Skyscrapers: “The greatest of them tug at our heartstrings. We seek them out in the skyline, both to get our bearings and to anchor ourselves psychologically in the life of the city. We certainly aspire to make architecture that achieves this, but we also want to make a building that is predicated on the conservation of our natural resources.”

If the familiar appeal of skyscrapers has waned in urban places where they are ubiquitous such as New York or Chicago the same cannot be said of cities around the world that are experiencing bursts of high-rise construction even in the current economic climate. The appearance of tall buildings on the skyline, morphing the identity of the urban landscape, expands a city’s dimensions, often making it a presence well beyond traditional boundaries.

Current concerns and issues confronting building tall range from structural soundness, safety and sustainability to programmatic and formal inventions that rethink the notion of the street and the top-down structure of traditional hierarchies. Studio investigations will consider 3 fundamental aspects of the tall building: urbanism, program and technology. These fundamentals are informed by current cultural attitudes towards cities as well as the Tower’s recent emergence as a building type which integrates design and technical strategies effective in moderating our negative effects on the environment.

The Studio examines the significance of Tall Buildings in the revitalization efforts of many urban centers as well as the structures metaphorical role in the culture of a city. Design considerations include; Aerodynamics, Structural technologies, Night illumination, Circulation and Public Space Making. Attention will be given to the impact of modern digital fabrication, structural strategies and green technologies on building envelope systems, materiality, day lighting solutions and structural expressionism.

The Design Problem will focus on the development of a high-rise structure (40+ stories: 550’) in downtown PDX consisting of a tower structure and a street level base component. The program will include primarily office and residential functions in the tower structure with public elements and services zoned in the base component. Particular emphasis will be given to how the base component addresses its surrounding urban fabric, the tower’s relationship to adjacent city context and the powerful iconographic potential inherent in skyscraper typology. If you have any questions regarding course content and structure please email or call.