

**Foundation Program
Department of Core Studies**

Fall Semester, 2006 – 2007

LABORATORY

Thursdays 9.00am - 2.40pm

2 W 13th Street room 612

CRN: 6550

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Course Description

Laboratory is a studio/seminar course in which students apply conceptual, visual and tactile skills from their Critical Studies and studio classes to projects that address the elements and characteristics of their immediate urban environment, New York City. Students read, write, and create; working with subjects, sites and themes that broadly address key aspects and issues integral to the design process. Through observation, research and response to specific locations or points of view, students learn how to frame design problems within real-world contexts. Laboratory projects frequently have a public dimension and students are introduced to the practice of working in groups to complete large-scale proposals and projects. This interdisciplinary course, taught by faculty from all of the departments at Parsons, exposes students to the breadth of study opportunities in the art and design fields, and the relationships, commonalities and differences among the various disciplinary approaches in the School. 3 CR.

Learning Objectives

The objective of this course is for students to:

- Learn to work in teams and to work collaboratively
- Understand research practices and methodologies
- Acquire and develop presentation and project management skills
- Develop problem-setting and solving skills
- Understand research, reading, discussion, and writing as a normative dimension of studio practice
- Develop a cultural literacy about New York City and its resources through the lens of creative practice
- Develop responsible, engaged and informed critique
- Develop formal, craft and presentation skills in a manner that appropriately reflects and communicates intent

Course Outline

In the first semester, the Laboratory investigates the theme, “people in relation to the city” and uses New York City, its spaces, communities, institutions and urban organization as a way to introduce students to how artists and designers understand, respond, critique, and shape their environment. In the two projects this semester, students will be asked to draw from their own backgrounds and experiences:

- to develop an array of creative strategies and processes for use in their work
- to describe a perspective or point of view in their work
- to propose interventions within social or physical spaces or invent responses to researched issues or problems.
- to present findings and ideas based on a process of research and reflection

The projects in the Laboratory emphasize *process* and encourage students to learn to use specific tools to analyze, assess, value, test, envision and make as artists and designers within the context of the city.

Course Requirements

- I. **RESEARCH:** With each project, students will be asked to conduct a specific type of research to inform the development of the project. Research is fundamental to the successful development of each project and comprises a large portion of the grade and evaluation for each exercise and the course. Students will be asked to present their research as part of the final presentation for each project.
- II. **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.
- III. **READING AND DISCUSSION:** Students are required to complete the reading each week and be prepared for class discussion.
- IV. **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)
- V. **TEAMS & COLLABORATION:** Students work in teams in many of the projects of the Laboratory. The ability to collaborate and communicate is a skill fundamental to any design and artistic practice. Students are expected to participate in teams, learn to work together and manage tasks in ways that support each other and the goals of the project.
- VI. **DESIGNING & PROTOTYPING:** Alongside research, reading, and discussions, students are also required to engage in the *process* of designing and prototyping. Relying on and drawing on skills learned in their other 1st year courses, students will engage in a design process that culminates in final design proposals and prototypes.

Resources and Readings

Bibliography I

Orientation:

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York, Viking Press: 1973, c1972)

Mapping:

James Corner, "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention," in *Mapping*, edited by Denis Cosgrove. (London: Reaktion Books, 1999)

Katharine A. Harmon, *You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003)

Web Resources:

Mapping:

Foundcity: <http://www.foundcity.net>

Google Earth: <http://earth.google.com/>

Google Maps: <http://maps.google.com/>

Graffiti Archaeology: <http://www.grafarc.org>

Living Memorials Project: <http://www.livingmemorialsproject.net/registrymap.htm>

Manhattan Timeformations: <http://www.skyscraper.org/timeformations>

Department and Class Policies

Student Responsibilities

1. Treat class time as an opportunity.
2. Arrive to class on time, with all materials, ready to work steadily throughout the session.
3. Be prepared with all your required materials for every class.
4. Complete all assignments on time.

5. Participate in all class discussions and critiques.
6. Confront difficulties in your work in the spirit of learning, creative exploration and personal growth.
7. Ask for help from your instructors when needed.
8. Respect your fellow students at all times.
9. Disruptive behavior is not tolerated.
10. You are responsible for cleaning up after yourself at the end of each class.
11. No radios, players, walkmans, beepers or cellular phones are allowed in class.
12. NO SMOKING ANYWHERE IN THE BUILDING.

The New School statement on Academic Integrity and Honesty

Academic honesty, 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, 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. Instructors are equally responsible for informing students of their policies with respect to the limits within which students may collaborate with or seek help from others on specific assignments. Instructors are expected to educate students about the legal and ethical restrictions placed upon creative work and about the consequences of dishonesty in the professional world. At Parsons, all students are required to sign an Academic Integrity Statement declaring that they understand and agree to comply with this policy.

(From the University Policies Governing Student Conduct) "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). The standards of academic honesty and citation of sources apply to all forms of academic work (examinations, essay theses, dissertations, computer work, art and design work, oral presentations and other projects).

The standards also include responsibility for meeting the requirements of particular courses of study.

The New School recognizes that the different nature of work across the divisions of the University may entail different procedures for citing sources and referring to the work of others. Particular academic procedures, however, are based in universal principles valid in all divisions of the New School and institutions of higher education in general."

Please refer to the Parsons Student Handbook for the entire policy statement.

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.

Absences

Classes meeting 1 time per week: 3 absences are grounds for failure. 2 absences are grounds for a single grade letter drop (i.e. A to a B).

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.

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): 20%

Intro Project: 10%

Project 1: 30%

Project 2: 40%

Grade Descriptions: (from Parsons Student Handbook & Core Studies Faculty Handbook)

A	4.0	WORK OF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY. 95-100% These are projects that go above and beyond the expectations and requirements described in the assignment. They demonstrate substantial effort and achievement in the areas of critical thinking, technique and presentation.
A-	3.7	WORK OF HIGH QUALITY. 90-94%
B+	3.3	WORK OF HIGH QUALITY, HIGHER THAN AVERAGE ABILITIES 86-89%
B	3.0	VERY GOOD WORK THAT SATISFIES GOALS OF COURSE. 83-85%

The "B/B+" student offers a clear and convincing structure to a visual endeavor that is more complex and unique than a project at the average level. The creator's point of view and point of the project are merged successfully and organized fairly consistently throughout the project. Although minor structural problems may be present in the assignment, they do not hinder the overall outcome.

- B- 2.7 GOOD WORK. 80-82%
- C+ 2.3 AVERAGE WORK, AVG. UNDERSTANDING OF COURSE MATERIAL. 76-79%
- C 2.0 ADEQUATE WORK; PASSABLE. 73-75%
The student demonstrates some success in engaging with the assignment. The project will show that the creator can identify and work with key ideas and examples found in reference material. Typical of a "C" project is that the original problem or assignment once approached, does not move forward. Projects may also have organizational, technical weaknesses.
- C- 1.7 PASSING WORK BUT BELOW GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING. 70-72%
- D 1.0 BELOW AVERAGE WORK; DOES NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENTS. 60-69%
Although this is passable work, the project only answers the minimum requirements of the assignment. The projects shows very little effort, is incomplete, late or incorrect in its approach. The outcome shows a lack of understanding and commitment on the part of the creator.
- F 0 FAILURE, NO CREDIT. 0-59%

THE TERM SCHEDULE

week 1	9/7	<i>SITE VISIT</i> - Circle Line Cruise: Manhattan - 11am - 2 pm (arrive at 10.30AM!) Materials: Media for site visit (camera, bag, sketchbook, drawing media)
week 2	9/14	Circle Line Project Due for presentation Intro to Project 1 Tishman Lecture (1-2.30pm) Introduction to course; observation and mapping Joel Towers, Aaron Fry Homework due: Circle Line Project presentation
week 3	9/21	Project 1 Homework due: Research and initial field observations Living Memorials exhibition visit option #1
week 4	9/28	Project 1 Homework due: Continued research, interviews, and field observation Living Memorials exhibition visit option #2
week 5	10/05	Project 1 Tishman Lecture (1-2.30pm) Steven Johnson Homework due: Data analysis, user identification and concept development Living Memorials exhibition visit option #3
week 6	10/12	Project 1 Homework due: Project prototype and user testing
week 7	10/19	Project #1 due Project 2 Introduction Homework due: Final refined map with presentation - (PowerPoint or KeyNote)

Group Project 2: ENGAGE

week 8	10/26	Project 2 Tishman Panel (1 - 2.30pm): Engage Homework due: Develop Project Brief with consideration of project direction and user identification
week 9	11/02	Project 2 Homework due: research and field observations. Furthering concept development
week 10	11/09	Project 2 Tishman Lecture (1 - 2.30pm): Parsons Alumni & NYC Homework due: Project prototype and user testing
week 11	11/16	Project 2 Homework due: refine project

THANKSGIVING 11/23

week 12	11/30	Project 2 Homework due: Execute and refine project
week 13	12/07	Project 2 Homework due: develop final deliverable

week 14	12/14	Project #2 due Homework due: Final deliverable and/or presentation due
week 15	12/21	Final Laboratory event

PROJECTS

Circle Line Assignment

There will be 6 teams of approximately 6 persons each, to be assigned by instructors. Each team gets a notebook. Beginning at the beginning of the cruise, each team member has 5 minutes to record, in drawn, photographic or written form on 1 notebook page, their location relative to: the boat, the city, their classmates, the environment, or anything else of note, and then passes the book to the next teammate.

Focus on orienting one's self in an ongoing "conversation" with one's teammates. At the end of each hour, each teammate will have contributed (approximately) 2 pages to the notebook; at the end of the 3-hour boat ride, each team will have a total of 36 images.

As homework, each team will create an assemblage to RE-PRESENT the experience for a critique on the following Thursday a.m. The notebooks can be taken apart and reassembled in any way that the team chooses. Consider that the *intention* of the notebook is to observe, record, and represent either the individual experience of the team member and/or of the team, the cluster, or the entire population of the boat (or some combination) relative to the (moving/changing/permanent/temporal) environment that you witness, observe, and participate in.

Project 1, ORIENTATION (weeks 2-7)

o-ri-en-ta-tion (or'e-en-ta'shen, -en-, or'-) n. 1. An act of orienting or the state of being oriented. 2. Location or position relative to the points of the compass. 3. Construction of a church so that its longitudinal axis is from west to east and its main altar is at the eastern end. 4. The line or direction followed in the course of a trend, movement, or development. 5.a. A tendency of thought: a general inclination. b. Sexual orientation. 6. Adjustment or adaptation to a new environment, situation, or belief. 7. Psychol. Individual awareness of the objective world in its relation to the self. 8. Introductory instruction concerning a new situation.

Project 1 orients students to the city through direct experience and observation of a specific neighborhood of the city at various times of the day. Students will research these neighborhoods, collect data and do field observations in various mediums observing relationships of social and natural systems in the urban environment. They will then analyze and interpret their collected data and observations and translate them into a "map."

The mapping exercise is intended to both translate and interpret material gathered by students through research (traditional textual, individual interviews, and observational/experiential). In this project, mapping is a method of documenting observations about a space, place, experience, or activity in the assigned location. In the categorization, distillation, and assembly of information, maps frame points of view that provide for different ways of understanding various geographies (spatial, temporal, ecological, political, cultural, etc.). Finally, as a discourse, mapping can reveal opportunities or new perspectives that can also suggest change,

fields of intervention, or a framework for imagination. A map can be both an objective communicator of information and a subjective and speculative statement.

Learning Objectives:

1. To pay close attention to the immediate environment and learn from seeing and experiencing it.
2. To explore the history of the assigned environment through [traditional forms of] research.
3. To conduct interviews with denizens of the assigned neighborhood
4. To conduct field observations of the assigned neighborhood
5. To record, structure and organize observations
6. To work collaboratively to distill information, observations, and strategies to develop a map
7. To clearly articulate a perspective or point of view in visual or audio map

Objectives:

Field work (hands-on research recorded at a site; data gathered through interviews, informed discussion, "following leads") supplemented with library (books, journals, newspapers) and internet research to inform or direct data collection.
Analysis of the above in the form of a "map."

Suggested methods of recording observations:

Visual/auditory: drawings, photography, video, still images, sound recordings, rubbings
Written: impressions and conclusions, empirical, factual, analytical, poetic language

The assignment:

Class will break up into self-selected teams of 3 students (12 teams in all), which will then be given a map of one of four New York City neighborhoods (East Village, West Chelsea, The Meat Market, Old New Amsterdam). Teams will then begin researching the neighborhoods, collecting data about their assigned neighborhood's history, cultural make up, socio-political make up, ecologies, and overall contribution to NYC's "urban ecosystem." The team will then conduct field observations of the assigned neighborhood at three different times of day - to be determined by team - which reflect the current nature of the neighborhood. Students will seek out representatives of the neighborhood and/or experts on the neighborhood's history or culture, and conduct interviews to inform their work. Once the initial observations, research, and interviews have taken place students will then collect and analyze their data in order to determine what form their map might take.
Each group will then begin honing their data and developing the initial prototype of their map. This prototype will be tested on representative users and the results will be used to refine the project's design for final, formal critique.

Schedule:

Week Two	Research and initial field observations
Week Three	Continued research, interviews, and field observation
Week Four	Data analysis, user identification and concept development
Week Five	Project prototype and user testing
Week Six	Refine project for final presentation
Week Seven	Final presentation (KeyNote or PowerPoint) of project and completed map

Project 2, ENGAGE (weeks 8-14)

engage v. -gaged, -gag-ing, -gag-es. [ME engagen, to pledge something as security for repayment of debt < OFr. engager: en-, in (<Lat. in-) + gage, pledge, of Germanic orig.] -vt. 1. to obtain or contract for the use of: EMPLOY <engage an architect> 2. To contract for the use of : RESERVE <engage a car> 3. To obtain and hold the attention of: ENGROSS <engaged the children's full support> 4. To require the use of: OCCUPY <Training engages most of an athlete's time.> 5. To promise, esp. to marry. 6. To enter or bring into conflict with <We have engaged the enemy.> 7. To

interlock or cause to interlock: MESH 8. To win: attract. 9. To involve: entangle <engaged me in their silly quarrel> 10. Archaic. To give or take as security. -vi 1. To involve oneself or become occupied: PARTICIPATE <engage in a discussion> 2. To assume an obligation: AGREE. 3. To enter into conflict or battle. 4. To become meshed or interlocked.

Project 2 addresses some notion of stewardship in relationship to the neighborhood explored in the first project. What kinds of needs can be addressed in the communities revealed through the mapping? This group project must convey some greater understanding and engagement with the assigned neighborhood, and should propose an intervention in the neighborhood, or a project that responds to observations as identified in project 1.

Learning Objectives:

1. To engage in self-directed research that stems from experienced-based field work and observation
2. To write a project brief that articulates a point of view
3. To use resources (data available on the internet, in magazines, newspapers, or books) to inform the development of a project
4. To imagine from the research and observations some kind of meaningful sight specific intervention

The assignment:

New teams of 3-4 students (12 teams in all) will be selected by the instructors. These groups will be selected from neighborhood specific project 1 groups so as to assure informed continuity for project 2.

Teams will return to the neighborhoods assigned in project 1 and insert themselves into the communities through some form of intervention. This intervention may manifest itself as street art, performance, social action, etc. The concept should strongly consider the community and its needs as well as aesthetic and usability issues.

Schedule:

Week Eight	User identification, project direction, develop project brief
Week Nine	Research, and field observation, concept development
Week Ten	Project prototype and user testing
Week Eleven	Refine project
Week Twelve	Execute or initiate project
Week Thirteen	Develop final deliverable
Week Fourteen	Final presentation (KeyNote or PowerPoint) of project