

Principles of Urban Design:

Contemporary Urban Design in Theory and Practice

Portland Program. Architecture 435/535. 4 credits. Fall 2009

Instructor: Gerry Gast.

Meets Wednesday 9:00 AM – noon + Required Workshop Saturday Oct 31, 9-5.



Plan for Potsdamer Platz Berlin (1999)

"Making a plan for Berlin was an impossible job, although I would never say this to my clients. A civilized person is called urbane ... and when we refer to this term, we immediately think about all the beautiful cities that have ever been. We know, however, that they are not designed. They were, and still are, a product of organic growth. When you walk around these cities, what is beautiful is the very fact that what you are looking at has not been designed. Instead, it represents the materialization of the millions of life stories that have been enacted within their respective walls across centuries"

- Renzo Piano reflecting on the design of Potsdamer Platz, Berlin.

This course focuses on contemporary Urban Design in theory and practice. Urban Design is examined as both a subject of theoretical inquiry and an activity immersed in the living experiences within cities, a meeting ground of ideas and the real forces at work in cities.

Comparative studies of neighborhood conservation, central city regeneration, and growth policies for metropolitan regions are discussed and debated. Future prospects for restructuring cities and their surrounding metropolitan regions are explored. Case study examples are accompanied by direct field experience through projects which address neighborhood, central city and regional design issues.

The course focuses on contemporary Urban Design issues in North America and selected cities abroad, using case studies from Portland, Seattle, Vancouver BC, Baltimore, Berlin, Bilbao (Spain), Curitiba (Brazil) and other cities. The format combines lectures, discussions, on-site workshops and urban design projects.

The Portland Laboratory

The Portland region is used as a laboratory for critical discussion of urban design concepts and principles, building on the metropolitan area's achievements in downtown development, neighborhood revitalization, land use / transit planning and regional growth management. Portland's development issues are viewed through the lens of contemporary urban design theory, comparing its approach to methods used in other cities in North America and abroad.

The course is designed to orient students to Portland's urban and regional context, providing an important foundation for projects in the design studios. It addresses issues of the central city and the larger metropolitan area, focusing on challenges facing the region as it strives to build a more livable, equitable and sustainable regional structure.

Format

The course format includes lectures, discussions and debates, visiting speakers, and neighborhood/site visits. A (required) all day workshop charette will be held Saturday October 31, 9 AM-5 PM.

Projects

Three projects are given during the term. Each project coincides with class readings, lectures and discussions:

Project 1: Urban Development Models. A critical analysis of new city center residential neighborhoods in Vancouver, BC and Portland. Focus on alternative visions of urbanism; analysis and critique of recent developments.

Project 2: Central City Regeneration. Urban design concept study of a revitalization project in Downtown Portland.

Project 3: "Re-building Suburban Centers". The challenge of "repairing" suburbia: creating transit and pedestrian-oriented centers to re-structure existing suburbs.

Information and Questions

Instructor: Gerry Gast geraldgast@gmail.com

Gerry Gast is an architect and urban designer, Associate Professor in the University of Oregon Portland Urban Architecture Program, and Visiting Associate Professor in the Program on Urban Studies, Stanford University. He is a founding principal of Gast-Hillmer Urban Design in the San Francisco Bay Area. Bio and firm info at: www.Gast-Hillmer.com