

CURRY J. HACKETT, INSTRUCTOR
PLACE, MEMORY, AND CULTURE
INCUBATOR (PMCI)

SPITZER SCHOOL OF
ARCHITECTURE
ARCH 51000 ADVANCED STUDIO
MON AND THURS 2:00–5:20PM
SSA STUDIO 318

OFFICE HOURS 1:00–2:00PM
MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS, AND
BY APPOINTMENT

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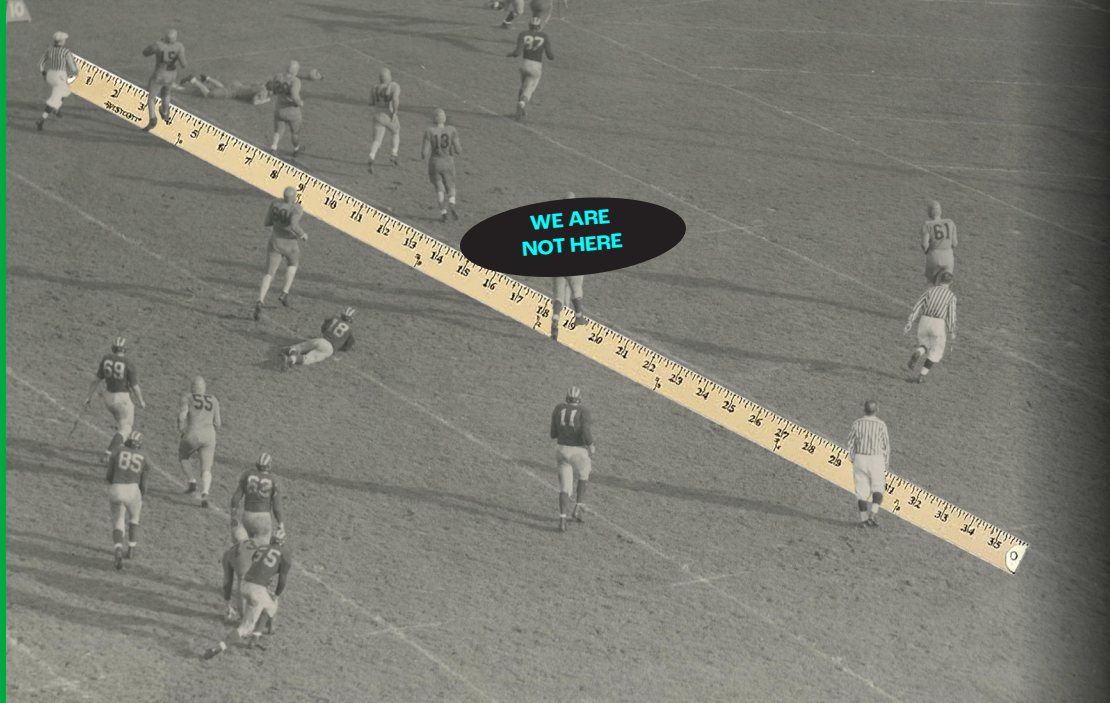
*(Towards a New Ecology on
Saint Nicholas Avenue)*



Yard—of the Old English *geard*, meaning building, home, or region—bears a multiplicity of meanings in the American imagination (hence the repetitive course title). Typically depicted as an emerald monocultural mat of (often non-native) grass in front of a single-family home, the American yard holds an outsized impact on the politics of property, land, and vegetation.

The lawncare industry, for example—a \$150 billion enterprise—is predicated on an array of products and gadgets intended to alter and constrain the behavior of plants such that the sanctity of this artificial landscape is maintained. We can trace this attitude to the British lawns of the 17th and 18th centuries, where lawns were touted as symbols of status, due to the labor required to keep the grass cut and manicured. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate is cited as one of the first British-style lawns in the United States, setting the stage for expansive lawns of the American plantation and the white-fenced yards of many twentieth century suburbs.

The *yard* as an empirical form of measurement of linear distance (and also of property) is the kind of thing we're hoping to confront and offer alternatives for.



This studio will radically frustrate these problematic formulations of the yard, however. Instead, we will encounter the *Yard* (the proper noun version) as both an idea and a place: an array of typologies which operate at different scales, support different ecologies, and tell different stories.

Throughout the semester we will look to how the Yard shows up in Harlem, the American South, and elsewhere throughout the Black Atlantic, such as: the role of gardens, yards, and foraging in Black American cuisine, along with the culinary, spiritual, and medicinal usage of plants imported from the African continent during the slave trade; Harlem's rich history of community gardens (note that "garden" is an etymological cousin of "yard"); the swept yards of the American South, in which residents use handmade brooms to sweep the ground free of debris and (incidentally) grass; the vibrant quads of many Historically Black Colleges (often called simply "the Yard"), portrayed in films like *School Daze* and *Stomp the Yard*; the *yaad* to mean "home" in Jamaican Patois; and, the emergence of the community land trust in rural Georgia as a form of collective ownership during Jim Crow. All these traditions will serve as

precedents for how "yardness" can serve as a viable framework for shaping emergent cultures, architectures, programs, media, and governance structures.

The studio will examine a 13-block strip of West Harlem, using the Yard as an investigative strategy for uplifting current social uses of land while inventing new architectural typologies, forms of media and archiving, and public engagement strategies. The goal of the studio, ultimately, is to discover and promote forms of communal gathering, endorse and engender relationships with nature and land, and invite students and community members alike to see the land itself along Saint Nicholas Park as a repository of Black and more-than-human subjectivities.



A NOTE ON THE PLACE, MEMORY, & CULTURE INCUBATOR

This studio is part of the Place, Memory, and Culture Incubator (PMCI), funded by the Mellon Foundation and now in its second year. The initiative “aims to interact with Harlem communities to transform the ways in which students engage and connect with their deep-seated histories. Design studios will record, visualize, and preserve heritage while projecting innovative, resilient cultural and spatial futures.”

To this end, this studio will identify, and then (to the extent that we are invited) be deeply embedded in, a Harlem community throughout our study area, with a focus on Saint Nicholas Avenue. We will also be in dialogue with other courses supported by the PMCI, namely the Living Lenox studio and research workshop, co-taught by Jerome Haferd and Najha Zigbi-Johnson.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Manhattan Community Board 10 (Hon. Marquis A. Harrison, Chair): Relevant committees could include: Arts & Culture, Land Use, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation, Historic Preservation & Landmarks.

Manhattan Community Board 9 (Hon. Victor Edwards, Chair): Relevant committees could include: Arts & Culture, Cannabis Task Force, and Health and Environment

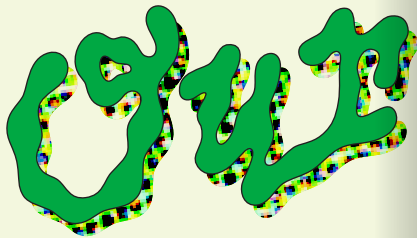
125th Street Business Improvement District (BID): a self-taxing entity, and precedent for hyperlocal governance

Friends of Saint Nicholas Park: local stewardship group known for hosting events

Otto Neals: artist and sculptor of 135th Street’s Harlem Walk of Fame

Harlem Grown: manager of community gardens and innovator of gardening technology in Harlem

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: [more of a resource than a partner] vast archival collection of Black ephemera, maps, and documentation of Harlem History



Outputs from the studio should outlive the studio and reside in the adjacent community in some way, or otherwise offer evidence of the studio's reflections.

These could take the form of an event, toolkit, or installation.



Chapter 8

Front, Side, and Rear Yards



Front and side yards and areaways are historic features at many residential buildings throughout New York City. They serve an important function, physically and aesthetically separating structures from sidewalks and the street. Yards and areaways are incorporated into private open spaces in front and on the sides of rowhouses and semi-detached rowhouses, and sometimes include driveways and walkways. They have historically been modified to address access issues, safety concerns, and to add or remove greenery. Historic alterations serve as the basis for LPC's rules for work in yards and areaways (see LPC Rules, Section 2-17, available on our website: www.nyc.gov/landmarks).

NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

Our Backyard



SITE

We will study a 13-block long north–south strip of Saint Nicholas Avenue in Central Harlem—in City College of New York’s backyard—spanning from 128th Street to the south, 141st Street to the north, Edgecombe Avenue to the east (and possible studies extending to Frederick Douglass Avenue), and the dramatic Fordham Cliffs to the west. This area largely consists of Saint Nicholas Park to the west, and mostly housing to the east. The Mount Calvary United Methodist Church (formerly Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement) anchors the split of Edgecombe Avenue from Saint Nicholas, and is fronted by a pocket park. Lastly, halfway through the north–south axis of Saint Nicholas Park, James Baldwin Lawn—named for the Harlem-raised writer—serves as the primary open space.

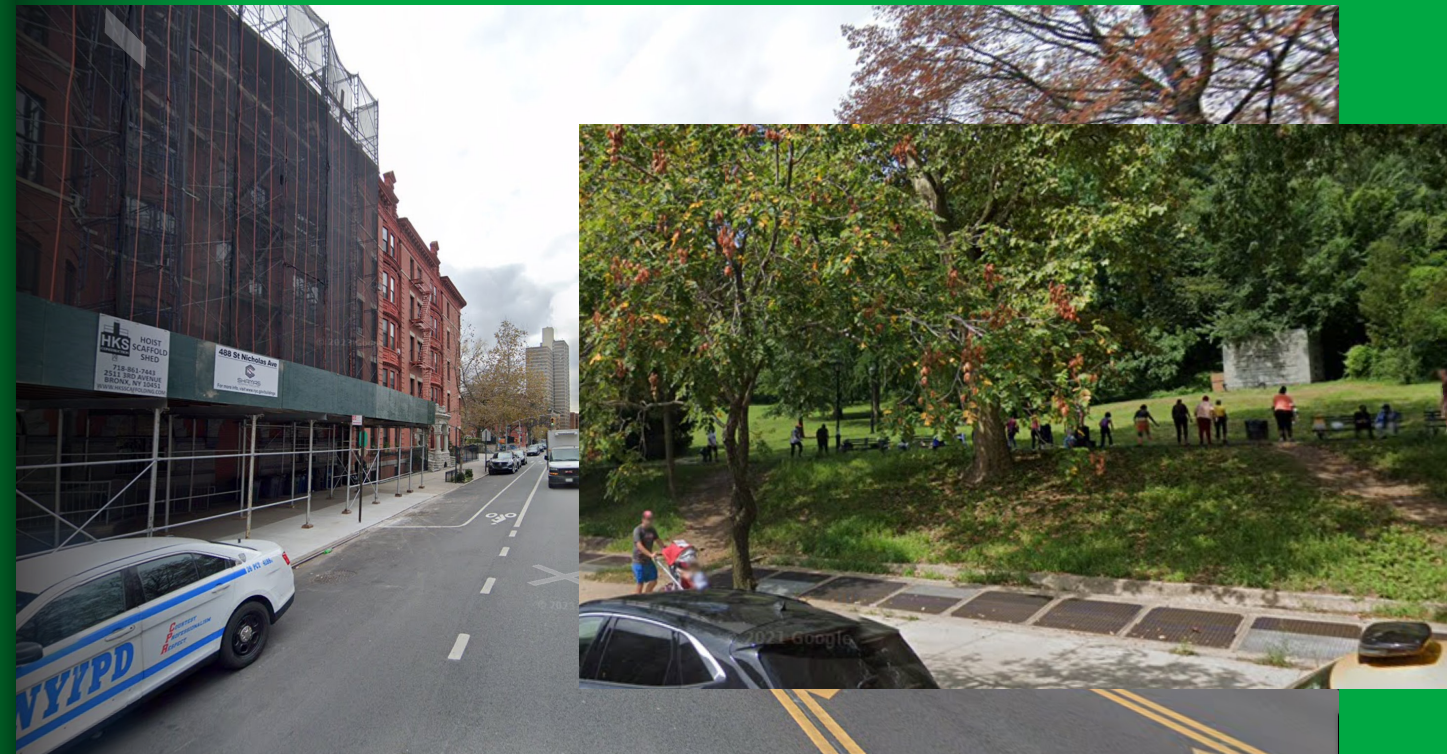
The westernmost arterial street of Central Harlem, Saint Nicholas Avenue traces the bottom of the Fordham Cliffs, slicing obliquely through the Manhattan street grid. The north–south corridor was also an important thoroughfare for the indigenous Weekquaeskeek, and connected current-day lower Manhattan to Albany. This path traversed several waterways, including creeks and marshes. The trail was supplanted by a major postal route before Harlem’s housing boom following the American Civil War, when it first became a vehicular avenue. Today, the wide street and relative lack of cultural spaces and retail frontage along the western edge of Saint Nicholas Avenue renders both the adjacent park and the streetscape largely underutilized—especially compared to Morningside Park and Frederick Douglass Avenue, respectively.

Students will pick their own sites within this study area, and gradually form teams to study a contiguous site area along no more than one or two city blocks. Towards the end of the semester, the entire class, along with any relevant community partners, will collectively discover overlaps in each other’s work to string together a larger strategy that engages the overall 13-block long study area.

This studio will consider the sidewalks, courtyards, and other open spaces along Saint Nicholas Avenue as an aggregate of “commonsens” that can be maintained, amplified, and revealed through a set of interventions and programming. We will also consider the site as a “thick”, multi-scalar condition: the root systems of the flora that hold the soil together, the features of the streetscape that support public activity, and the multi-generational stories that make up the Saint Nicholas Avenue imaginary.

Site photos along Saint Nicholas Avenue. Our studio is trying to bridge and reimagine these two scenes into something that feels less separated, and more “yardlike” (hopefully).

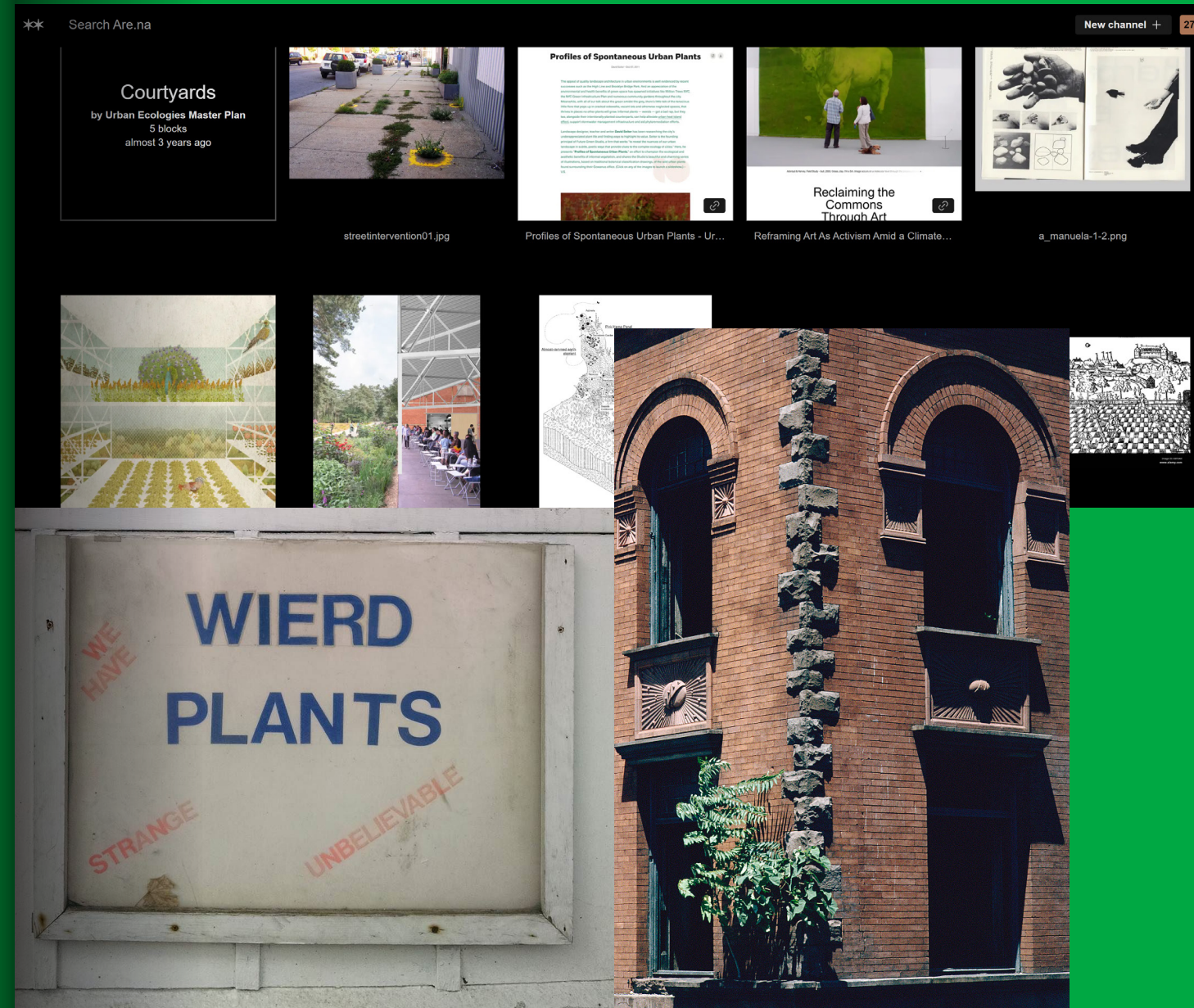
Also, we’ll be looking at the ground itself as a kind site, and offer “thick descriptions” of this contested place.



REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- Niya Bates' work on the Getting Word African-American Oral History Project at Monticello
- Maroon towns in Jamaica, quilombos in Brazil, and similar configurations throughout the American South
- HBCU college campus (as seen in films such as "Stomp the Yard" and "School Daze")
- "Black Land Pedagogy Lab", "Ugly Beauties", and "YARDS & YARDS & YARDS" channels on Are.na
- Gordon Parks' chronicling of both Harlem street life and Southern Black life in the 20th century
- Harlem Grown community gardens
- Oral histories from "Drylongso: An Ode to the Black Southern Landscape", Curry J. Hackett, 2021
- "So That You All Won't Forget" exhibition at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
- Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn
- Studio Zewde landscape/planting strategy at Studio Museum Harlem
- High on the Hog series on Netflix, and Jessica B. Harris' book by the same name
- "Ugly Beauties" installation in downtown Brooklyn, Curry J. Hackett, 2024
- "Time Landscape" land art installation near Washington Square Park by Alan Sonfist
- Pope L's iconic crawl performances in the streets of New York
- Digital and archival collections at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Screenshot from are.na channel showing inspiration and ideas for studio output, along with additional resources



ADDITIONAL READING

Plants and Ethnobotany:

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013)

Twitty, Michael. *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South* (New York, Amistad, 2017)

Del Tredici, Peter. "Flora of the Future". *Places Journal*. April 2014. <https://placesjournal.org/article/the-flora-of-the-future/>

Mullins, Paul. "Gardens in the Black City: Landscaping 20th-Century African America". July 2019. <https://paulmullins.wordpress.com/2015/07/19/gardens-in-the-black-city-landscaping-20th-century-african-america/>



Policy/Governance:

Williams, Olivia R. "The Problem with Community Land Trusts". *Jacobin*. July 2019. <https://jacobin.com/2019/07/community-land-trusts-clts-problems>

Hong, Grace Kyungwon. "Property". *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (New York: NYU Press). <https://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/property/>

hooks, bell. "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" in *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, No. 36 (1989), pp. 15-23

Urban Landscapes:

Roberts, Bryony. "Performative Rebellions". *Harvard Design Magazine*. Fall/Winter 2017. <https://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/articles/performative-rebellions/>

Mattern, Shannon. "Fugitive Libraries". *Places Journal*. October 2019. <https://placesjournal.org/article/fugitive-libraries/>

Hayden, Dolores. "The Potential of Ethnic Places for Urban Landscape: Using Ethnic History to Understand Urban Landscapes [Vision, Culture and Landscape]". *Places Journal*. Volume 7, Issue 1. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1592744m>

Allen, Diane Jones. "Living Freedom Through the Maroon Landscape". *Places Journal*. September 2022. <https://placesjournal.org/article/the-maroon-communities-and-landscapes-of-louisiana/>

Wolfe, Alan. "Pedestrian 37: A Walk Is a Gift: Announcing the seedlings of an emerging project" via *Substack*. Nov 28, 2023. <https://pedestrian.substack.com/p/pedestrian-37-a-walk-is-a-gift>

Mutiti, Nontsikelelo. "Tracing the Diasporic Experience through the African Hair Braiding Salon" in *Ways of Knowing Cities*, edited by Laura Kurgan and Dare Brawley. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019)

Week 1

Thu Aug 29 Convocation @ 2pm
Advanced Studio Lottery @ 3pm
Followed by first studio meeting

Week 2

Mon Sep 02 College Closed (Labor Day), no classes
Thu Sep 05 Hour SSA/JEDI Climate Survey (in studio) 2-3pm

Week 3

Mon Sep 09 Studio
Thu Sep 12 CJH at "Black Home as Public Art" conference; no class (virtual office hours TBC)
Sciame Lecture: Lawrence Vale

Week 4

Mon Sep 16 Studio
Thu Sep 19 Studio
Rudin Lecture: Alan Hantman

Week 5

Mon Sep 23 Studio
Thu Sep 26 Studio: Part 1 Due
Sciame Lecture: Maria Carrizosa

Week 6

Mon Sep 30 Studio
Thu Oct 03 No Classes

Week 7

Mon Oct 07 Studio
Thu Oct 10 Studio
Sciame Lecture: Jon Michael Schwarting & Frances Campani

Week 8

Mon Oct 14 College Closed (Columbus/Indigenous Peoples' Day), no classes
Tue Oct 15 Studio (Classes for a Monday schedule)
Thu Oct 17 Studio
Sciame Lecture: Anna Pashynska & Tania Pashynska

Week 9

Mon Oct 21 Studio
Thu Oct 24 Studio - Midterm Reviews (Part 2 Due)
Sciame Lecture: Nora Akawi

Week 10

Mon Oct 28 Studio
Thu Oct 31 Mid-semester assessments, Hour SSA Session

Week 11

Mon Nov 04	Studio
Thu Nov 07	Studio
<i>Sciame Lecture: Sabine Malebranche</i>	

Week 12

Mon Nov 11	Studio
Thu Nov 14	Studio
<i>Sciame Lecture: TBD</i>	

Week 13

Mon Nov 18	Studio
Thu Nov 21	Studio: Part 3 Due

Week 14

Mon Nov 25	Studio
Thu Nov 28	College Closed (Thanksgiving) NO CLASSES

Week 15

Mon Dec 02	Studio
Thu Dec 05	Studio

FINAL REVIEWS, Dec 9–13 (Part 4 Due)

Mon Dec 09	Advanced Studios
	Hackett
	Stigsgaard
	Brahmbhatt
	Keramati

Tue Dec 10	Core Studio I Horn (coordinator)
Wed Dec 11	Advanced Studios Edmiston, Bolhassani Gebert
Thu Dec 12	Core Studio III Wainer (coordinator)
Fri Dec 13	Core Studio V Volkman (coordinator)

End of Semester

Mon Dec 16	Clean-up Day (all materials, projects, and any other items must be removed from studio)
Tue Dec 17	End of Semester Assessment (faculty only) Student Portfolios due for: SSA/CCNY Archive, etc. as directed by instructor
Fri Dec 27	Final grade submission deadline

Our Culture

How we hope to hold ourselves in this class:

Be present.

Cultivate curiosity (especially when feeling frustrated).

Listen actively.

Ask questions.

Be authentic in sharing thoughts.

How we want to meet challenges/complexity:

Promote creativity/playfulness.

Sit with discomfort

Embrace ambiguity.

Define what safety mean—name when the space isn't working for us.

Take responsibility for our impact as well as our intentions.

How we want to be in community with one another:

Build connections to one another.

Learn names.

Show compassion and interest.

Take collective ownership of the space.

Share the air

Bring identities into the space.

Keep in mind that others will come to the conversation with different identities/ experiences than those we bring.

How we want to learn:

Take time to process: slow is okay.

When someone helps your learning, say thank you!

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- That students will develop a high level of independent thought and rigor and a willingness to go beyond both basic project requirements and their own perceived limits and abilities.
- That students will successfully complete all project requirements. No make-up or postponed project submissions will be accepted except in the case of documented medical emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances. Excused absences and project delays must be officially cleared by the professor in advance to be considered valid.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

- During the first full studio meeting, the professor will make time for an Hour SSA session for the JEDI Climate Survey.
- Studio members will work together to create a community agreement for interacting together over the semester. Definition: "A consensus on what every person in our group needs from each other and commits to each other in order to feel safe, supported, open, productive and trusting... so that we can do our best work." <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/tools/developing-community-agreements>
- These agreements will be taken seriously, and revisited frequently during the semester

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

- Attendance and participation in class discussions and activities: 10%
- Project development in response to semester schedule: 60%
- Project presentation, level of completion and resolution: 30%

The Fine

GRADING ASSESSMENT & LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students demonstrate the ability to respond to studio discourse and feedback in a consistent and clear manner throughout the semester as demonstrated in the evolution and development of design work.
- Students demonstrate the ability to utilize both digital and manual drawing and model-making techniques to precisely and creatively represent architectural ideas.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical and applied research methodologies and practices used during the design process, and test and evaluate recent innovations in the field of architecture.
- Students demonstrate the ability to prepare a comprehensive program for an architectural project that includes such tasks as: an assessment of client and user needs; an inventory of spaces and their requirements; an analysis of site conditions (including existing buildings); a review of the relevant building codes and standards, including relevant sustainability requirements, and an assessment of their implications for the project; and a definition of site selection and design assessment criteria.
- Students demonstrate the skills associated with making integrated decisions across multiple systems and variables in the completion of a design project, in different settings and scales of development, from buildings to cities. This demonstration includes problem identification, setting evaluative criteria, analyzing solutions, and predicting the effectiveness of implementation.
- Attendance: Consistent level of preparation and on-time presence for each studio class and scheduled evening lectures.
- Portfolio: Completion of final portfolio or collection of studio work as directed by instructor and/or coordinator and attendance at all scheduled portfolio related events.

Print

GRADING CRITERIA

- A (+/-) Work meets all requirements and exceeds them. Presentations are virtually flawless, complete, and finely detailed. Work exhibits professional, “museum quality” level of craft. Student has developed an individual design process that shows a high level of independent thought and rigor. Work shows evidence of intense ambition and effort to go beyond expectations, and beyond the student’s own perceived limits of their abilities.
- B (+/-) Work meets all requirements. Presentations are complete and finely detailed. Work exhibits professional level of craft. Student has developed an individual design process that shows a high level of independent thought and rigor.
- C (+/-) Work meets minimum requirements. Deadlines are missed. While presentations may be somewhat complete, student has struggled to develop an individual design process and/or is lacking in craft or design resolution.
- D Work is below minimum requirements. Presentations are incomplete, student has struggled to develop an individual design process and/or is lacking in craft or design resolution.
- F Work is well below minimum requirements. Student does not develop adequate design process, and/or does not finish work.
- INC Grades of “incomplete” are not given under any circumstances unless there is evidence of a medical or personal emergency. In such cases, instructor and student develop a contract to complete work by a specified date, as per CCNY policy. Classes and/or work missed due to illness must be explained with a physician’s note.

D is the lowest passing grade for B. ARCH students. Working in teams does not guarantee the same grade for each team member; grades are based on a range of criteria for each individual student.

For more information on grading guidelines and other CCNY policies and procedures, consult the current CCNY academic bulletins: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/registrar/bulletins>.

OFFICE HOURS

Each studio faculty member schedules 30 regular office hours over the semester, as posted at the top of the syllabus. If a student needs to speak in private with a studio critic, they should ask or email in advance to request a specific meeting time. Students may seek office hour appointments to discuss any matters of concern including personal, private matters and general inquiries about course related work, grading, assessment and content.

PROBATION & DISMISSAL

For program specific information related to grades, academic standing, probation and dismissal, please see your program academic advisors:

Undergrad advisors: Amy Daniel adaniel@ccny.cuny.edu
Tony Bowles abowles@ccny.cuny.edu

STUDIO CULTURE

Working collaboratively and respectfully on studio assignments, with and alongside others, is an expectation in studio. Studio culture is an important part of an architectural education, and it extends to expectations for Faculty and the School’s Administration as well. Please see the Spitzer School of Architecture Studio Culture Policy, which can be accessed on the SSA website here: <https://ssa.ccny.cuny.edu/about/policies/>

ABSENCE & LATENESS

Arriving more than ten minutes late to class will constitute an absence. Two unexcused absences will result in a whole letter grade deduction from a final grade; more than four will result in a failing grade. It is expected that all students will participate in all scheduled working, midterm and final reviews and contribute constructively to the discussions.

ABSENCES DUE TO RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Students who will miss any class sessions, exams, presentations, trips, or the like due to a religious observance should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate adjustments for observance needs can be implemented. This could include an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirement that is missed because of an absence due to a religious observance on any particular day or days.

READINGS & JOURNALS

Students are expected to keep a journal or sketchbook throughout the semester to document their thought process and take notes of any texts, books, terms or references that are mentioned by either the studio critic or fellow classmates, and to selectively follow up on these and any assigned readings before the next class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a student you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner that reflects the ethical ideas of the profession of architecture. Any act of academic dishonesty not only raises questions about an individual's fitness to practice architecture, but also demeans the academic environment in which it occurred. Giving or receiving aid in examinations, and plagiarism are a violation of an assumed trust between the school and the student.

Plagiarism, i.e. the presentation as one's own work of words, drawings, ideas and opinions of someone else, is as serious an instance of academic dishonesty in this context as cheating on examinations. The submission of any piece of work (written, drawn, built, or photocopied) is assumed by the school to guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are literally the student's own, executed by the student. All assignments must be the student's original work. Any copying, even short excerpts, from another book, article, or Internet source, published or unpublished, without proper attribution will result in automatic failure of the entire course.

The CCNY Academic Integrity Policy: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/about/integrity>

For citations, the Chicago Manual of Style is recommended: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

ACCESSABILITY CENTER (STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES)

The AccessAbility center (AAC) facilitates equal access and coordinates reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and support services for City College students with disabilities while preserving the integrity of academic standards. Students who have self-identified with AAC to receive accommodations should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. (North Academic Center 1/218; 212-650-5913 or 212-650-6910 for TTY/TTD). For further information, go to <http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/accessability/> or email disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu

HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT

City College's Office of Health and Wellness Services offers free and confidential counseling. Contact: Health and Wellness Services, Marshak Science Building, room J-15: counseling@ccny.cuny.edu.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE RESOURCES

City College has resources to support you if you have experienced sexual violence, intimate partner/domestic violence, gender-based discrimination, harassment or stalking. For confidential support, you can contact the Student Psychological Counselor: Confidential Advocate at (212) 650-8905 or the Gender Resources Program at (212) 650-8222. If you would like to report sexual misconduct, you can contact the Chief Diversity Officer and Title IX Coordinator, Sheryl Konigsberg, Esq., at (212) 650-6310 or skonigsberg@ccny.cuny.edu. If there is an emergency on campus, you can call Public Safety at 212-650-777 and off campus call 911. For more information, see: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/affirmativeaction>

LIBRARY

The school's library is a shared resource that is necessary supplement to all research and design work. Please direct questions to the library staff or the Architecture Librarian Nilda Sanchez-Rodriguez: nsanchez@ccny.cuny.edu

NAAB (NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL ACCREDITING BOARD)

The following criteria from the 2020 NAAB Conditions are addressed in this course:

- Program Criteria (PC) These criteria seek to evaluate the outcomes of architecture programs and student work within their unique institutional, regional, national, international, and professional contexts, while encouraging innovative approaches to architecture education and professional preparation.
- PC.2 Design: How the program instills in students the role of the design process in shaping the built environment and conveys the methods by which design processes integrate multiple factors, in different settings and scales of development, from buildings to cities.
- PC.5 Research and Innovation—How the program prepares students to engage and participate in architectural research to test and evaluate innovations in the field.

Students should consult the NAAB website www.naab.org for additional information regarding student performance criteria and all other conditions for accreditation.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR CURRY J. HACKETT

I AM HERE
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edu

EMERGENCIES ONLY
202 302

2917

CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS DESIGNED FOR:

Gabriel

Ornella

Richard

Onika

Bryan

Anderson

Evelyn

Sonia

Anne

Faith

Carla

Reuben

Anthony

Jeann

Angel