**HJA Experimental Forest Studio Part I: Ecosystem Understanding through Play**

**Fall 2023**

**LA 4/589**

**Time:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. 1-5pm

**Location:** Room TBD

**Instructor:** David Buckley Borden (he/him/his)  
Lawrence Hall, Room 381  
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**Curricular Context:** Required studio in the  
BLA and MLA degree programs.

**Studio Prerequisites:** Successful completion  
of LA 4/539 studios or the equivalent (upon  
approval by instructor).

**Office Hours.** Immediately following studio on  
Mondays and Wednesdays, or by appointment.

**Credits:** 6

**Mid-term and Final Review:** TBD

**Studio Brief:** This intensive design-research  
studio is organized around research methods  
that actively employ solution-driven creative  
workflows within a rigorous design process.  
Students will learn a variety of “research  
through design” skills that will be transferable to  
a range of landscape architecture applications  
and scales. Maker-based workflows will  
be central to the studio’s narrative-driven  
creative process throughout the term. The site,  
inspiration, and initial community partner for  
the studio will be the HJ Andrews Experimental  
Forest (HJA) and OSU College of Forestry.

A follow-up LA 4/589 Winter 2024 term  
studio will focus on applying student design-  
research knowledge to a site-design with  
an environmental-education program at one  
of several HJA sites. This two-term studio  
sequence is an opportunity for intensive  
research and high-craft portfolio products.
Studio Description

This design-research studio is organized around research methods that actively employ maker-based creative workflows within a design process. Students will learn a variety of “research through design” skills that will be transferable to a range of landscape architecture applications and scales. The site, inspiration, and initial community partner for the studio will be the College of Forestry at Oregon State University and the HJ Andrews Experimental Forest (HJA) in Blue River, OR. This studio will explore the HJA and its ecological knowledge base at a range of scales as a means for research, design-narrative development, and environmental communication through community engagement “game” design and fabrication.

Students will select their own design research topic(s) in response to the place, research, and community of the HJA. Potential topics of inquiry include forest management, watershed stewardship, carbon dynamics, and natural and man-made disturbances, including wildfires. A list of HJA research programs can be found here. Building off the HJA’s research efforts, successful studio projects will articulate pressing environmental challenges of the Anthropocene, in terms of both design-research and a compelling design-narrative. Final studio projects will vary in response to student interests, aptitudes, and goals, and will likely manifest in a variety of design products ranging from spatial maps, thematic diagramming, environmental systems communication, problem-space articulation, and other place-based, narrative-driven products including a community-engagement game.

This studio will build student capacity for critical design-thinking skills in terms of landscape analysis, mapping, narrative, and research-through-design. Design-research methods will be incorporated in all stages of the studio process and include both indirect (literature, case study, and precedent review) and direct methods of design inquiry. Direct design research will include traditional landscape inventory, mapping, and analysis, but also employ research tools to drive concept generation. The studio’s process aims to expose students to a diversity of design research approaches, and includes artistic, adaptive, analytical, and systematic methods. The studio will embrace an iterative maker-based approach throughout the entire course of the studio. Given the research demands, and physical making process (wood shop and fabrication time), this studio will be very time-intensive.
Context
The HJ Andrews Experimental Forest (HJA) is a landscape of inquiry. Its mission is to support research on forests, streams, and watersheds, and to foster collaboration among ecosystem science, education, natural resource management, and the humanities.

The HJA is a center for ecosystem research in the Pacific Northwest. The research program has its roots in the establishment of the HJA in 1948 by the US Forest Service. The Andrews Forest became a charter member of the National Science Foundation’s Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) program in 1980. Long-term measurement programs continued on experimental sites and watersheds with a focus on questions about climate, streamflow, water quality, vegetation succession, biogeochemical cycling, and effects of forest management.

HJA research is ongoing, and continues to reveal surprising and important information relative to landscape architects and other allied professions proactively engaged in environmental stewardship.

Also relative to the design research studio is the Long-Term Ecological Reflections (LTEReflections) project, an arts and humanities program that takes place at the HJA and will continue for 200 years (2003 to 2203). The mission of the Long-Term Ecological Reflections program is to bring together writers, humanists, artists, and scientists to create a living, growing record of how we understand the forest and the relation of people to the forest, as that understanding and forest both change over time.

HJ Andrews Experimental Forest Research:
landslide simulation flume (top), stream gauge (middle), and heavily instrumented old growth tree (bottom).
Learning Objectives
By the end of this ecologic systems design-research studio, students should be able to demonstrate the following:

• An understanding and working knowledge of design-research methods and practices in transforming environmental research into an articulated design narrative;
• Knowledge of research-by-design methods including both direct and indirect modes of practice, including experimental workflows in both digital and analog media;
• The ability to clarify communicate your design-research in support of your final design project through effective graphic communication and written narrative;
• Proficiency in designing in a professional setting, including project organization, workflow, file preparation, and final presentation of a professional quality research-driven design project;
• Ability to balance the demands of a rigorous design-research project while simultaneously enjoying the creative process; specifically, have fun.

Communication
Our class will communicate through our Canvas site. Announcements and emails are archived there and automatically forwarded to your UO email, and can even reach you by text. Check and adjust your settings under Account > Notifications. Canvas will also be the go-to platform to access Zoom links to “go to studio” and schedule “live” office hours. Please let me know if scheduled office hours do not work for you and we will schedule another time.

**Studio Format**

The studio format will be organized around rigorous weekly project work, one-on-one critiques, pin-ups, peer reviews, guided class discussions, presentations, and guest lectures from HJA, OSU, Harvard Forest, UWLA, Rios, and other professionals engaged in design-research as part of their creative practice.

The studio will be organized around a variety of hands-on design research methods that include the creation of drawings, models, and props, as intentional research methods for concept development, community engagement, and design-research narrative.

Beyond class meetings, students will be required to read selected readings. Optional readings are highly encouraged.

Outside of studio time, students are expected to complete exercises, develop work for weekly submissions, and prepare for periodic pin-ups, and reviews. All students are afforded one unexcused late submission (no questions asked) per term. An excused late submission grade will be reduced by one point per day. Otherwise, unexcused late submissions will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.

The studio will generally follow a regular schedule:

- Monday: lecture and or workshop
- Wednesday: desk critique and discussion
- Friday: pin-up and reviews

Occasional guest lecturers will be scheduled as their professional calendars permit.

Zoom links to studio are available on Canvas and through an Outlook calendar invite. The same link will be reused for entire term.

Expectations
I expect that the highest professional standards to be maintained throughout the term. Active in-class participation, open communication, and consistent progress is very important. In addition, class participation also includes respecting the rights and property of others, working cooperatively, and completing assignments satisfactorily and on time.

Grading
Consistent with all Department of Landscape Architecture studios, this studio is graded Pass/No Pass with formative and cumulative feedback.

Exceptional effort, experimentation, and creative risk-taking will be rewarded in final grade. Minimal effort, an unproductive attitude, missed submissions and tardiness will generally be rewarded with a failing final grade.

Attendance and Preparation
Preparation for all critiques, pin-ups, and reviews is essential. Preparation not only includes organized drawings/models for discussion, but also an investment of critical-thinking into the creative process and intellectual development of the work. Barring extenuating circumstances, if a student fails to prepare, they will forfeit one-on-one critiques with instructor and or guest critics. All students are afforded one excused critique (no questions asked).

If online options are required, students are expected to log in for the live lectures and desk crits for their entire duration. In case of technical difficulties related to “live” participation, you will need to watch the recorded sessions at a suitable time and demonstrate it through our future communication.

Beyond technical difficulties, barring extenuating circumstances, students are allowed one excused absence from studio meeting times. Otherwise, a student’s final grade will be reduced by two-points per unexcused absences.