

ARC 496D/596D: Social and Behavioral Issues in Built Environments

Fall 2018

3-credit units

Instructors: Altaf Engineer, Ph.D., NCARB, LEED AP BD+C

This course is a recommended elective for MS.Arch. students in the Health and the Built Environment (HBE) program and for master's level and upper level undergraduates interested in pursuing careers that integrate human health and wellbeing in the built environment.

This course explores specific Technology topics in depth; it may be taken up to four times under different topics by permission of the Stream Coordinator.

This course introduces students to social and psychological issues in architecture and urban design and to the burgeoning field of environment and behavior. Students will examine social and behavioral factors in environmental design through case studies, critical thinking and discussions, and small-scale design exercises. A variety of built environments will be discussed, ranging from building interiors to parks, urban plazas, streets, and sidewalks.

Students will understand how to apply the outcomes of environment-behavior research to their design projects and existing places and spaces. As future designers committed to social responsibility, students must anticipate and respond to people's needs. Ignoring these needs not only leads to costly errors, but also negatively influences health, wellbeing, productivity, and performance.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Critically analyze major works and synthesize useful information for social and behavioral issues in architecture and urban design
2. Conduct small-scale environment-behavior studies in built indoor and outdoor environments
3. Communicate research outcomes for evidence-based design recommendations via effective oral, written, and visual techniques

In addition, students who complete the graduate course will be able to:

1. Identify research studies in the social sciences and environmental psychology with findings that may apply to human-centered architecture and urban design, and synthesize this information into a research report or publication

Course structure and organization

This course meets once a week and is comprised of interactive lectures and student participation and presentations, both informal and formal. The course is broken into the following phases:

- **Leading a seminar discussion** on social and behavioral issues in the built environment
- **Environmental-Behavior studies**
- **Final project: Environment-Behavior study of a public plaza**
- **Synthesis:** Documentation, and compilation of a final research report (Graduate students only)

There are regular reading assignments, and assigned tasks that involve finding and critiquing additional research articles not in the required reading list for each phase. Students will also present design recommendations based off of the readings for each phase, and participate in field exercises in which they observe and document social and behavioral issues in existing spaces on campus and make design recommendations for improvements.

This course is designed to achieve the learning objectives indicated. Because architecture is an art as well as a science, and because every student and student-group present new challenges in the teaching of design, instructors may add, alter, or modify assignments, criteria, or project weights in order to adapt to evolving circumstances that are inherent in the practice of Architecture, and also to evaluate students' abilities to make such adaptations. The Instructor will notify the students in advance of such changes; students for their part will notify the professor within one week of such notification if the proposed changes will cause undue hardship. Students acknowledge the dynamic nature of this course.

The graded components of this course and their criteria of evaluation are currently anticipated to be as follows, but are subject to change as set forth above:

Texts

Reading assignments are outlined on the syllabus and course calendar; these assignments should be supplemented with more in-depth research and readings by students. Do not rely solely on web-based sources. While you will have a number of these referenced within the class, please be aware that the instructor knows that these sites are creditable and reliable. The instructor may frequently recommend other sources for in-depth readings. Students should also be prepared to share useful sources that they find on their own, with other classmates. All class sessions will in part, be group discussion format.

Projects

- 1. Leading a seminar discussion:** Develop an informative and engaging slide presentation discussing any one chapter in your textbook: *Environmental Psychology for Design*. Using the text as a basis for your information, expand upon it with additional sources drawn from other readings in this syllabus or your own research. Lead a class discussion and engage other students in discussion questions or activities listed in your chapter as well as your own. Compare, analyze, and critique two different, contrasting designs of any one building type based on concepts discussed in the chapter. Include your evaluation of these two designs in your slides and present to class. This is an individual assignment.
- 2. Environment-behavior studies:** This assignment is subdivided in four small-scale environment-behavior studies based on concepts discussed in class, readings, and sources drawn from your own research. Details of each exercise will be provided in advance. Potential research questions for these studies will include: How do people perceive and recognize the environment? How do they manage their personal space? How does this impact their experience and use of different spaces – both indoor and outdoor? Your studies should also reflect your understanding of wayfinding and territoriality. Study methods may include participant observations, short interviews, and surveys. Present your findings to the class in a slide presentation and discuss their design implications. Further details of presentation requirements will be discussed in class. These are individual assignments.
- 3. Final project: Environment-behavior study of a public plaza:** The goal of this exercise is for you to employ qualitative research strategies learned throughout the semester to analyze the use of an existing urban plaza and subsequently propose improvements to improve its experience. Select a public plaza – preferably on-campus or in an urban setting. Your approach will be based on the premise that every public place has a distinct subculture with physical and social characteristics. Become a participant observer in the scene by familiarizing yourself with the place, observing, and interviewing people. Maintain a field notebook, and develop graphic representations for your observations and analyses. Interviews may help reveal rules of conduct, norms of behavior, and rituals of public life that are supported or hindered by the physical environment. Compile all behaviors and activity patterns in a composite map. Suggest design improvements for the plaza based on your findings.

Present your findings and potential design improvements to the class in a slide presentation. Presentations must include the processes described above; further details of presentation requirements will be discussed in class. Class time will be allotted to discuss ideas, show progress and get feedback from instructor as well as peers. This is an individual assignment and also the final one for this class.

References

Required:

Kopec, Dak. *Environmental Psychology for Design*. New York: Fairchild Books Inc., Third ed., 2018.

General:

Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Engineer, Altaf, and Kathryn H. Anthony. *Shedding New Light on Art Museum Additions: Front Stage and Back Stage Experiences*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Hall, Edward T. *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.

Kopec, David Alan, and Susan S. Szenasy. *Health and Well-being for Interior Architecture*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960.

Nassar, Jack, Wolfgang Preisler, and Thomas Fisher (eds.). *Designing for Designers*. New York: Fairchild Books, 2007.

Newman, Oscar. *Defensible Space; Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*. New York: Collier Books, 1973.

Sommer, Robert. *Design Awareness*. Corte Madera, CA: Rinehart Press, 1972.

Sommer, Robert. *Social Design: Creating Buildings with People in Mind*. NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1983.

Sommer, Robert. *Personal Space: The Behavioral Basis of Design*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Sommer, Robert and B.B. Sommer. *A Practical Guide to Behavioral Research: Tools and Techniques*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Ulrich, Roger S. "View Through a Window May Influence Recovery from Surgery." *Science* 224, no. 4647 (1984): 420-421.

Whyte, William H. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Washington DC: The Conservation Foundation, reprinted by Project for Public Spaces, 1980.

Zeisel, John. *Inquiry by Design*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012.

Useful web links for your reference:

Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA): www.edra.org