Fall 2014  SUS- 7100A: ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

3 credits 3 hrs/week. Tuesday 1 pm to 3:40pm.

Professor  Denise Hoffman Brandt, RLA, ASLA
Contact: hoffmanbrandt@nyc.rr.com

Description  This course provides an overview of the physical environment of the New York City metropolitan region including geology, soils, surface water, dominant weather systems, the changing climate, plant communities, wildlife habitat and regional design style trends. The region is utilized a case study site for multi-layered analysis. Each student also prepares a colloquium presentation (short paper and slides) on a particular aspect of New York City regional ecology, design, local material or an historical feature.

Overview. The course opens with a study of ecological theory and current questions in environmental planning, based on an overview of the physical environment of greater New York City, and the often hidden environmental systems that intertwine with city-making. That overview is a basis for examining the evolution of New York City’s infrastructural systems to understand the scope and scale of socio-environmental process negotiation that define the current city and the ideas that will shape its future. Urban infrastructures embody social and cultural issues as they are implemented within dynamic environmental processes. The designed urban infrastructural landscape is as much
Environmental Planning, Professor Denise Hoffman Brandt  
Fall 2014 Syllabus (subject to refinement/updating)

constructed of shifting human values, as it is water, air plants or concrete. The rift between American cultural ideas of landscape and American constructed landscapes – our patterns of occupation – is growing larger. The messy nature of overlapping and contradictory urban infrastructures obfuscates the ideas underlying their design. In order to initiate truly sustainable practices, designers are charged with reconciling the difference between powerful cultural ideas of landscape and the social and environmental milieu of constructed infrastructure. Examination of the underlying environmental systems of New York City: geology, hydrology, soils, climate, and the evolution of infrastructure construction in the city, provide a case study for examining the interplay of society, culture and environment in design practice.

Learning Objectives:
1. Develop understanding of the reciprocity between social forces and environmental processes in urban areas
2. Build familiarity with contemporary ecological, design, and planning theory
3. Examine New York City’s human and environmental system’s transformation over time as basis of understanding processes of future transformation
4. Expand understanding of the city as an eco-system, and develop skills to analyze and critique transformation of its constituent systems

Educational Goals:
1. Grounding in environmental theory that can be directly related to design practice.
2. Enable students to become conversant in the languages of ecology, environmentalism, theories of nature, and urban landscape design.

Methodology:
The seminar provides an opportunity for students to read diverse perspectives on environmental planning, and then synthesize the readings through using their synopsis in moderated class discussion.

Presentation Topics, Outlines, and Final Presentations:
Students are to submit a topic for approval by September 30, and an outline of their presentation by October 07. Outlines will be returned to students with comments on November 1. Final presentations are to be presented to the class and a handout of the presentation with 2 slides per sheet should be submitted to the instructor with a disk of the presentation and web page. Final presentation slides should have images and a clear outline of the paper content – not the entire text to be presented. In other words, the image text organizes your thoughts, but you do not read your slide text for the presentation.

Library Research Help Needed?
Contact: Judy Connorton, Librarian  
Architecture Library - Spitzer 101  
212 650 8766 or jconnorton@ccny.cuny.edu

Requirements:
1. Class Discussion: Seminar readings will be given one week in advance and students are required to participate in class discussions. Additional texts will be brought into discussion in the lecture, and slides/images will illustrate aspects of the issues to be discussed. Students are expected to contribute to conversation in reading groups and general class discussion.
2. Synopses: A one or two paragraph (300 words minimum) summary of each of the weekly readings to be printed and handed in at the end of each class. The synopsis will be graded and synopsis handed in late will not be eligible for full credit. No synopsis will be accepted more than two weeks after the deadline and no credit will be given.

3. Class Presentations: A 45-minute presentation to the class in powerpoint format on an aspect of current urban infrastructure technology and its impact on the urban landscape.

Grading and Related Matters:

I. Grading Breakdown
   Grading for the class will be determined according to the following criteria:
   • Class Presentation 25%
   • Class participation and Weekly Reading Synopsis 75%

II. Incompletes: There will be no Incomplete given for a course except for a documented medical excuse at the discretion of the instructor. You are required to attend all classes and be present in the studio during the allocated times. Absence need to be notified as mentioned in the paragraph above in schedule.

III. Attendance and timely submission of assignments: More than two unexcused absences in a course will result in a failing grade (two absences is equal to over 13% of total class time). Due to the nature of reviews and presentations, late assignments will not be reviewed for a grade. Each student must turn in what is completed or receive a failing grade for the particular assignment. Names of groups and individuals should be clearly indicated on all assignments.

IV. Grading Standards

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Explanation (refers to class performance)</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Rare, near perfect achievement</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>3.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>High caliber</td>
<td>3.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>2.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Not satisfactory</td>
<td>2.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Course failure</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to modification)

09.02 Planning for What? Part 1
   • Sample case study: The Landscape of Beef

Summaries of readings are due the following week for discussion in class:

09.09 Ecological Planning: Oxymoron?
   • Nature - Manahatta to Manhattan
   • the culture of space and carpet urbanism
Readings:

09.16 Planning for What? Part 2
- Social mechanisms and public space
Readings:

09.23 No Class

09.30 Environmental Processes in the New York City region Part I
- Geology and Climate of the New York Bight
- NYC environmental processes and climate change
Readings:

10.07 Environmental Processes in the New York City region Part II
- Soil, Water, Plants, Animals
Readings:

10.14 Circulation -- Connective Tissue/Collective Meaning I
- The Grid and the Group: a look at New York City’s evolving street system
Readings:

10.21 Circulation -- Connective Tissue/Collective Meaning II
- Fundamental to urban inhabitation is the format of the city – its circulation plan. Streets reflect more than just settlement pattern, they format physical systems of transfer for goods and services and land as property. They also format collective urban experience, creating a reciprocal arena for culture and social engagement.
Readings:
10.28 Water and Waste -- Physical Systems and Perceptions of Value
- The class will examine the development of water and waste infrastructure in New York City. Discussion will examine decision-making processes.

Readings:
- Mitchell, William J. “City of Bits”, “Cyborg Citizens” from City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn 1996.

11.04 Power -- Physical Systems and Social Empowerment
- Power networks cut across our physical landscapes as they expand our conceptual horizons. These dynamic systems increasingly define our territories and our patterns of inhabitation.

Readings:

11.11 New York Waterfront: More than Economic Infrastructure?
- The interrelationship between the changing economies, demographics, and the form of the waterfront will be examined.

Readings:
- Susan Herrington, On Landscapes (chapters 2 and 3) 2008.

11.18 New York Parks: Manifold Roles in Human Ecology
- development-evolution of Central Park
- parks as urban renewal

Readings:

11.25 Environmental Processes as an Armature for Development
- Case Study: Emscher Park International Building Exhibition

Start of Class Project Presentations – 3 presentations

12.02 Class Project Presentations – 3 presentations

12.09 Class Project Presentations – 3 presentations

Presentations will continue in Exam week if necessary.