
Research Preparation Seminar: Fall 2023

Design Studio: Winter + Spring 2024

Please also see the Arch 407/507 posting for the Fall Research Seminar: Gerry Gast

Please view the PowerPoint slide presentation on file under Terminal Studios.

“Learning Cities: Linking Urban Design and Architecture with Education”

This studio is founded on the conviction that building human capital through education is the most important mission of cities.

Lifelong opportunities are shaped by experiences gained in education. Healthy cities are not possible without thriving places of learning, dedicated teachers and community workers, active parents and supportive learning environments.

The “Thesis” Studio

The “thesis” studio is a series of design investigations which focus on a strong theoretical foundation, rigorous design explorations, and a high level of architectural refinement through tectonic studies that integrate design, sustainability and building
systems. The emphasis is development of a comprehensive project that integrates all previous architectural studies. The studio is not a “terminal” or end. It is a beginning, linking students to future learning, professional work and studies.

The studio invites students to select their own project within the topical framework of “Learning Cities: Linking Architecture with Education”. Studio projects may focus on schools of all types, higher education, and places of learning such as centers for early childhood education, environmental education, adult education, libraries and public places of learning. Projects may be sited in Portland or anywhere in the world.

The instructor will work with each student individually during Fall term to select a project which meets each student’s individual goals.

**Learning Cities: The United Nations UNESCO Program**

Medellin, Colombia. A global “Learning City” in the UNESCO United Nations league of cities. Over 200 cities in the world are designated as Learning Cities in the network.

A “Learning City” is defined by the United Nations Education and Social Organization (UNESCO) as a community which mobilizes the resources of every sector to promote an inclusive learning culture for all ages throughout life.

The “Learning City” extends its resources to families, schools, workplaces and public life through programs and environments which range in scale from the city as a whole to neighborhoods and sites such as parks and public places. The concept of the “Learning City” has potential to inform design at every level of the environment from urban design to the architecture of individual sites and buildings.

Although schools are a major part of the places for learning there is a wide range of places where learning can take place.
Public education is experiencing a revolution in thinking as educators, policy makers, parents, students question the most effective means of preparing all citizens for an uncertain global future. Although we are architects, not educators, developments in education will dramatically change future educational environments. The subject is wide open for research, experimentation and innovative architecture.

**Linking Schools with Community Development**

In communities of the world public schools have become community centers where neighborhood libraries, recreation centers, adult education and meeting spaces are combined with traditional school programs. High school and college students increasingly engage their communities through volunteer and internship opportunities. Community members engage schools through mentoring and volunteer teaching.

Charles Drew Public Charter High School. Atlanta. Perkins+Will, Architects. The school is a central part of the Eastlake community development, a racially diverse, mixed income new community near downtown Atlanta.
Project Selection

Students are challenged to select their own projects and sites within the framework of the studio focus: “Learning Cities”. From my past experience with thesis studios I have been impressed by the creativity and resourcefulness of students when they select their own projects. Some students choose projects in Portland, others in their hometowns. Many choose sites in places they have worked in or visited. Select the project and place where you have always wanted to design! A different climate, culture, local building tradition or place of need.

Projects and sites may be located anywhere in the world within a few parameters:

- It is highly recommended (not required) that you have visited the city or place (not necessarily the site) in the past. If you choose a city you have not visited additional extensive research is required to gain reasonable familiarity.

- It often works better to design a building for an existing organization or client such as a school in a disadvantaged neighborhood, or an experimental learning environment that explores a re-envisioned place of learning. There are hundreds of creative educational organizations and programs throughout the globe with web pages and ideas for inspiration and reference.

It may be possible to establish communications with your chosen organization for zoom interviews or meetings.

- Adaptive reuse of existing buildings, or a combination of adaptive reuse and a new building, are encouraged. If you choose an adaptive reuse project, it will be necessary to acquire drawings of the existing structure before design studies begin in January.

The diversity of projects in a class creates opportunities for comparative discussions, examining differences of culture, environment, urban context and educational theories and approaches.

Previous sites in my thesis studios have been located in Portland and other cities in Oregon; several cities in North America; and internationally in Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, Guatemala, Germany, the Czech Republic, Spain, Ukraine, Cyprus, The Syria-Turkey borderlands, Nepal, Malaysia, India, China, Vietnam and Korea.

**Portland Opportunities**


For students who are interested in selecting a Portland project, several possibilities exist. I have contacts with Portland Public Schools (PPS) about opportunities for both research and design projects. Portland is presently engaged in an ambitious program to rebuild its nine public high schools and is now looking ahead for new opportunities to re-envision its educational programs for the next twenty years.

**International Opportunities**

Many past students have selected international projects in places they were from, worked or visited.

I can often facilitate projects in places where I have contacts. I have worked in Lviv, Ukraine since 2014 participating in the design and building of a new university. One recent student completed a Multi Discipline Center on the campus and spent Spring
term in residence. I have also been working with the Pies Descalzos (Bare feet) Foundation in Colombia on schools in marginalized neighborhoods. We recently completed a K-12 school in Barranquilla, Colombia on the Caribbean coast.

**Studio Process**

**Fall Term 2023: Research and Program Preparation Seminar**

- Students in the studio are expected to enroll in the Arch 407/507 Research Preparation Seminar (Gerry Gast) during Fall term. This seminar focuses on the Learning Cities UNESCO program, education research and innovative architectural and educational program precedents.

  Students select their projects and develop a site and building program during Fall term.

  - A research summary and architectural program is prepared as a product of the Fall seminar. This is a high-quality professional document that includes a thesis statement, urban and site analysis, space program and bibliography. The program may be developed individually or by teams of students.

**Winter Term 2024: Concept Design Studies, including a component of Urban Design.**

- Design studies with regular class reviews take place approximately every two weeks. A diverse group of Portland professionals participate in the studio through critiques and reviews. Past students have highly valued peer reviews in small groups of fellow classmates. These are held every other week and coordinated with study due dates.
Media selection is up to the student. Study guidelines are issued for each phase of work. In addition to the use of traditional and digital media, physical study models are required throughout the design process.

**Spring Term 2024: Tectonic Design Studies: “The Art of Construction”**

Spring term is focused on creative tectonic development of the conceptual design proposals. The studio is not construction. It is focused on creative studies in the “art of construction” where students creatively develop design-building integration.

Climate and environmental strategy, structure, materials and environmental systems are studied and integrated with emphasis on the creative exploration of sustainable technologies.

Consultants and guest critiques from several Portland firms participate in the studio.


Architecture as “The Third Teacher”


Studio Consultants and Resources

A support team of Portland professionals will serve as visiting consultants during the term in individual critiques and reviews. The team will represent a diversity of individuals, special expertise and architectural firms with different design philosophies.

Project Monograph

A design monograph is prepared as a final product at the end of Spring term, in addition to the final reviews. Monographs produced by past students have been highly professional publications that measure up to the quality of the best architectural offices.

Information / Questions:
Gerry Gast    ggast@uoregon.edu    gerald gast@gmail.com

During the period before classes begin I will be happy to answer questions or discuss project possibilities by E Mail, or to confer by Zoom or phone.

Please send an E mail and we can set up a time to talk. gerald gast@gmail.com

Gerry Gast

Instructor Bio

Gerry Gast is an architect, urban designer and member of the University of Oregon Architecture faculty where he teaches Architectural Design Studios and Urban Design. He previously served as Director of the Portland Architecture Program.

Professor Gast taught for several years as Visiting Associate Professor in the interdisciplinary Program on Urban Studies at Stanford University, where he developed the two core courses in
urban design. As a founding principal of Gast Hillmer Urban Design in the San Francisco Bay area, he directed public urban design and urban architecture projects throughout California and the western states.

Recent research focuses on education and schools. Professor Gast has been active in the Portland Public Schools (PPS) and was a member of the Master Plan Committee and Design Advisory Group for the new Lincoln High School in Portland’s central city, the first new public high school to be built in Portland in over 50 years. The new Lincoln High School opened in September 2022.

Professor Gast is currently working with the Pies Descalzos Foundation of Colombia on schools in marginalized neighborhoods of the country. In another international project, he authored the Master Plan for the new Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv, Ukraine. He has worked with the University on its design and development program since 2008, when he completed the Master Plan for the new Styiskya Park campus. Five buildings have been completed.

Other professional work includes School Site Redevelopment Studies for the San Francisco Unified School District; "Uptown District", a mixed-use urban development of 313 dwellings and neighborhood retail center in San Diego’s Hillcrest neighborhood; the San Diego County Government Center on the downtown waterfront; and the Oregon Science and Technology Park (OSTP), a sustainable industrial district in Gresham and Troutdale, Oregon.

End Notes:
Brief Introductory Video. Cities of Learning Platform: Link on YouTube
Link    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85fEr4KdrLw

1 min 30 sec. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOdgjmavWWY

Kindergarten students at the Loma del Peye School. Cartegena, Colombia.
The Pies Descalzos Foundation. Photo credit: Gerry Gast.