In the first part is taught all the Theory of Gardening, it being necessary, as everyone knows, to learn the Theory before the Practice, which is no more than Sequel and Execution of the Consequences and Certainties drawn from the former.

- Dezallier d’Argenville
  *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*, 1709

**Course overview**

This course situates contemporary design ideas in their historic precedents and theories, and uses those intellectual roots as a means of reading, understanding and critiquing contemporary practice.

Lectures and readings will examine themes in landscape architectural theory:

- theory as an inquiry in landscape architecture;
- and theories of context, form, making, use, and meaning.

Students will analyze a contemporary project through three of the five theory lenses discussed, through mapping and graphic analysis projects and a final paper.

Through readings, lectures, and assignments, students will understand landscape architecture as cultural production, and be able to situate works of landscape architecture within cultural discourse. The course aims to increase students’ ability to discuss and write about landscape architecture (their own and others’ designs) within a cultural context of ideas and critiques; improve their ability to situate contemporary projects in a historic lineage of thought; and enhance their critical thinking and writing skills.

The course is open to all students, and is required for landscape architecture students.
Readings

Required Texts

Recommended Texts
John Wylie (2007) Landscape

Reference
About Landscape. Essays on design, style, time and space (Topos, 2002)
Charles Birnbaum (2009). Shaping the American Landscape
Denis Cosgrove. Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape
David Harvey. The Condition of Postmodernity
Jens Jensen. Siftings
Ian McHarg. Design With Nature
Carolyn Merchant. The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History

Term project
Each student will study a single significant landscape architectural built work over the course of the term, situating the work in its physical, cultural, and theoretical context. The project will include three major components:

- A critical map uncovering theories of context in the work;
- A graphic analysis uncovering theories of form in the work; and
- A final paper reading the work through a theory of making, use, or meaning

The projects will be developed through two interim stages:

- An annotated bibliography, identifying primary and secondary sources on the work, and
- A paper abstract identifying the key texts and ideas represented in the work, and describing the major points you will make in the paper.

Friday 10/2       Project selection
Friday 10/9       Annotated bibliography due
Monday 10/19      Critical mapping project due
Wednesday 11/4    Graphic analysis due
Friday 11/20  Paper abstract due
Tuesday 12/8   Final papers due

Class sessions

Classes will typically be structured around four modules:

Reading discussion: drawing out themes and questions from the readings
Case study presentation: analyzing a project as an illustration of the theory
Workshop: in-class work to further students’ critical and analytical skills. These will vary greatly
session to session, and may include analysis of the case study project, the project students are
studying for the term, or the students’ own studio work
Lecture: clarifying and synthesizing the class session topic

Course schedule (draft; subject to revision)

I. What is theory in landscape architecture?

M 9/28  Landscape as social production; Aristotelian knowledge, Theoria, Poiesis, Praxis
        Garrett Eckbo, Landscape for Living (Swaffield, 9-10)
        Elizabeth Meyer, Situating Modern Landscape Architecture (Swaffield, 21-32)
        Denis Cosgrove, Landscape as Cultural Product (Swaffield, 165-166)

        LA 507:
        Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Arendt, 7-21)

W 9/30  Theory and truth; ethics; 3 modes of ethical action
        Landscape architectural values: ecology, community, delight
        Ian Thompson, Landscape and Truth (Thompson, 7-18)

F 10/2  Cultural, personal, and vernacular landscapes
        John Wylie, Landscaping Traditions (Wylie, 17-54)

Project selection due

II. Theories of Context

M 10/5  The site itself, genius loci
        John Dixon Hunt, Reading and Writing the Site (Swaffield, 131-135)
        Ian Thompson, The Genius Loci (Thompson, 216-228) (Brook, Turner)
        Dripps, Groundwork (BK)
        Meyer, Site Citations (BK)
        Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture, p-p
Nature: 3 natures, constructed

*Middleton Place*


Regionalism, critical regionalism

*Prairie school, Jensen*

Joan Woodward, *Signature-Based Landscape Design* (Swaffield, 213-216)

Terry Harkness, *Gardens from Region* (Swaffield, 216-220)

Jens Jensen (1939) “Art Has Its Roots in the Soil”, “Our Native Landscape” in *Siftings* (17-24, 44-60)

Annotated bibliography due

Ecology, eco-revelatory, eco-relevant

*Bos Park*

Ian McHarg, *An Ecological Method* (Swaffield, 38-42)

Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Granite Garden* (Swaffield, 173-175)

Alan Ruff, *An Ecological Approach* (Swaffield, 175-178)

(Messy Ecosystems, Orderly Frames? Does Bart have them read this?)

LA 507:

Ian Thompson, *Ecological Perspectives* (Thompson, 172-189) (Leopold, Naess, Wilson, Ruff, Selman)


Sustainability

Hill, *Shifting Sites* (BK)

LA 507:

Ian Thompson, *Sustainability* (Thompson, 190-206) (Lyle, Nassauer, Thayer)

**III. Theories of Form**

Ordering systems

*Kiley and agriculture*

J. B. Jackson, *How to Study Landscape* (Swaffield, 11-18)

Wassily Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*

Sublime, Beautiful, Picturesque
**Downing**

- Ian Thompson, *The Picturesque* (Thompson, 49-58) (Hussey, Price, Nicholson)
- Ian Thompson, *Use and Beauty* (Thompson, 73-90) (Berleant, Marshall, Colvin, Kerr)

**Critical mapping project due**

**W 10/21** Modernism and Functionalism

- *JCN Forestier, Le Corbusier, Tunnard, Migge*
  

**LA 507:**

- Ian Thompson, *The Functionalist Aesthetic* (Thompson, 91-98) (Hogarth, Tunnard, Pye)
- Ian Thompson, *Rationalism* (Thompson, 26-36) (Wittkower, Vitruvius, Kiley, Mawson)

**LA 507:**


**F 10/23** Modernity in crisis, Post-modernism

- Ian Thompson, *The Failure of Modernism* (Thompson 121-131) (Pye, Koh)

**LA 507:**


**M 10/26** Landscape architecture as avant-garde art

- *Guevrekian, Eckbo, Rose*
  
  Patrick Condon, *Cubist Space, Volumetric Space* (Swaffield, 84-86)

**W 10/28** Landscape architecture as land art

**F 10/30** Minimalism and seriality

- *Walker*
  
  Peter Walker, *Minimalist Landscape* (Swaffield, 87-88)
- Ian Thompson, *Landscape as Art* (Thompson, 99-111) (Jellicoe, Ross, Berleant)

**M 11/2** Color, plants
Jekyll, Farrand, Cautley, Shipman


Gertrude Jekyll (1908), “Introduction” and “The Main Hardy Flower Border” in Colour Schemes in the Garden, (xii-xv, 52-60)

LA 507:

Mara Miller (1993), “Definitions, examples, and paradigms” and “General unifying principles” in The Garden as an Art, (p-p)

IV. Theories of Making

W 11/4 The design process (right making)

Halprin

Hideo Sasaki, Design Process (Swaffield, 35-36)

Lawrence Halprin, The RSVP Cycles (Swaffield, 43-48)

Bernard Lassus, The Obligation of Invention (Swaffield, 64-72)

Graphic analysis due

F 11/6 (RT out – ASLA conference)

M 11/9 Tectonics and truth

Adolf Loos, Ornament and Crime

W 11/11 Technology

Film and cars (Mt Vernon Memorial Parkway, Alphandé)


Robert Thayer, Three Dimensions of Meaning (Swaffield, 104-107)

LA 507:


V. Theories of Use and Meaning
F 11/13 Meaning in landscape architecture
    Laurie Olin, Form, Meaning, and Expression (Swaffield, 77-79)
    Marc Trieb, Must Landscapes Mean? (Swaffield, 89-101)
    Catherine Howett, Systems, Signs, and Sensibilities (Swaffield, 108-115)

M 11/16 Phenomenology
    Ian Thompson, Phenomenology (Thompson, 207-215) (Merleau-Ponty, Thwaites & Simkins, Heidegger)

W 11/18 Narrative
    *Burle-Marx and the story of identity*
    Anne Whiston Spirn, The Language of Landscape (Swaffield, 125-130)
    Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton, Landscape Narratives (Swaffield, 136-143)

LA 507:
    Lakoff and Johnson

F 11/20 Place attachment, memory, identity
    Edward Relph, Place Reclamation (Swaffield, 102-103)

Paper abstracts due

M 11/23 Immersion, situation, walking (Smithson)

W 11/25 Social concerns and pluralism
    Elizabeth Meyer, The Expanded Field of Landscape Architecture (Swaffield, 167-170)
    Ian Thompson, Pluralism and Trivalent Design (Thompson, 19-25) (Berlin, Gray)

F 11/27 No class – Thanksgiving Break

11/30-12/4 Review Week

12/8 Final Papers due by 4:00 pm