

LANDSCAPE RESEARCH II: Linking questions, literature and methods
Department of Landscape Architecture
University of Oregon Spring 2015

LA 621 (2 cr. Masters students, 4 cr. PhD students) / Grading: P/N

Prerequisites: conditional MLA or Land. Arch. PhD candidate or Permission of Instructor

Time: Thursdays 10:00 – 11:50 AM Location: 231 Lawrence

Prof. Bart Johnson / 216 Lawrence Hall / Office hours: Thurs. 1:00 – 3:00 PM or by appt.

Tel. 541-346-2235 / bartj@uoregon.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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 frequently attempts to build bridges between them. It does so to develop analytical or experiential understanding of landscapes, and apply them toward prescriptive solutions to place-based issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to develop skills in conceiving and crafting a landscape design and planning research project as part of conducting your own graduate research efforts. You will explore the published literature in landscape architecture and other fields, identify a researchable topic, and explore it through tools and techniques that range from online literature searches to identifying and exploring potential research methodologies that you might apply.

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, and in so doing, to contribute toward theory. In this course, research is examined as an approach to inquiry rather than as a form of strict adherence to methodological conventions.

By the end of the course, students will have:

- 1) Developed a researchable topic and expressed it in an initial research statement that builds on your Master's Project Prospectus from LA620 to concisely frame and delimit the landscape research problem you wish to investigate; identifies one or more key questions to be explored through your own processes of inquiry; and draws from the relevant published literature to help frame and contextualize the work to be performed.
- 2) Revised the research statement several times using critical reading, writing and thinking
- 4) Explored potential methodologies to critically investigate the question(s) posed so as to contribute new perspectives and knowledge to the field

This course builds on LA 620 Landscape Research I: Students will continue to develop proficiency in critical reading, writing and thinking; to learn to efficiently process diverse sources of information so as to connect their research to the published literature; and to learn how develop a researchable question, conceive approaches to answering it, and connect their answers back to the broader context of design and planning scholarship.

Additional outcomes for this course are that students will have:

- Worked iteratively among a) problem definition and delimitation; b) consideration of appropriate, tractable investigative methodologies; and c) gleaning and incorporating understanding from the relevant literature so as to craft a landscape research project that is compelling to you and your intended audience, and feasible within the limits of your time and resources
- Gained familiarity with standard methodologies and techniques used by environmental design researchers, and be able to determine which techniques are appropriate to a given research design
- Improved their ability to craft a clear, persuasive written argument with logical development and progression of ideas that is targeted to their desired audience

COURSE FORMAT

The course meets weekly. We will explore research design and methodology through various modes: readings and discussion, presentations by the instructor and peers, and short written assignments directed toward developing your own project prospectus. You will also learn how to use emerging information resources and literature search tools. AAA faculty and/or graduate students may visit the class to discuss their research and the role of research in their professional development. Students will receive feedback on their research statement development from their Master's Project Advisor (M.L.A. students) or Major Advisor (Ph.D. students). Doctoral students will meet an additional hour per week with the instructor and later with their major advisor, and are expected to contribute an additional 5 hours a week of independent work outside of class in refining their dissertation proposal directions. The scope of this additional work will be defined in consultation with the instructor and, when appropriate, the student's major advisor.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the UO Bookstore):

Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design. by M. E. Deming & S. R. Swaffield.

The Craft of Research, 2nd or 3rd ed. by Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb & Joseph Williams

The Elements of Style, 4th ed. by William Strunk & E. B. White

Rules for Writers, 5th or 6th ed. by Diana Hacker

OPTIONAL TEXTS (available at the UO Bookstore) - **including assigned readings**

Practical Research: Planning and Design, 7th, 8th or 9th or 10th ed. by Paul D. Leedy

- There are assigned readings (three chapters to read and 5 to skim for specific methods). A useful book to have, and if you don't have access to one, you'll need to check it out from AAA reserve (1 copy). Not required only because of expense.

Inquiry by Design, revised ed., by John Zeisel

- A good book linking design and research with a number of detailed chapters on design research methods

The Shape of reason : Argumentative Writing in College, 4th ed. by John T. Gage

- A good book about the fundamentals of argumentative writing