“Universal design is a process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation.”

-Edward Steinfeld and Jordana L. Maisel-

Inclusive Architecture and Design: Utilitarian Aesthetics

Accessibility is one notable issue when addressing public safety and welfare in architectural design. However, while we acknowledge that accessibility is an important part of architectural design practice, we often treat the accessibility as a mandate to comply with and/or an obstacle to our creativity. A building we design may satisfy the American with Disability Act (ADA) Standards but our design response of passive code compliance may discriminate or segregate other users with/without a disability from ‘normal and abled majority individuals.’ Our designed space may create a statement of “a separate-but-equal kind of access.” In this seminar, we will advocate a notion that inception of universal/inclusive design not only satisfies the intended functionality of the architecture but also strengthens its aesthetics for all users regardless of their disability or ability. This advanced seminar explores inclusive design issues beyond the ADA Standards. Students will collaborate with Northwest ADA Center – Oregon at Lane Independent Living Alliance, a Eugene based regional non-profit organization whose goal is to “help people with disabilities achieve as much choice, access, inclusion and independence as possible.”

In this seminar, Architecture and Interior Architecture graduate students will be engaged in research and interactive dialogues with guest lecturers and community members to explore opportunities for improvement of design equity in built-in environments and architectural products. The seminar activities include but will not be limited to role-play simulations, self-directed case studies, reading discussions, presentations, field trips, and guest lecture(s). Students will also be encouraged to disseminate their research findings by preparing to submit their work to be accepted in a professional conference setting.

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