Seminar: “Learning Cities: Next Generation Urban Education”

- The class is open to all disciplines and students in the University. There are no prerequisites.
- The class also serves as a research and studio preparation seminar for the Architecture 485/585 Advanced Architectural Design Studio (Gast studio, W + S 2022).
- The seminar is intended as an in-person class on the Portland campus following University and State of Oregon health protocols.

The UNESCO “Learning City” of Medellin, Colombia. Host of the 2018 “Global Learning Cities” conference.

Introduction: “Learning Cities”

This course examines the role of education in building the human capital of cities.

A “Learning City” is defined by the United Nations Education and Social Organization (UNESCO) as a community which mobilizes the resources of every sector to promote an inclusive learning culture for all ages throughout life.
The “Learning City” extends its resources to families, schools, workplaces and public life through programs and environments which range in scale from the city as a whole to individual dwellings. The concept of the “Learning City” has potential to inform design at every level of the environment from urban design to architecture: individual sites and buildings.

**Emphasis of the Seminar and Studio**

This seminar is founded on the conviction that *building human capital* through education is the most important mission of cities and communities. Due to poverty, racial segregation, family conditions and the inequality, the future of many children is determined before they are even born. Education is considered as the foundation of equality, opportunity and social justice.

Excellent public education is central to the health and regeneration of cities. A city performs many functions and offers a wide range of essential services. None are more important than the quality of educational opportunities offered to citizens of all ages.

This course will focus, in part, on the potential of Portland to be a UNESCO “Learning City” through dialogue with representatives of the Portland Public Schools (PPS) and other organizations.

Children at the Lomas del Peye school in Cartagena, Colombia. A new public school in the barrio of Lomas del Peyes. Supported by the Pies Descalzos (Bare Feet) Foundation of Colombia.
Seminar Format

The seminar is a mix of instructor lectures, readings, class discussions, guest speakers, site visits (if feasible) and student presentations.

Advanced Architectural Design Studio Preparation

The course also serves as a research and design thesis preparation seminar for students enrolled in the Advanced Architectural Design Studio: “Learning Cities” in the Portland Architecture Program: Gerry Gast, Winter + Spring 2022.

Specific research assignments in this seminar may be different among students enrolled in the Studio and those not taking the studio.

For students enrolled in the studio, projects may focus on learning environments of all types: schools, higher education, places of learning such as centers for early childhood education, environmental education and adult education. The studio projects are self-selected by each student. Sites may be located anywhere in the world.

The instructor will work with each student individually during Fall term to select a studio project that best meets the student’s individual goals.

More detail about the studio is given in the Arch 485/585 “Advanced Architectural Design Studio” course description.

Fall Seminar Organization

Education Theories and Innovative Programs

The seminar will begin with a focus on educational theories and research about how people learn. Links between education and community development will be examined with focus on model programs around the world.

Historical precedents:
The research and writing of prominent educators and movements in history such as Maria Montessori (Montessori Schools), Rudolf Steiner (Waldorf education), John and Evelyn Dewey (The University of Chicago Laboratory School), The Reggio Emilia Approach (the school environment as “The Third Teacher”).

Contemporary precedents and examples:
Academy for Global Citizenship, Chicago
BRICK Avon Academy, Newark
The Finland Education System
The Harlem Children’s Zone, New York City
High Tech High, San Diego
Leadership Academy for Girls and African Leadership Academy, South Africa
Malcolm X Shabazz High School, Newark
Pies Descalzos Foundation, Colombia

**Contemporary Architectural Precedents**

Innovative architectural precedents of learning environments throughout the world will be studied and compared through class discussions. Precedent studies will be conducted by teams of students.

**For Students in the Advanced Architectural Design Studio: Architectural Program and Context Analysis**

For students taking the studio, the seminar will involve selecting a studio project and site, conducting an analysis of the urban social and environmental context, and defining an architectural and site program. Sites may be located anywhere in the world with the requirement that adequate site information can be acquired by the student.

Research products may be individual or team-generated, or a hybrid of individual and team depending upon student choice.

Students are encouraged to look well into the future, not be limited by what can be built at the moment. Cities and architecture are changing rapidly. Anticipate change through your project and make your project a precedent for others to study.

**Questions**

Prospective students are welcome to contact the instructor during the summer months:

Gerry Gast
geraldgast@gmail.com or ggast@uoregon.edu

**Instructor Bio**

Gerry Gast is an architect, urban designer and member of the University of Oregon Architecture faculty where he teaches Architectural Design Studios and Urban Design. He previously served as Director of the Portland Architecture Program.

Professor Gast taught for several years as Visiting Associate Professor in the interdisciplinary Program on Urban Studies at Stanford University, where he developed the two core courses in urban design. As a founding principal of Gast Hillmer Urban Design in the San Francisco Bay area, he directed public urban design and urban architecture projects throughout California and the western states.

Recent research focuses on education and schools. Professor Gast has been active in the Portland Public Schools (PPS). He served as a member of the Master Plan Committee and Design Advisory Group for the new Lincoln High School in Portland’s central city, the first new
public high school to be built in Portland in over 50 years (now under construction, scheduled to open in Fall 2022).

Professor Gast is currently working with the Pies Descalzos (Bare Feet) Foundation of Colombia on schools in marginalized neighborhoods of the country, including new schools in Cartagena and Barranquilla, Colombia. In another international project, he authored the Master Plan for the new Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv, Ukraine and continues to work with the University in its design and development program. Six new buildings have been completed.

Other professional work includes School Site Redevelopment Studies for the San Francisco Unified School District; “Uptown District”, a mixed use urban development of 313 dwellings and neighborhood retail center in San Diego’s Hillcrest neighborhood; The San Diego County Administration Center on the downtown waterfront; and the Oregon Science and Technology Park (OSTP) in east Multnomah Country (Portland), Oregon.

Merrill Environmental Education Center. Annapolis, Maryland.
Operated by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Marinilla Environmental Education Center. Giancarlo Mazzanti, Architect. The center hosts community development education for all ages in the small town of Marinilla, Colombia.