

Landscape Architecture 620

LANDSCAPE RESEARCH I

The Culture and Context of Research in Landscape Architecture

Professor Robert Ribe and GTF Hope Rising

2-4 credits, Grading is P/N

Prerequisites: MLA or Ph.D. student, or permission of professor. (Other majors are welcome to request.)

Voice: 346-3648. email: rribe@uoregon.edu. Probable office hours: Thursday 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Time: Tuesdays 4:00 p.m. – 5:50 p.m. Location: 231 Lawrence Hall.

Readings will be on Blackboard only. All assignments will entail presentations to the class.

COURSE CONCEPT

In recent decades, critical research has become an integral part of the discipline of Landscape Architecture. We now recognize research as a necessary and demanding aspect of our work as designers and planners, and as one of the valuable ways in which we question our beliefs, admit new understandings, inform design decisions, and adopt new paradigms for professional work. Traditionally, the field has endeavored to merge the rigors of scientific research with the best humanistic insights of introspective art. Within this context, a field of design and planning research has emerged that draws on both science and art, and attempts to bridge the gaps between them.

GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to understand the culture and the context of design and planning research as a precursor to conceiving and carrying out your own initial graduate research efforts. As part of this you will explore the role of the Master's project proposal in articulating your research intentions. We will explore published literature in landscape architecture and other fields, and examine tools and techniques that range from online literature searches to place analyses.

For the purposes of this course, research means formal, systematic inquiry intended to explore or resolve specific questions. In a broader context, research is usually designed to test or revise our understanding of some phenomena or process to contribute toward theory and evidence-based understandings that can aid professional decision-making. In this course, research is examined as a means of inquiry rather than as a form of strict adherence to methodological conventions. By the end of the course, students will have:

- achieved moderate proficiency in critical reading and thinking about design and planning research;
- examined the role of research in building and supporting different kinds design-related arguments;
- studied the role of evidence versus intuition versus conjecture versus postulate in designing;
- explored the use of conceptual model diagrams in exploring research intentions and methods;
- wrestled with the uniquely difficult challenges of operationalizing research related to idealistic and intentional normative values and synthetic qualities that motivate many design researchers;
- explored the difference between “taking a stance” as a designer and doing so as a researcher;
- attempted to master the art of being happily dissatisfied with a very good research project;
- Learned techniques for efficiently accessing and sorting through information that can connect their research to the body of critical thinking within environmental design professions and from other fields with relevant knowledge or perspectives.
- Appreciated the need to narrow their thinking from an interest area to a topic to a researchable question, to conceive approaches to answering that question, and to reconnect answers to the broader context of the issue so that the new knowledge can be applied within a larger context of design and planning.