SES) theory* to explore how integrated social and ecological dynamics create, sustain and change landscapes, including the use of social network theory to illuminate how relationships among people and organizations can aggravate or help resolve conflicts.

Design Research Techniques:

- Apply environment-behavior fieldwork techniques to document visitor use and assess not only visitor’s impacts, but their desires and motivations
- Use stakeholder engagement tools to learn from their experiences and to help develop broad agreement for site design and management decisions

Tools and Technologies:

- Employ real-time sensors to analyze visitor use in time and space
- Use remote sensing tools including LIDAR to assess key landscape features and processes
- Explore the use of crowd-sourced spatial and observational data such as iNaturalist
- Learn from personal exploration: walking, sketching, recording and listening to the landscape to learn what it has to tell us

Learning Outcomes

Students will develop skills in exploring, conceiving and crafting landscape planning, design and management solutions based on theory, empirical investigations, stakeholder engagement, and design development.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe the current condition, context, and processes of change for a valued public landscape characterized by competing values and goals, by observing, recording and assessing physical traces and environmental behaviors in conjunction with remote sensing data and historical archives;
- Use stakeholder engagement tools and processes to help describe, assess, and resolve competing priorities for public lands management;
- Apply an iterative process of spatially-based investigations and proposals to create recommendations for design and planning interventions across multiple scales;
- Graphically represent landscape change and the evidentiary basis for design proposals to clearly communicate the proposal, desired human experiences and environmental processes in ways that can be critically evaluated by management agencies and the public.

Student Products

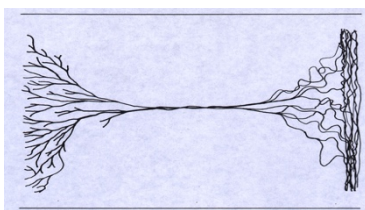
- 1) Assess the desired experiences of multiple user groups whose members visit the summit, and develop design and planning proposals to serve their needs while protecting important habitats and their associated native species under the guidance of site management

Students will participate in conversations and charrettes with members of different stakeholder groups to understand the perspectives and needs of both park users, and park stewards and managers, and to assess conflicts and synergies among these groups.

- 2) Develop an evidence-based argument for a mutually supportive set of planning and design documents at two scales: a) a *landscape planning strategy* for the role of the Mt. Pisgah summit in the HBRA user experience, and b) a *detailed site-scale design for the summit area* intended to enhance the collective user experience and constrain impacts on sensitive species and habitats and integrate human-use infrastructure with ecosystem management practices.

- a) The *landscape planning strategy* should identify a desired role for the Pisgah summit in the HBRA landscape, and recommend spatially explicit interventions to support that role through trail system design, viewshed management and visitor experiences. *For example, to what degree should park managers target increasing the human carrying capacity of the summit v. enhancing alternative iconic trail destinations to reduce pressure on the summit?*
- b) The *site design* should provide detailed recommendations for design and management of the summit environs in both its social and ecological dimensions. The ultimate goal of both components is to enhance the collective HBRA user experience while supporting native ecosystems and constraining visitor impacts on sensitive species and habitats.

Students will be able to adjust the degree of emphasis and effort they apply to each scale so as to meet their interests and support their assessment of what types of solutions are most needed.



**Integrate design processes
with stakeholder engagement
to craft solutions**

*Design Process Images,
John Lyle*

