

PLANTS DESIGN



LA 452: T, TH 2-5

Department of Landscape Architecture
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Instructors:

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Course Description:

The focus of this course is the investigation and elaboration of the design potential of plants for and by landscape architects. In this way the course is as much interested in design as it is in plants. We feel this is an important distinction for contemporary landscape architecture which has a tendency to focus on plants or plant systems as objects as opposed to what may be effected via those plants or plantings. It must be remembered that plants are only one aspect of a rich ecology of factors which must be considered on any site. With this in mind, we will approach design holistically but with an emphasis on plant materials and the ways they may be deployed on the site to generate effects which may be spatial, sculptural, functional, programmatic, environmental, etc.

Course Objectives:

- To gain a greater awareness of the performative potential of plants beyond the merely decorative or sculptural.
- To understand plant materials as one part of a design ecology, which must not be considered apart from soil, aspect, usage, spatial limitations, etc.
- To continue the development and refinement of oral and graphic presentation skills.

Course Format and Projects:

The course will be structured around two main projects roughly corresponding to the first and second halves of the semester. The first project will place emphasis on ideation and creative strategies while the second will focus on the development and technical resolution of a completed site plan. We will work across scales ranging from small, intimate sites to large-scale urban framework plans. Each project will focus on a particular set of contemporary conditions or problems which we believe could be engaged effectively through the skillful deployment of plant materials. Day to day class time will vary in each project. During the first project we will have weekly field trips, tutorials on representational techniques, and campus walks looking at planting design. The second project will follow a more typical studio project format consisting of studio work time and desk crits. The projects are described below.



Project 1: Urban (Planting) Design North First Street Area, Champaign, IL

The first planting design project will focus on an urban area just east of downtown Champaign. The sites to be investigated in this project each have unique characteristics and potentials for how they are developed. Situated in an area of the city with a unique history of social, economic, and aesthetic factors, designers will be asked to work across the full range of their design intelligence to develop design strategies that are sensitive to community needs but also creative, provocative and sustainable. The aim of this design exercise is to investigate the transformative potentials of plants in the designed landscape. Students will be allowed to develop their own programmatic goals for the sites which may range from sustainability issues to public realm issues to design investigation which will serve to jump-start a more in-depth study of landscape design as effected primarily through the use of plant materials.

Project 2. "The Eagle's Nest" - Shelter for Homeless Veterans East St. Louis

This project will focus on the creation of a technical planting plan for a homeless veterans' shelter in East St. Louis. The site was formerly a military facility which is currently being retrofitted for its new purpose. The proposed opening of the shelter is November 2008, and the directors of the facility would like to begin the landscape installation in spring 2009. Students will work with facility directors, ESLARP members, and other University of Illinois students to develop site plans which are sensitive to the needs of both shelter occupants and the surrounding community.

St. Louis Field Trip and East St. Louis Action Research Project Outreach Weekend (Required):

On Thursday, September 25 through Saturday, September 27 (tentative), we will take a three-day field trip to the St. Louis metropolitan area. This trip will include a visit to the Missouri Botanic Gardens, St. Louis University, Laclede's Landing, and more. Friday and Saturday students will participate in an East St. Louis Outreach Weekend which includes a tour of the ESL metropolitan area to understand its history and contemporary condition, as well as time spent at various sites aiding ESLARP partners on a variety of projects. Our class will also spend time at the veterans' shelter site for project site analysis. Students are expected to attend and participate in discussions and fieldwork as necessary at all sites. Additional details about the trip will be provided as necessary. Students who have scheduling conflicts that prevent their attendance must contact the instructors as soon as possible to discuss alternative solutions to acquiring the information to be gained on the field trip.

Course Wiki:

The instructors have constructed a wiki site at the following address: <http://plantsindesign.pbwiki.com/>

The goal of this site is to facilitate the exchange of resources and ideas concerning planting design among class members. The site also contains a calendar which will serve as the key scheduling document of the course. Students are encouraged to check the site frequently for updated resources and scheduling information about the course.

Other Recommended Resources

- Low, Tim, *The New Nature: Winners and Losers in Wild Australia*, (Victoria: Penguin, 2003)
- All books by Edward Tufte on mapping, diagramming, communicating information
- *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*, by Lawrence Newcomb
- *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, by Michael Dirr.
- *Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers: A Field Guide*, Ladd & Oberle.
- *The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook*, Packard & Mutel
- www.inhs.uiuc.edu/~kenr/home.html
- www.prairienursery.com

Studio Progress and Time Management

Students are expected to work actively on design projects before and after critiques — do not sit waiting for a review and then leave at its completion. Except for days that are scheduled for project introductions, discussions, pin-ups and presentations, studio time is intended for you to make progress on your studio work. Making good use of your studio time is essential to making the progress necessary to achieve the high quality of design content, craft, and technical accuracy expected in this course.

Attendance

Every class meeting is important. You are expected to work in the studio during all scheduled class hours. Attendance will be monitored via sign-in sheets at the beginning of each class, so on-time arrival to class is essential. Attendance at lectures, field trips and site visits is also mandatory and will be noted. In the event that you are unable to attend studio due to extenuating circumstances, you will be required to provide your studio professors with advance notification. Inconsistent attendance will result in a reduction of your final grade.

Submission Deadlines & Late Work

All studio projects, including interim materials, are to be submitted on the due dates indicated for the project. Products that are not complete at the deadline must still be turned in on time, and will be graded as submitted. Exceptions to this policy will only be granted in cases of extenuating circumstances (serious illness, etc.) where appropriate. Requests for submittal at times other than those specified in the brief should be made as far in advance of the due date as possible and must be approved by your professors. Late work will not be accepted unless the student can prove that circumstances were such that on-time submittal was impossible.

Academic Integrity

LA 452 will abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy #1-401 (http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/article_1/a1_1-401.html) and related College and Departmental policies. Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, responsible, and civil manner. All members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Academic integrity includes productive and positive participation during group assignments.

Evaluation

Detailed evaluation criteria will be supplied with each problem statement. Course grades will be based on the following:

Project 1: North First Street	30%
Project 2: Veterans' Shelter	40%
Field Trip Participation	10%
Class Participation & Attendance	20%

Departmental Grading Scale and Description

0	60.0	63.0	67.0	70.0	73.0	77.0	80.0	83.0	87.0	90.0	93.0	97.0
F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
0	0.67	1.00	1.33	1.67	2.00	2.33	2.67	3.00	3.33	3.67	4.00	4.00

Description for Grade Ranges:

A (4.0) An outstanding performance in which the student demonstrates superior grasp of the subject matter and an ability to go beyond the given material in a critical and constructive manner. The student demonstrates a high degree of creative and/or logical thinking; a superior ability to organize, to analyze, and to integrate ideas; and a thorough familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques.

B (3.0) A good to very good performance in which the student demonstrates a thorough grasp of the subject matter and an ability to organize and examine the material in a critical and constructive manner. The student demonstrates a good understanding of the relevant issues and a solid familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques.

C (2.0) A fair performance in which the student demonstrates a general grasp of the subject matter and a moderate ability to examine the material in a critical and constructive manner. The student displays an adequate understanding of the relevant issues, and a general familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques.

D (1.0) A poor performance in which the student demonstrates a minimal familiarity with the subject matter, but whose attempts to examine the material in a critical and constructive manner are inadequate. The student displays minimal understanding of the relevant literature and techniques.

F (0.0) An inadequate performance. Failure, generally (but not always) resulting from minimal student effort and poor attendance. An indication that perhaps this is not the field for you to pursue

COURSE SCHEDULE*

	Week 1 Tuesday Thursday		(August 26-28)	
PROJECT 1	Week 2 Tuesday Thursday		(September 2-4)	
		Site Visit (Tuesday)		
	Week 3 Tuesday Thursday		(September 9-11)	
	Week 4 Tuesday Thursday		(September 16-18)	
	Week 5 Tuesday Thursday		(September 23-25)	
	Week 6 Tuesday Thursday		(September 30-Oct. 2)	
		St. Louis Field Trip & East St. Louis Outreach Weekend (Thursday-Saturday)		
	Week 7 Tuesday Thursday		(October 7-9)	
	Week 8 Tuesday Thursday		(October 14-16)	
	Week 9 Tuesday Thursday	WINDSOR ROAD CHARRETTE - NO CLASS		(October 21-23)
	PROJECT 2	Week 10 Tuesday Thursday		(October 28-30)
		Week 11 Tuesday Thursday		(November 4-6)
		Week 12 Tuesday Thursday		(November 11-13)
			Charrette (Tuesday)	
		Week 13 Tuesday Thursday		(November 18-20)
		Week 14 Tuesday Thursday	FALL BREAK - NO CLASS	
Week 15 Tuesday Thursday			(December 2-4)	
Week 16 Tuesday Thursday		FINAL JURIES		(December 9-11)
Week 17	FINALS WEEK - NO CLASS		(December 10-14)	

*Instructors reserve the right to adjust the schedule as the semester progresses. An evolving calendar is available on the course wiki site.