ARCH 484/584 FALL 2021

TRAUMA-INFORMED DESIGN: CAN ARCHITECTURE HEAL?

CRN 18285 /18286 | Instructor: Grace Aaraj, gracea@uoregon.edu
Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 12:00 pm to 3:50 pm - Online via Zoom and MS Teams - 6 credits

A slogan painted on a barrier in front of towering grain silos gutted in the massive August 2020 explosion at the Beirut port that claimed the lives of more than 200 people, December 2, 2020. © 2020 AP Photo/Hussein Malla

“Beirut is the Elizabeth Taylor of cities: insane, beautiful, falling apart, aging, and forever drama laden. She'll also marry any infatuated suitor who promises to make her life more comfortable, no matter how inappropriate he is.”

— Rabih Alameddine, Lebanese-American Author of “An Unnecessary Woman”

This intermediate studio sheds light on the complex and often misunderstood situations of the 21st century: cities and communities recovering from trauma. With the case study of Beirut in the aftermath of the most recent August 4 explosion, and while studying post-colonial burdens and opportunities. The format of the course is interactive, via online learning and diverse materials ranging from readings, interviews with practitioners, and multi-media review. The studio meets for a total of 12 hours weekly. Studio time is divided between:

1) Group work and individual work (Charrettes and Esquisses)
2) Guest lecturer and guest reviewers
3) Lectures leading with a global perspective, students will explore knowledge in discussions.
4) Reading and discussion groups to explore ideas feeding into the architectural imagination

In this studio, the student is at the center of the learning experience. The proposals are advanced through research-driven and hands-on approach of the site and the theme. Beirut is not unique among the divided cities and the cities in need of healing, but will be used as a case study.

Student Learning Outcome:
It is an opportunity to implement active learning methods, offering opportunities to students to experience learning about and from the world we currently live in. I hope that the learning outcome will be meaningful and lasting to the students’ future careers.

1) Identifying on-the-ground problems and identifying practiced solutions,
2) Analyzing current solutions, and weaknesses to improve,
3) Reflecting on the role of designers and architects in solving and reducing problems,
4) Understanding the relationship between development and sustainable healing,
5) Being able to question existing solutions, learn from them and present characteristics of better solutions (both logistically and from a design point of view)