Shaping Portland
Designing a City, 1840-2040

ARCH 407/507, Spring 2012
Thursday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
Instructor: Chet Orloff, chetorloff@gmail.com, 503.223.5932
Office hours by appointment

Course Syllabus

Introduction: This is a course about how several generations of Portlanders have shaped—and continue to shape—their city, from a small village on the lower Willamette River to a metropolitan region widely recognized for its neighborhoods, transit, and good planning. We will learn about the city through the writings of historians, journalists, architects, and planners. We will explore the city on foot (and other means) to learn about its geography, architecture and urban design, and history. We will discuss among ourselves the personal, social, economic, political, architectural, and urban-design factors that invariably have gone into shaping Portland’s built and natural landscapes. Members of the class will have responsibility, in collaboration with the instructor, for leading one of our class sessions during the term. Those taking the course for graduate credit will also read a book about the city and prepare a brief review of it. And, as a final project for the course, class members will create exhibits about the city, on topics of your own choice, that you will present in class during the last two weeks of the term and (if you wish) publish in the Museum of the City, which we will discuss the first day of class.

Full Disclosure: Like architecture, history is a full-contact sport; you have to read it, talk about it, and get out in it. In our case, we’ll be doing a lot of all three. It’s also a participatory endeavor; everyone in the class will be expected to be engaged, to ask and answer each others’ questions. Bottom line, this is not a lecture class for the passive listener, but a studio about Portland for the active citizen who, in some way, may be shaping this or another city in the future. Twenty percent of your grade will be attributable to participation in discussions, tours, and the class in general.

While this is a course on Portland history, its focus is very much on the built environment and geared toward students of architecture, urban design, and planning. Appreciating the value of presentation skills in the practice of architecture and planning, students in this class are expected to be able to prepare and present topics and projects while demonstrating understanding of the information and an ability to confidently lead a discussion.
Expectations:
~Read all assignments for the day assigned (see dates on schedule below);
~Participation in class discussions (this is a seminar, not a lecture course, which means everyone is expected to arrive in class with questions and prepared to discuss the week’s topic);
~Attend every class session (absences must be followed with legitimate excuses) - if you know that you will not be able to attend class, please e-mail the instructor;
~Fully participate in your “Leading the Class” presentation, discussion, and tour;
~Plan, research, prepare, and submit--using the exhibit builder tool on the website--your exhibit for the Museum of the City;
~Ask the instructor if, at any time, you have questions about any aspect of the course;
~Thoroughly peruse the Museum of the City website so that you have a clear understanding of its purpose and how your exhibit can enrich it;
~If you are taking the course for graduate credit, complete the book review project.

Readings and Contributions to Class Discussions:
The reading materials for this course include Carl Abbott’s *PORTLAND IN THREE CENTURIES* and Bart King’s *AN ARCHITECTURAL GUIDEBOOK TO PORTLAND* as well as selected readings (referred to in the schedule below as “Packet,” with quotation marks around the titles of articles to be read) relating to some of the topics we will be covering. All of the readings have been selected because they offer information and perspectives about how Portland has been shaped (physically, architecturally, socially, economically, and politically) since its founding. Below is a course schedule, with readings assigned for almost each class session. On the date the readings are listed on the schedule, everyone will be expected to (1) have read the assigned material and (2) have prepared and brought to class sessions at least two questions—germane to the readings and the day’s topic—for discussion among the class members. This way, we all will share in the class’s conversations. The consistency and quality of your questions and the level of your participation in class and tour discussions will amount to 20% of your grade. As with any studio, seminar, architectural, or planning practice, full participation is a given.

Those taking this class for graduate credit are expected to read one book (in addition to our texts) about Portland and write a 500-750-word review. See the list of recommended sources on pages 177-185 in the Abbott book, *PORTLAND IN THREE CENTURIES* for ideas. Two books of note are Philip Niles, *BEAUTY OF THE CITY: A.E. Doyle, Portland’s Architect* and Bosker and Lencek’s *FROZEN MUSIC: A History of Portland Architecture*. Both are available online or at Powell’s.

Leading the Class:
Each of us will be responsible for leading the class in the discussion, presentation(s), and tour on the day assigned to us. Each of us will want to give ourselves time to plan, research, and develop our presentation/discussion/tour for the particular day we will be responsible for. The instructor will work with each student to help develop the “program” for his/her day. Thirty percent of your grade will be based on your preparation and presentation for your assigned day of leading the class. This exercise is designed in the spirit of making presentations to clients about architectural and planning projects. Dates and topics for each “presenter” are listed in the schedule below.
Exhibit:
The final project for the course will be a digital exhibit that each student will create about the city, on a topic that interests you. We will talk about possible topics during the first weeks of the term. The exhibit will amount to 50% of your grade. The purpose of the exhibit, intended for ultimate presentation/publication in the electronic galleries of the Museum of the City, is to illuminate some aspect(s) of cities (need not necessarily be Portland, though this city is the focus of this class...) that will inform Museum visitors who share our interest in cities and how they work. Each student will present his/her exhibit in class during the last two weeks of the term. These exhibits will be created with the public in mind; i.e., they should address a topic of current interest aimed at the informed citizen, not necessarily the specialist or professional. We will discuss the project and how to approach it throughout the term. Everyone will participate in critiquing and evaluating each other’s exhibit. A draft evaluation form is provided at the end of this syllabus. We will discuss what else needs to be added to the form. An exhibit checklist, which we will also discuss, is attached.

Grading:
End-of term project (digital exhibit) = 50%
Leading the Class preparation and presentation = 30%
Participation in class (engagement in discussions, book review) = 20%
Term Schedule

April 5
Topic: Introductions, class expectations/protocols, the Museum of the City, a conversation on cities
Presenter: Chet
Readings: None
Tour Destination: Worldwide… vicariously

April 12
Topic: Origins and Stumptown
Presenter: Chet (with lots of input from class members)
Readings: Abbott, 9-33
          King, 115-155
          Packet, “Skidmore/Old Town Historic District”
Tour Destination: Yamhill Historic District and Old Town/Chinatown

April 19
Topic: On the Edge of the West & Growing up and Settling Down
Presenter: Chet
Readings: Abbott, 35-70
          King, 9-20
Tour Destination: Meet in front of Pioneer Courthouse (we’ll hold class inside there today)

April 26
Topic: The Fair and the City -- Parks, too
Presenters One and Two
Readings: Abbott, 71-96
          King 20-55
          Packet, “If Zealously promoted by All…”
          “The City Beautiful Movement and Park Planning in Portland” (NOTE: this is a very long piece; at least peruse it thoroughly)
Tour Destination: Pioneer Courthouse Square

May 3
Topic: Modern Times
Presenter Two
Readings: Abbott 97-118
          “The Portland That Might Have Been”
Tour Destination: TBD

May 10
Topic: The War and After
Presenter Three
Readings:   Abbott, 119-137  
             Packet, “Robert Moses and Lewis Mumford: competing paradigms of growth in Portland, Oregon”

Tour Destination: TBD

**May 17**  
Topic: The Portland Revolution  
Presenter Four  
Readings:   Abbott, 139-156  
             Packet, “Portland’s 1972 Downtown Plan: Rebirth of the Public City”

Tour Destination: TBD

**May 24**  
Topic: Portland Looks Forward  
Presenter Five  
Readings:   Abbott, 157-175  
             ASSIGNMENT: Find a newspaper or magazine article that you believe illustrates the direction you think Portland is headed today and for the next few years

Tour Destination: TBD

**May 31**  
Topic: Based on what we’ve read, discussed, and observed, “Where has Portland’s history gotten this city?” “What value(s) and use(s) does its history offer us today and tomorrow?”  
Activity: Exhibit Presentations  
Presenter: Class Members  
Tour Destination: Studio

**June 7**  
Topic: Exhibit Presentations  
Presenter: Class Members  
Tour Destination: Studio
Exhibit Evaluation

Name of Exhibit: __________________________

Using a gradient of 1 – 5, with 5 being the highest, evaluate the colleague’s exhibit based on the following criteria:

Interesting topic  1  2  3  4  5
Quality of graphics  1  2  3  4  5
Intellectual content  1  2  3  4  5
“Wow!” factor  1  2  3  4  5
Variety of images  1  2  3  4  5
Clarity of topic  1  2  3  4  5
Quality of text  1  2  3  4  5
Clarity of text  1  2  3  4  5
Clarity of captions  1  2  3  4  5
Will it “reach” people?  1  2  3  4  5
Does it present new information?  1  2  3  4  5
Will viewers beyond Portland understand the exhibit?  1  2  3  4  5
Will it interest young people?  1  2  3  4  5
Will the exhibit reach non-Americans?  1  2  3  4  5
Can you discern a specific target audience for the exhibit?  1  2  3  4  5
If so, what is that audience?

What needs to be added to the exhibit to make it “work” for you?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

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Exhibit Check List

1. ___ Review exhibits in Museum galleries for examples.

2. ___ Download Exhibit-Builder Tutorial from Museum website and read.

3. ___ Plan your exhibit.
   ___ Keep in mind that your exhibit must relate to cities.
   ___ Select topic.
   ___ Research information and images.

4. ___ Remember the Exhibit Triangle:

   WRITTEN TEXT
   VISUAL TEXT (Images)
   CAPTIONS

5. ___ Research and write your text.
   ___ Include a clear introduction (for the first page of your exhibit) and conclusion.
   ___ Include solid information AND analysis. Your exhibit is more than a mere Wikipedia entry about your topic; it’s an exhibit.
   ___ Your text should be at least 1,000 words.

6. ___ Find and select images to illustrate your text (photographs, maps, drawings, plans, etc.).

7. ___ Write captions for each and every image in your exhibit; captions should explain and interpret the structures, people, events, and/or action depicted in each image. Captions should be used to add depth and context to your text.

8. ___ Check and re-check the spelling and grammar in your text and captions.

9. ___ Provide links to other websites, as appropriate. (The Museum visitor looking at your exhibit should see it as a “jumping off point” to learn even more about your topic.)

10. ___ Include a bibliography of the sources for your information and images. (This will allow the Museum visitor to learn more about your topic as well as know your sources.)

11. ___ Include your name (and, if you wish, your contact information). This proclaims you as the “author” and creator of your exhibit, giving you credit for your work.