Shaping Portland, 1840-2040, is a course on the design and shaping of metropolitan Portland. We will explore the history, architecture, and urban design of the city and how these elements have shaped—and were shaped by—Portland’s society, government, and economy.

Students in this course will analyze Portland from its geologic origins. They will look at how generations of developers have planned and built the city on a geography of rolling landscape and rivers. They will discuss the events and people who have led Portland in both its boom and bust years. And, they will discuss the decisions that Portland’s citizens have made that continue to influence and shape life here today, as well as the issues we are currently debating that will affect future Portlanders.

By the end of the term, students will have developed some observations and perspectives about Portland that they can apply in their work as architects and designers, as well as their recreation. More immediately, students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge in class, and their experience as architecture students, to creating exhibits for a new virtual Museum of the City, a web-based international museum of cities being established in Portland.

Full Disclosure: History is a contact sport. In order to appreciate it, you have to get out and immerse yourself in it… it being the places, ideas, events, documents, and memories of people that the past has left us. The class includes considerable reading, thinking, walking, looking, and in-class conversation. The class is a studio in the history of place. Everyone in the class is expected to be constantly posing questions—for each other and the instructor—derived from readings, tours, research, and other activities.