The Craft of Design:
The Elwood Center for Climate and Ocean Health

In this studio you will design a three-story, ~30,000 sq. ft. waterfront complex with a program that is part research institution and part center for public education. We will develop the detailed program in the first days of the term (a task you should all experience as part of your professional training), in addition to the research and public engagement facilities; there will be a cafe, a climate and ocean science library, a wharf for docking boats along the west edge of the site, and an expectation that you will create some beautiful—albeit modest—outdoor spaces.

Purpose
This studio will emphasize design integration in the context of an explicit intention to craft evocative, aesthetically meaningful buildings. Students will be asked to make buildings of strong character with an identity that derives primarily from the materials and systems of construction they employ. The goal will be to make beautiful space, light, and architectural form using expressive systems of structure, construction, and high-performance enclosures. The class will be an opportunity to make comprehensive designs in preparation for the terminal studio level and should be considered an advanced vertical studio drawing on students’ substantive preparation in systems of construction, structure, and ECS (or their willingness to develop competence in those technical areas quickly).

From day one, we will expend much effort working on the exterior of the buildings: massing and sculptural form; façade composition; making something special of the roof; enclosure; and materials, tectonics, and details.

Project
We have a fabulous five-sided, 15,000 sq. ft. waterfront site on the shore of Lake Union in the Eastlake neighborhood of Seattle (47.636364, -122.391942), adjacent to a small waterfront park and a houseboat community to the north, and industrial waterfront buildings, commercial fishing infrastructure, and moored working vessels to the south. The southwest axis aligns directly with the Space Needle. The view due west looks over the water to Queen Anne Hill, which, at sunset, would be silhouetted, sparkling, against the colored sky. The studio projects will draw on the rich typologies of industrial, educational, and institutional architecture. Buildings must engage the waterfront, the street, and the eclectic urban context; and must demonstrate an ethos of sensitivity to the neighborhood context, appropriate technology, and environmental responsibility. The principal structural material will be mass and heavy timber, with careful use of concrete, steel, glass, or other materials at the designer’s discretion.

Process
Working through the elements of the program, from small to large, a construction vocabulary will be developed for the building. The full range of media for design development will be required: diagrams and concept models as generative tools to develop architectural ideas; sketches and site models to explore the urban context; digital and physical models to test the relationship between structure, space, and light; freehand and measured drawings for generative details in the systems of structure, construction, and enclosure. Expect to work hard in this studio.

Field Trip
We will travel to Seattle on a field trip to visit the site and explore the city at the end of the first week of studio. There is much world-class architecture to see in Seattle and the city itself is wonderful: students will have the opportunity to extend their stay into the weekend for additional time to explore and study. As soon as we know who will be taking the studio, we will hold a Zoom meeting to discuss logistics.