After the First 100 Days
Design as A Socio-Political Activity

Joint Landscape Architecture, Architecture Studio

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Every choice designers make impacts peoples' lives. Sometimes that impact is immediate and tangible, while at other times the effects of design reverberate through a community in a less obvious, yet still effectual way.

Design is not an activity that is isolated from social and political concerns. As Bruce Mau discuses in Massive Change (2004), it is easy to live in a cloud of complacency when everything "works." But when our infrastructure breaks, our understanding of the world changes radically. As we just found out, something as simple as an ice storm can disrupt our whole sense of safety, and how fleeting the safety of our current infrastructure is.

Often infrastructure is thought of simply as systems of physical apparatus to sustain the basic needs of a society. It is important to think of infrastructure as political and social systems as well. When the political infrastructure of a society is rapidly changed or disrupted, design is one of the most important activites interacting with that disruption.

This combined Architecture and Landscape Architecture studio brings these issues front and center. Students will be asked to consider the socio-political impacts of design choices, and how infrastructure, such as affordable housing and climate sensitive site design, as well as policy and long term planning, have implications beyond simply handing a "design problem."

Students will be asked to design affordable housing and site design for a site in the Portland Metro area. Students teams must attend to the following issues:
Climate Change
Affordable Housing
Serving a marginalized population
Providing specific services on site (education, incubator, food production)
Site design that specifically attends to the needs of the stated population

Teams will:
•choose a population of users who face marginalization.
•develop a cohesive master plan and specific site plan.
•develop a scheme for a specific type of affordable housing type and apply it uniquely to the site and contextual conditions.
•program a set of services and provide designed spaces for those specific services.
•students must specifically address one or more climate change issues that will be handled on site through interventions such as energy production, materials' embodied energy, and water use.

At this point we foresee teams of 4, half Architecture, half Landscape Architecture. Teams will form based on shared interests. We do not want people to walk into the studio with predetermined teams.

More details forthcoming.