Wellsprings Friends School needs a new home. They provide a unique alternative education for students who don't fit traditional high schools. With a “culture of affirmation”, they seek to nurture the spirit as well as the mind. At Wellsprings, learning is a partnership between the students and faculty, who tailor classes to fit interests, needs and abilities. They foster music, art and writing as vehicles for personal growth and for enriching the learning community. See http://wellspringsfriends.org/ for more information.

Wellsprings currently uses the buildings of the Mennonite church on w. 18th Street near Bailey Hill in Eugene. They are eager to consider how a new building on the site could support living lightly on the land. They want to facilitate group activities and shelter independent learning. The class can choose to lead Wellsprings students in creating components for the new school.

Process

The studio will combine group and individual work. We will begin by considering the nature of learning with the Wellsprings community, followed by site mapping and individual conceptual site responses. Students will consider the project at different scales to understand how urban-level decisions affect the immediate spatial experience. Students will work in groups to establish massing and layout options, then each person will consider accommodating a specific activity in detail. After a careful study of the parts and case studies, students will return to the whole, looking at how shared spaces can support different circles of community.

We will specifically look at connections to nature, structure, daylighting and natural ventilation. Each student or group will research a sustainable system to integrate into the design.

Media

Students will be guided in using design media strategically, starting with sketching and sketch modeling and moving towards digital refinement. Assignments will encourage experimentation with media, such as hand-computer hybrids and quick generation of options.

- Design for eco-education: build with nature
- Hands-on client involvement
- Manageable program complexity
- Media for design discovery

Nancy Cheng, B.A. Yale, M.Arch. Harvard, AIA, has taught architectural design for 15 years. From recent classes on the LEED process at the White Stag building, sustainable cohousing and eco-villages, she has amassed strong eco-design resources. Her research focuses on digital media and design process. nywc@uoregon.edu