
Architectural Design Studio: Winter + Spring 2022
Preparation Research Seminar: Fall 2021

Please also see the Arch 407/507 posting for the Fall Prep Research Seminar. Gerry Gast

“Learning Cities: Linking Education with and Architecture and Urban Design”


This studio is founded on the conviction that building human capital through education is the most important mission of our communities and cities. Due to poverty, racial segregation, family conditions and inequality of educational opportunities, the future of many children is determined before they are even born.

Lifelong opportunities are shaped by experiences gained in education. Healthy cities are not possible without thriving places of learning, dedicated teachers and community workers, active parents and supportive learning environments.
The “Thesis” Studio

The studio is a series of design investigations which focus on a strong theoretical foundation, rigorous design explorations, and a high level of architectural refinement through tectonic studies that integrate design, sustainability and building systems. The emphasis is development of a comprehensive architectural project that integrates all previous studies.

The studio invites students to select their own project within the topical framework of “Learning Cities”. Studio projects may focus on schools of all types, higher education and places of learning such as centers for early childhood education, environmental education and adult education, libraries and public places of learning. Projects may be sited in Portland or anywhere in the world.

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

Learning 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.

Linking Education with and Architecture and Urban Design

Kindergarten students at Lomas del Peye School, Cartegena, Colombia. Pies Descalzos Foundation High School students in a project-based learning studio. Helsinki, Finland.
Public education is experiencing a revolution in thinking as educators, policy makers, parents, students and the public question the most effective means of preparing all citizens for an uncertain global future.

Although we are architects, not educators, developments in education will dramatically change future educational environments. The subject is wide open for research, experimentation and innovative architecture.

**Linking Schools with Community Development**

In many communities of the world public schools have become community centers where neighborhood libraries, recreation centers, adult education and meeting spaces are combined with traditional school programs. “Open schools” are a growing movement despite what we read about security concerns. High school and college students increasingly engage their communities through volunteer and internship opportunities. Community members engage the schools through mentoring and volunteer teaching assistance.

![Charles Drew Public Charter High School](image)


**Project Selection**

Students are challenged to select their own projects and sites within the framework of the “Learning Cities” topic. From my past experience with thesis studios of I have been impressed by the resourcefulness of students in project selection. Students have creatively responded to this opportunity with a wide range of projects and sites. Some choose projects in Portland, others in their home towns or cities they have worked in or visited. Select the project and place in which you have always wanted to design!

Projects and sites may be located anywhere in the world within a few parameters:

- It is highly recommended (not required) that you have visited the city or place (not necessarily the site) in the past.
• It usually works better to design a building for an existing organization or client such as a school in a disadvantaged neighborhood, or an experimental learning environment that explores a re-envisioned place of learning. There are hundreds of creative educational organizations and programs throughout the globe with web pages and ideas for inspiration and reference.

It may be possible to establish communications with your chosen organization for remote interviews or meetings.

• Adaptive reuse of existing buildings, or a combination of adaptive reuse and a new building, is encouraged. If you opt for an adaptive reuse project it will be necessary to acquire drawings of the existing structure before design studies begin in January.


The diversity of projects in a class creates opportunities for comparative discussions, examining differences of culture, environment, urban context and educational programs.

Previous sites in my thesis studios have been located in Portland, other cities in the North America and internationally in Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Germany, Italy, Spain, Ukraine, Cyprus, Turkey, Nepal, China, Vietnam and Korea.
Portland Opportunities

For students who are interested in selecting a Portland project, several possibilities exist. I have been in contact with Portland Public Schools (PPS) about opportunities for both research and design projects.

Portland is presently engaged in an ambitious program to rebuild its nine public high schools and is now looking ahead for new opportunities to re-envision its educational programs for the next twenty years.

There is potential for Portland to be a “Learning City” in the UNESCO international program. We may pursue this through dialogue with representatives of the Portland Public Schools (PPS) and other civic organizations.

Students at the Rosa Parks Elementary School, Portland, Oregon. The award-winning school, part of the New Colombia neighborhood redevelopment in North Portland, has a diverse student body comprising children who speak 21 different languages including many new immigrants. The school is co-located with a community recreation center and after school club. Architect: John Weekes, FAIA. DOWA/IBI Group.

Studio Process

Fall Term 2021: Preparation Research Seminar

- Students in the studio are expected to enroll in the Arch 407/507 Preparation Research Seminar (Gerry Gast) during Fall term. This seminar focuses on learning theories, education research and innovative architectural and educational program precedents.

Students select their projects and develop a site and building program during Fall term.
A research summary and architectural program is prepared as a product of the Fall seminar. This is a high-quality professional document that includes a thesis statement, urban and site analysis, space program and bibliography. The program may be developed individually or by teams of students.

**Winter Term 2022: Conceptual Design Studies**

Design studies with regular class reviews take place approximately every week. I have found that students value peer reviews the most, therefore many reviews are class peer reviews in small groups.

Media selection is up to the student. Study guidelines are issued for each phase of work. In addition to the use of traditional and digital media, physical study models are encouraged throughout the design process.

**Spring Term 2022: Tectonic Design Studies: “The Art of Construction”**

Spring term is focused on creative development of the conceptual design proposals.

Environmental strategy, structure, materials and environmental systems are studied and integrated with emphasis on the creative exploration of sustainable technologies. Consultants and guest critiques from several firms participate in the studio.
Architecture as “The Third Teacher”

National winner in the AIA COTE Top Ten competition.

**Studio Consultants and Resources**

A support group of Portland professionals and community members will serve as visiting consultants and design critics during the term in individual critiques, conferences and reviews. The team will represent a diversity of individuals, special expertise and architectural firms.

Redmond High School. Redmond, Oregon (right).

**Project Book / Monograph**

A design monograph is prepared as a final product at the end of Spring term in addition to the normal final reviews. Monographs produced by students in past studios have been highly professional publications that measure up to the quality of the best architectural offices.

**End Note:** Education and Opportunity. Shakira Mebarek. Pies Descalzos Foundation. Colombia. 1 min 30 sec. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOdgjmavWWY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOdgjmavWWY)
Information / Questions:

Gerry Gast  ggast@uoregon.edu  geraldgast@gmail.com
During the period before classes begin I will be happy to answer questions or discuss project possibilities by E Mail, or to confer by Zoom or phone. Please send an E mail and we can set up a time to talk. geraldgast@gmail.com
Gerry Gast

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) 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.

Professor Gast is currently working with the Pies Descalzos 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. He has worked with the University on its design and development program since 2008. Five 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 Government Center on the downtown waterfront; and the Oregon Science and Technology Park (OSTP), a sustainable industrial district in Gresham and Troutdale, Oregon.