

## **THE LABORATORY**

Fridays 9-3PM  
CRN: Room 301 2 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street  
Foundation Core Program  
Parsons School of Design  
Fall Semester, 2004 – 2005

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### **Course Description**

Laboratory immerses first year students in a study of contemporary art and design culture through readings & discussions, a studio component, and direct engagement with the urban environment of New York City. Through observation and experience, the course introduces students to the ways artist and designers see, record, understand, and respond to the environment in which they are working. Students will read, write, and make as part of studio exercises that explore the process of thinking as an artist or designer. This interdisciplinary course, taught by faculty from all of the departments at Parsons, exposes students to the breadth of studies in the art and design fields, and the relationships, commonalities and differences among the disciplinary approaches in the School.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The objectives of this course are for students to:

- Learn conceptual art and design methods and engage in self-directed research that stems from experienced-based field work and observation
- Gain and develop presentation and project management skills
- Develop problem-setting and solving skills
- Understand research, reading, and writing as a regular dimension of studio practice
- Develop a cultural literacy about New York City and its resources through the lens of creative practice

### **Course Outline**

In the first semester, the course will investigate a theme, "People in relation to the city" and will use New York City, its spaces, communities, institutions and urban organization as a way to introduce students to how artists and designers engage with society and the role of artists and designers to understand, critique, shape, respond to their environment.

Students will be asked to draw from their own backgrounds and experiences as a way to position themselves in relation to the city, to ways of seeing and understanding the world through specific responses to spaces, communities and phenomena.

### **Cluster Objectives and Focus**

Our three clusters will focus on narrative and its central role in the urban experience (i.e. how it links past to present, need to desire, personality to personality, person to place, picture to text, intellect to soul, etc.). We will explore the importance of a story and how that story gets told. Films based in New York City during different time periods that represent the topics Beneath, Within and Above will be shown in a group setting once during each project session followed by discussions with sections responding to the films from their unique perspective.

### **On Process**

Your development of a more sophisticated design process is one of the prime goals of the course. How you think through a problem, define your design's goals and evaluate its successes and failures is of great importance. To this end, each student is required to keep a sketchbook of their experience and process of the LAB course. These should be available for perusal by your professor during presentation and discussion sessions.

### **On writings, projects, and presentations**

An important skill for any designer is the ability to justify their ideas, and this requires the ability to articulate and present them via text and oral presentation. To this end it is absolutely necessary that your documentation be well written (i.e. clearly written. as well as free of typos and misspellings). Your presentations should be equally clear and well thought out. This will require rehearsal and preparation of visual elements depicting a given project's development.

### **Materials and Suggested Supplies**

Metro card, camera (still or video preferably digital), standard exacto knife and blades, scissors, mechanical pencils, soft clean eraser, ruler with a metal edge, sketch book, 14"x17" all purpose and tracing paper, fine and extra fine sharpies or micron pens, c-thru ruler, 1" white and clear tape, post-it notes, spray mount or adhesive of choice.

IN ADDITION, STUDENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO KEEP A SEPARATE SKETCH BOOK FOR LAB.

### **Texts:**

**Low Life** by Luc Sante

**Invisible Cities** by Italo Calvino

**Subculture** by Dick Hebdige

## **Course Requirements**

**RESEARCH & REPRESENTATION:** With each exercise/project students will be asked to reflect, reframe, imagine, present, and archive. With each exercise/project process, students will evaluate and respond to a given situation and they can intervene or change something about it. Students will learn tools to analyze, value, and envision what they can do as artists and designers.

## **PRESENTATIONS:**

There will be formal in-class visual presentations required for this course. Presentations will include both written and visual documentation of research materials, design analysis, and project proposals.

Written and visual materials will be collected and assembled in your sketchbook for the course.

## **READING AND DISCUSSION:**

Students are required to complete the reading each week and be prepared for class discussion.

## **CITING RESOURCES:**

Students are required to cite source material using the appropriate bibliographic format for research in this course. Sources should be cited (identified) following proper format on any presentation board, sketchbook, on the Portal, or in a design statement or final presentation. (see NSU Academic Integrity Statement and Citing Resources Guidelines attached)

## **Resources and Readings**

Reading materials will be handed out weekly along with selected readings from course text.

## **On class trips**

All Class trips should be documented. You will be expected to keep a journal, or record the experience somehow other than pure memory. This documentation will be helpful to the development of your projects, and help to focus your attention on process (see below).

In order to prepare for class trips, you will be expected to do the following:

- Prepare for inclement weather by dressing accordingly.
- Have a Metrocard ready to go.
- Pack a lunch.
- Be on time.
- Missing a class trip will be considered as an absence.

## **Department and Class Policies:**

### Student Responsibilities:

- Treat class time as an opportunity.
- Arrive to class on time, with all materials, ready to work steadily throughout the session.
- Be prepared with all your required materials for every class.
- Complete all assignments on time.
- Participate in all class discussions and critiques.
- Confront difficulties in your work in the spirit of learning, creative exploration and personal growth.
- Ask for help from your instructors when needed.
- Respect your fellow students at all times.
- Disruptive behavior is not tolerated.
- You are responsible for cleaning up after yourself at the end of each class.
- No radios, players, walkmans, beepers or cellular phones are allowed in class.
- NO SMOKING ANYWHERE IN THE BUILDING.

## **New School University Statement on Academic Integrity and Honesty:**

Academic honesty is the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship of his or her own work, and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. Academic honesty is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate and creative and academic pursuits. All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty.

Students are responsible for knowing and making use of proper procedures for writing papers, presenting and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research.

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind in the course of academic work will not be tolerated. Academic honesty includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of instructors and other students). These standards of academic honesty and citation of sources apply to all forms of academic work (examinations, essays, theses, computer work, art and design work, oral presentations, and other projects).

It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university.

Every student at Parsons signs an Academic Integrity Statement as a part of the registration process. Thus, you are held responsible for being familiar with, understanding, adhering to and upholding the spirit and

standards of academic integrity as set forth by the Parsons School of Design Student Handbook.

### **Attendance Policy:**

Class attendance is mandatory. There is no substitute for working and participating in class. The attendance policy applies to everyone. There are no exceptions. If a student fails a class due to attendance, he/she is no longer permitted to attend the class. Absences will impact your grade (see Grading). Students must return to class promptly after breaks. Undo tardiness following a given break will result in an absence. Leaving the class before it is over will be considered an absence. Students must check in with instructors at the end of all class excursions.

### **Absences:**

Class attendance will be shared between all of the teachers in the cluster.

Our clusters policy on absences is as follows:

One unexcused absence from class will result in the reduction of your final grade by one full letter grade (i.e. B- to C-). Two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you are ill you will need a doctor's note.

### **Tardiness:**

Two (2) tardies will be counted as one absence.

Class begins on the hour sharp. The door to the classroom will be closed at that time. Anyone walking in after the door has closed (class has started) will be marked late. 5 minutes is considered tardy. Over 20 minutes is considered as an absence.

The following may be counted as tardy:

- Coming to class without the required materials
- Sleeping in class
- Being asked to leave class because of disruptive behavior.
- Doing other course work in class.

### **Academic Warning:**

Students who do not complete and submit assignments on time and to a satisfactory standard will fail this class. It is a student's responsibility to obtain missed assignment sheets from other classmates and make-up the work in time for the next class.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

#### **A. Course Expectations**

In order to receive a grade for this course, students must actively participate in classroom discussions and critiques, and complete all the assigned projects, including mid-term & final projects. Expectations for each assignment will be clearly defined; they will be printed in handouts and discussed in each class. All assignments will be posted to the Portal site.

Individual assignments will be evaluated on the following basis:

- If the project fulfills the requirements and objectives of the assignment
- If the student demonstrates initiative and inventiveness in the exploration
- If the student has improved from previous work
- If the project is carefully considered and consistently developed

Assignments must be completed on time and included in class discussion & critique. Late assignments will be penalized.

Consideration will be given to how much a student's work has developed and how well that development demonstrates an understanding of the concepts of the course.

#### B. Mid-semester Evaluations

Mid-semester evaluations are issued to help students improve performance and make progress. Although a grade may not be given, the comments will indicate your standing on an average - below or above scale.

#### C. Grading

Your grade is determined by your performance in following :

- Participation (includes reading & discussion) & Attendance: 25%
- Research project 1: 25%
- Research project 2: 25%
- Research project 3: 25%

All projects must be digitally documented on CD-Rom or DVD and handed in at the end of the four week section in order to earn credit.

Late or incomplete projects are unacceptable.

#### **Grade Descriptions:** (from Parsons Handbook)

- A Work of exceptional quality.
- A- Work of high quality.
- B+ Work of high quality, higher than average abilities.
- B Very good work that satisfies goals of course.
- B- Good work.
- C+ Average work, understanding of course material.
- C Adequate work; passable
- C- Passing work but below good academic standing.
- D Below average work; does not fully understand the assignments.
- F Failure, no credit

## FALL TERM SCHEDULE

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9/10	Week 1	Laboratory Introduction Lecture: Paul Goldberger (not confirmed)- introduction to NYC & course introduction Handout: project 1 and syllabus Materials: Media for site visit (camera, bag, sketchbook, drawing media) Circle Line Cruise around Manhattan
9/17	Week 2	First Section Class 1
9/24	Week 3	First Section Class 2
10/1	Week 4	First Section Class 3
10/8	Week 5	First Section Class 4 Panel: Chairs discussion #1 (10:30AM) Architecture, Fashion Design, D&T, Photography, Interior Design, Panel Discussion/Lecture
10/15	Week 6	Second Section Class 1 Panel: Chairs discussion #2 (10:30AM) Product Design, Communication Design, D&M, Integrated Design, Illustration
10/22	Week 7	Second Section Class
10/29	Week 8	Second Section Class 3
11/5	Week 9	Second Section Class 4
11/12	Week 10	Third Section Class 1 Panel discussion (10:30AM) Designers in NYC & public realm (above, within, below) city planner, bill board designer, architect, graffiti artist, subway designer/ engineer, fashion designer of uniforms, landscape architect, political cartoonist, activist/designer
11/19	Week 11	Third Section Class 2
11/26	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
12/3	Week 12	Third Section Class 3
12/10	Week 13	Third Section Class 4
12/17	Week 14	Final Group critique/Archiving & collection of clusters projects

**NOTE:** To make up for the lack of a 15<sup>th</sup> class day (required for credit), some classes will be extended at the prerogative of the instructors.

## WITHIN SECTION

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New York City's population, landscape, and very character are constantly evolving, and this constant evolution is apparent in all we see. From the arts to the architecture, from the fashion to the advertising, from social developments to political alterations, from sprawl to renewal, the evolution of one of the most widely heralded metropolises of modern human experience tells us a story. And this narrative tells us something about ourselves if we are only willing to look closely.

The choices made by those who built the city, the appropriateness of those decisions, and the decisions made by those who flock to and live within the five boroughs are ones of enormous importance if we are to understand how best to design for it. This portion of the course will focus on developing awareness of the cities evolution and attempt to climb within this evolution to better understand the directions that it may take in the future in order to understand our city as well as ourselves.

### WITHIN SECTION - Class One

**Assignment due** (individual project): Having read E.B. White's essay *Here Is New York* prepare a brief (5 minute) presentation addressing the following points:

- Introduce yourself and where you are currently living in the NYC area?
- What most struck you about White's Essay?
- Visit one of the sites that White mention's and report back to us about your visit in whatever medium you feel most comfortable making sure to give your audience a sense of that specific urban environment.
- What is the story here?

**Reading:** E.B. White's essay *Here Is New York*

**Handout:** Historic Photo Hand out

**Lecture:** from Block & Tackle to Metropolis.

**Site visit:** Lower East Side Tenement Museum

### WITHIN SECTION - Class Two

**Assignment due** (pod project): Search out, research and document the location of one of the images handed out in class (week one) as it stands today. Prepare a brief (5 minute) presentation of your documentation addressing the following points:

- What is the history of this point in urban space (what is the story here)?
- What is the significance of its transformation?
- Give your audience a sense of this evolution in whatever medium you choose.

**Readings:** Luc Sante's Low Life Pp 22-45  
Robert Caro handout on Robert Moses & His  
Riverside Park Project

**Discussion:** The tenement experience

**Site visit:** Riverside Park

### **WITHIN SECTION - Class Three**

**Assignment due** (pod project): Progress report for Community Lottery Project

Your group or pod will be provided with a destination picked at random from a hat. Each group will venture to the location provided and document their journey, their experience of the location, and interview at least three subjects about the location. This documentation should be presented to the class on the fourth week in a reproducible visual medium such as a video or audio recording, slideshow, etc.

Provide written design concept outline, abstract and overview.

**GROUP FILM VIEWING AND DISCUSSION:** Ken Burns' Brooklyn Bridge documentary

### **WITHIN SECTION - Class Four**

**Assignment due** (pod project): Community lottery project

**Site Visit:** Travel from Museum of Natural History thru Central Park's Rambles to the Guggenheim

**Note:** For the first half hour of class cluster teachers will rotate to new section for introduction and assignment of the following week's work.