The last decade has seen tremendous changes in cities as innovations such as ride-sharing, car-sharing, bike-sharing and e-scooters have flooded urban areas. In the last few years, COVID has changed the way we live and move and now AI has just started to change our world. At the same time e-commerce has exploded, completely altering the way we shop, where we spend time, and the ways goods are warehoused and delivered. This has overflowed into the restaurant world as food delivery has been a new source of orders but has also impacted transportation and the activity seen inside restaurants themselves. And autonomous vehicles are potentially on the horizon with pilots throughout the country and ride-share options now being offered or planned in various locations.

All of these forces will have an impact on transportation, land use, and real estate, but – critical to this seminar – also on design. In this course, we will investigate the current state of deployment of these innovations, look at the impacts of COVID, chart potential futures, and focus in on the impacts this will have on both urban design and building design.

Through lectures, reading, invited speakers, discussion and research projects, we will build a body of knowledge that will build student expertise around these topics and help us understand how design needs to adjust – both in terms of process and product – to this changing world. An emphasis will be given to finding avenues of communicating this knowledge outside of the seminar and on how this knowledge can impact student roles in the professional world.

The seminar will be primarily based in Portland (in person), with additional students joining remotely in Eugene. A few sessions will be led (in person) in Eugene with remote participation from students in Portland. The course is open to (and encourages) any discipline interested in the future of cities.