



California State University
Architecture Program in Florence

ARCHITECTURE LAB

2017-2018
ARC 401 / 403 / 405A

FALL SEMESTER SYLLABUS

professors: **Gianni Pettena (GP)**, pettena@giannipettena.it
Marco Brizzi (MB), marco.brizzi@image-web.org
Paola Giaconia (PG), paola.giaconia@image-web.org
Achille Michelizzi (AM), achille@michelizziarchitettura.com

schedule

Monday: 4.00pm-9.00pm
Wednesday: 9am-1pm; 4.00pm-9.00pm

office hours

Marco Brizzi: Wednesday 9am-9:40am or by appointment
Paola Giaconia: Wednesday 4pm-4:40pm or by appointment
Achille Michelizzi: Monday 4pm-4:40pm or by appointment

course fees

There are no specific course fees for the ARCHITECTURE LAB for the fall semester. Expenses can vary greatly, from student to student, depending on how much each is investing on printing boards and making models.

course objective

The ARCHITECTURE LAB fosters an interdisciplinary approach to research in architecture and aims at promoting critical thinking on the disciplines and activities that shape our environment. A combination of informative lectures by the instructors, field trips and personal research and readings will support the development of studio projects that will exhibit a creative approach, conceptual precision and aesthetic sophistication.

course description

This cross discipline course -where Architecture, Urban, Landscape and Interior Design overlap- combines site visits to get knowledge of the project site, along with projects carried out in class as studio assignments.

In the first semester students will develop an architectural project that is deeply rooted within the urban context. In particular the students will focus the attention to issues related to construction in historical contexts as dealt with by the contemporary architectural culture.

This first phase will serve as a foundation for the development, in the second half of the course, of two projects that will be located on the outskirts of the city but still within a historically charged context. Issues of urban planning and design within the contemporary urban condition will be at the core of the discussions.

Lectures by the professors and by invited guests, as well as readings on various themes related to the project topics, will be addressed to generate a common cultural ground and reinforce the multidisciplinary approach of this course.

assignments

The ARCHITECTURE LAB is structured in a "project oriented" framework.

— **ASSIGNMENT 1 (fall semester)**. The introductory (warm-up) assignment, titled "Sky is the Limit", is aimed to having the students develop an environmental analysis (through pictures, sketches, written texts) of a specific building or site in the city of Florence and to propose a small extension to it, defining new solutions for inhabiting historic cities. The assignment is about going to visit the "site" and graphically and photographically documenting the environment; understanding the historic urban environment, its morphology and its constraints; exploring the possibility of intervening within such contexts by designing a piece of contemporary architecture. This assignment is a good opportunity for the students to rehearse their design and drawing skills as well as their abilities in oral and graphic presentation. Also it proves a fundamental way for the professors to understand the degree of competence of the single student. Last, but not least, it will make the students learn more about the city of Florence, which will be their home for a whole year.

— **ASSIGNMENT 2 (fall semester)**. With the first project (fall semester) we have the intent of experimenting the activity of design into an existing urban context. The students will be asked to design an addition to an existing building. A site visit will be planned before starting the project.

upcoming Spring semester assignments and events

Below is an anticipation of assignments and events that will take place in the Spring semester:

— **ASSIGNMENT 3 (spring semester)**. The second project (spring semester) will deal with larger urban and territorial issues. Not only will this exercise deal with a larger scale, it will also bear more complex implications; different conditions, constraints and possibilities await for a coherent and effective design response. The city of Florence will be, once again, the object/subject of a didactic investigation, that will see the students work in teams and that will further enrich the curriculum.

— **CSU Florence Architecture Day (spring semester)**. After the first edition of the CSU Florence Architecture Day, which took place in May 2011 as a review of the development of the CSU Florence architecture program in the last 35 years, the program will continue in its mission of highlighting its successes by inviting an alumn who will lecture on his/her work as well as discuss with the students the state of the profession and of research in architecture.

In May 2011, Tim Power, CalPoly San Luis Obispo alumn, now principal at his firm in Milan, started the program; in 2012 we invited Johanna Grawunder, CalPoly San Luis Obispo alumn (1983) and former partner at Sottsass Associati in Milan, now principal at her firm with offices in Milan and San Francisco; in 2013 we invited Mike Ryan (Milan / San Diego, www.mmryan.net); in 2014 our guest was Thom Faulders, principal at his own multidisciplinary practice in Oakland, CA (faulders-studio.com); Dan Parks, project leader at L22 in Milan (www.l22.it), was our guest in 2014; Tim Power returned in 2015. Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the CSU Florence program. On that occasion, we invited Russel Thomsen, 1979-1980 alumnus of the Florence program and currently principal of RNTThomsen ARCHITECTURE in downtown Los Angeles as well as history and theory professor at SCI-Arc.

– **Coast-2-Coast in Ascoli Piceno (spring semester) - TBC.** This workshop provides an important occasion for CSU students in terms of knowledge exchange as they will work side by side with Italian students from the Facoltà di Architettura in Ascoli Piceno. Originally conceived by Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, the Coast-2-Coast is now in its 13th edition.

– **Image: HOT SEASON'S PIX (spring semester).** Image, the company run by Marco Brizzi and Paola Giaconia (www.image-web.org), is exceptionally opening up its architecture video ARCHIVE, unparalleled repository of its kind, to liven up a special evening devoted to some hot topics in contemporary architecture.

– **Lecture series.** Italian and European architects will be invited to talk to the students, who will have the opportunity of hearing from them in person, seeing their most recent projects -completed and under construction- which relate to their own studio projects, and asking them questions in the informal Q&A session that takes place at the end of each event. The lectures, which will be fine-tuned with the programs developed in studio, will span the whole spectrum of architecture-related activities, from industrial design to art and urban installations, from videos to architectural projects, ranging in scale from residential to institutional to urban design.

Given the relations established by California State University - Florence Program with other institutions in the city of Florence (for example, the Municipality of Florence, the University of Florence, Kent State University, Syracuse University, etc.), our program will be enriched by a series of architecture-related events which will be communicated to the students in the course of the year. The architecture faculty will introduce the events as details on them become available and will frame them -whenever possible- in the didactic course described in this syllabus.

bibliography

Readings from the texts mentioned below, as well as from current magazines/newspapers, will be discussed during classes:

- Benevolo, Leonardo. *The Origins of Modern Town Planning*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1967.
- Bruno, Giuliana. *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*. New York: Verso, 2002.
- Colomina, Beatriz. *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996.
- Colquhoun, Alan. *Modern Architecture*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1992.
- Gehl, Jan. *Life Between Building: Using Public Space*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987.
- Hays, Michael. *Architecture Theory Since 1968*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.
- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House, 1961.
- Lang, Peter and William Menking. *Superstudio: Life without Objects*. Milan: Skira, 2003.
- Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1960.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938.
- Pettena, Gianni. *Radicals: architettura e design*. Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia, 1996.
- Vidler, Anthony. *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use*. Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008.

architecture lab lectures

Gianni Pettena
Marco Brizzi
Paola Giaconia
Achille Michelizzi

attendance policy

Class meets on Mondays, 4.00-9.00pm, and on Wednesdays, 9am-1 pm and 4.00-9.00pm.

Attendance to all CSU architecture courses is mandatory. Two unexcused absences are allowed during the semester but more than two unexcused absences will lower your grade as follows (excused absences will

be accepted for serious medical reasons or emergencies): **3 unexcused absences**, lowers one letter grade; **4 unexcused absences**, lowers two letter grades; **5 unexcused absences**, lowers 3 letter grades. **More than five unexcused absences could result in failure of the course.**

In order not to disrupt the class, punctuality is required. Students are expected to be in class at the beginning of the class hour; any delay exceeding 30 minutes will be considered an absence.

Dates of mid-term and final crits **can not** be changed for individual travel plans or personal needs. Students should take note of the dates and hours of the midterm and final crits and plan their trips after the last crit. It is important to inform friends and relatives about these crit dates so that no tickets are purchased for you that will interfere with these crit dates. Missing the midterm or the final crit could mean failure of the course.

During the academic year photocopies and other material may be distributed in class by the instructors. Students who were not in class are responsible for getting the material from their classmates and making their own photocopies.

grading policy

Evaluation is based on daily work in studio, presentations, and quality and completeness of assignments. Grades are given by the instructors. The final course grade will be determined as indicated below:

- Assignment 1 - Sky is the Limit: 20%
- Assignment 2 (phase 1): 40%
- Assignment 2 (phase 2): 40%

calendar

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|--|-------------|
| Nov 6 | Monday | Sky is the Limit project crits (in aula magna) | GP+MB+PG+AM |
| Nov 8 | Wednesday am | Presentation of assignment 2 (in aula magna) | GP+MB+PG+AM |
| | Wednesday pm | Visit to the project site (TBC) | |
| Nov 13 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Nov 15 | Wednesday am | Visit to the DIDALABS at the University of Florence with prof. Giovanni Anzani (TBC) | |
| | Wednesday pm | Marco Brizzi's presentation + deskcrits Paola Giaconia's presentation + deskcrits | MB PG |
| Nov 20 | Monday | Special workshop with Giulio Margheri (OMA/AMO) The workshop will run from 11:30 am to 2 pm; and from 4 pm to 9 pm. We will meet in the aula magna at 11:30 am. | |
| Nov 22 | Wednesday am | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | Assignment 2: class models (1 per room) at scale 1:200 ready | PG |
| Nov 27 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Nov 29 | Wednesday am | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | desk crits | PG+AM |
| Dec 4 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Dec 6 | Wednesday am | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | guest lecturer (TBC) | |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---|-------------|
| Dec 11 | Monday | desk crits | |
| Dec 13 | Wednesday am | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | desk crits | PG |
| Dec. 18/20 | Mon/Wed | Midterm crits - assignment 2 (phase 1) | GP+MB+PG+AM |
| ----- WINTER BREAK ----- | | | |
| Jan 8 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Jan 10 | Wednesday am | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | desk crits | PG |
| Jan 15 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Jan 17 | Wednesday am | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | desk crits | PG |
| Jan 22 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Jan 24 | Wednesday am | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | guest lecturer (TBC) | PG |
| Jan 29 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Jan 31 | Wednesday | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | desk crits | PG |
| Feb 5 | Monday | desk crits | AM |
| Feb 7 | Wednesday | desk crits | MB |
| | Wednesday pm | desk crits | PG |
| Feb 12/14 | Mon/Wed | Final crits - assignment 2 (phase 2) | GP+MB+PG+AM |