Directed Design Research (DDR) is the title given to the independent design exploration that is the final studio-based requirement for the MLA degree. Students are required to identify and explore transcendent issues and principles through the discipline of landscape architecture design. Thesis is the title given to the independent exploration that is the more academically traditional form of inquiry as a requirement for the MLA degree. Both choices are available at the beginning of the final two-semester sequence of MLA degree studies.

A. TOPICS AND ISSUES

Contemporary landscape architecture practice and theory is issue-oriented more than ever before as a consequence of the ecological, cultural, and global complexity of urban conditions. The choices between undertaking a “thesis” or “directed design research” study both require clarity about issues that deserve investigation. “Thesis” is the name given to the primary means of inquiry in the liberal arts and sciences fields, and in other non-design professional graduate programs. A “thesis” typically engages a proposition that allows a method of study towards a resolution or “proof.” Such study allows replication by other persons to validate the findings. The outcome of a thesis study is a written document with appropriate and sometimes extensive illustrations. The USC Graduate School establishes the due dates and the final report is required to use a format established by the School and University.

An option more particularly related to landscape architecture is “Directed Design Research” that employs the primary means of inquiry in the arts where issues and ideas are explored to generate greater insight about qualities and about the action of making things and places. The findings, both as studies and as tangible designs, are valuable as they resonate with the experience of other artists and with the public. Although proof and validation are not characteristic of findings in the arts and in design, the DDR and the Thesis both require equally rigorous inquiry. The outcome of a DDR study is a very thoroughly developed design and presentation and discussion of findings that are the result of the design inquiry.

Both the thesis and design research study require identification of central issues that deserve exploration and a means of study that is capable of developing valuable findings.

The beginning of any study is a choice of general topics. Within an overall consideration of urban conditions, four sets of focused yet overlapping investigations are fully supported by the faculty and other resources of the University and the region. However, any one of the four general topics cannot become the singular focus for your study. A hybridized argument integrating and fusing the topics can offer a more complex and holistic set of inquiries. Thus these studies should integrate topics and advisors from other programs within the School of Architecture and across the USC campus.
the opportunities to create more supportive urban places
   habitat; the public realm; open space and the streets; historic places and districts; places of commerce and exchange; amenity and meaning.

understanding the integral importance of ecology and technology
   natural systems and infrastructure; processes and materials for landscape remediation and construction.

attention to design methodologies and processes
   theories and practices of designing; collaborative approaches to project investigation, development and implementation; methods and techniques of simulation and visual communication;

attention to issues of theory, history, and criticism
   methods of historical inquiry, theories of interpretation and criticism; and socio-cultural implications of process and form.

Finally, although each student is provided the opportunity to propose a topic for study, the faculty coordinators and committee members participate in assuring that the topics are appropriate for advanced and significant landscape architecture study. Although the spirit and character of faculty–student interaction is more collaborative than hierarchical, faculty members have a responsibility to help “direct” the inquiries for both the thesis and directed design research studies.

B. SCHEDULE AND STRUCTURE
Throughout the first semester the class will meet two hours each week to develop study programs and to compare approaches and methods. Meetings will be with the co-coordinators throughout the semester.

The initial work of the first semester will be to define topics, associated issues and projects for each student and to identify principal faculty advisors by the end of September. Students will begin regular weekly meetings with their principal faculty advisors (“committee chairs”) as soon as they have been selected. An additional committee member will be selected to form a three-member committee including one of the co-coordinators. The principal advisor must be from the School of Architecture faculty, preferably a member of the landscape architecture faculty. An additional committee member may also be from the School of Architecture, or from another program at USC, or an outside professional whose interests and accomplishments are highly related to the focus of the study. An “interim report” is due at the end of the first semester. This report must include clear and well-written text regarding the central purposes of the study and findings related to issues, to precedents, to a selected site and project. Substantial information about the selected site must also be presented in drawings, diagrams, photographs, and other images. Preliminary ideas, sketches, and other studies about design are expected.

Progress reviews will be held at the end of October and again at the end of November with full committees. The purpose of these reviews will be to assess the quality of the work already started, to provide other advice as appropriate, and to assure strong progress prior to the beginning of the spring semester 2012. Interim reviews and a mid-semester review will be held during the spring semester, at the end of January, February, March, and April. The final review for each student will be held in mid-May.
C.1 DIRECTED DESIGN RESEARCH REPORT
An Interim Report in digital form will be due at the conclusion of the fall semester, no later than January 15, 2012. This report includes not only the graphic presentations developed for the committee reviews, but also substantial text in draft form related to the following outline that is the basis for the final report at the conclusion of the second semester. Items I through V.1 are required in the Interim Report. Initial development of designs is also expected.

I. Executive Summary
This section shall not exceed two pages. The information and findings of items II-VI below are to be summarized.

II. Topic
Presentation of the subject as an aspect of landscape architecture shall be described in sufficient detail to distinguish this study from other possible studies within the topic area.

III. Issues and Inquiries
The design research questions shall be identified that allow this study to be a genuine inquiry rather than only an application of present understandings, techniques, and skills.

IV. Project Description
A description is required of the specific site(s) and the objectives and program of the project that has been chosen as a means for exploration of the topic and issues.

V. Design Research
1. Precedents:
   a. Regarding the topic
   b. Regarding the issues
   c. Regarding aspects of the site
   d. Regarding project elements

2. Design Studies:
   a. Visual and written representation of the methodological strategy and techniques by which the project design was developed.
   b. Visual and written representation of means and sources by which critical information and relationships were discovered through the process of design.

3. Design Proposal.

VI. Summary of Findings
1. Discussion of general relationships and principles, of design problems and opportunities, and other insights regarding the central issues of study.
2. Suggestions regarding further inquiries beyond the immediate scope and findings of this study.

VII. Complete Bibliography and Reference Sources

C.2 THESIS DOCUMENT
The final document of a thesis study follows guidelines of appropriate scholarly presentation that have been developed by academic institutions. The organization of each thesis is determined by students and their faculty committees. Students whose study interests have been approved as a thesis rather than directed design research form of inquiry, will be required during the first semester to articulate a suitable research proposition for which there are qualified faculty advisors, substantial and available resources to allow good prospects for the study to go
forward, and to establish a plan, methods, and a schedule for study that the committee deems likely to be effective. The thesis interim report must include a developed outline and description of the thesis study, an extensive annotated bibliography, a schedule for how the work will continue and be concluded during the following semester, and a preliminary discussion of probable findings.

### D. SCHEDULE, FALL SEMESTER, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>August</strong></td>
<td><strong>8/27</strong> First class meeting at 12:30pm (future class times to be determined)</td>
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</table>
| **September** | **9/4-7** **Draft statements due**; class meeting with coordinator  
                  **9/10-14** **Second draft statements due**; class meeting with coordinator  
                  **9/17-21** Faculty advisor introductions, continuing statement development; class meeting with coordinator  
                  **9/24-28** **Final draft statements due; Advisor assignments**; class meeting with coordinator |
| **October** |  **10/1-5** Meetings with potential faculty advisors; class meeting with coordinator  
                  **10/8-12** **Appointment of faculty committees**; class meeting with coordinator  
                  **10/15-19** Meetings with Committee Chair and Coordinator  
                  **Detailed plan of study; annotated bibliography with at least 5 books and five case-studies/precedents; 250 word summary of topic and issues**  
                  **10/22-26** Meetings with Committee Chair and Coordinator  
                  **Preparation for week ten committee meeting** |
| **November** |  **10/29-11/2** **Committee Meetings**: Attention to topics and issues; suggestion of site and project types, readings and precedents.  
                  **Pin-up review including graphic presentation of site choices and studies with images and diagrams of at least three precedents critical to the study**  
                  **11/5-9** Meetings with Committee Chair and Coordinator  
                  **Detailed response to committee meeting; resolve site selection and continue site documentation; development of critical path to achieve semester goals**  
                  **11/12-16** Meetings with Committee Chair and Coordinator  
                  **11/19-20** Meetings with Committee Chair and Coordinator  
                  **Preparation for week fifteen comprehensive review; clarification and graphic representation of design imperatives**  
                  **11/21-23** Thanksgiving Recess  
                  **11/26-30** **Committee Meetings** Attention to proposed places of study, development of issues, richness of sources, further means of inquiry.  
                  **Pin-up review including text and graphic description of program components/objectives; developed graphic presentation of selected site(s); graphic analysis of selected precedents with written findings** |
| **December** | **17** **Interim Report Due** (see “C” above)                                                                                         |
E. REQUIREMENTS and DUE DATES

First Draft of Study Interest (due at beginning of class, week two)

1 Basic Topic
Examples are “watersheds as open space opportunities”; “equitable provision of open space in underserved communities”; “transformation of single-purpose infrastructure”; “remediation of toxic sites”; etc. These are only “samples” to assist framing your own topics (200 words)

2 How it matters, and to whom
Describe why your topic is important enough to be of interest to society and to the profession (be specific). Why should this study go forward? Does it deserve the time, energy, and resources it will require? (400 words)

3 Issues, Dilemmas
Identify one or more aspects of your topic in which there are conflicting “imperatives”, that is, rather obvious and significant purposes that seem contradictory. Examples are: public AND private; fresh AND reflective; continuing AND distinctive; global AND local; ecological AND cultural; etc. These examples and others can provide a force for the study as they are interpreted with regard to more specific conditions and urgent needs. (400 words)

Second Draft of Study Interest (due at beginning of class, week three)

1-3 First Draft Revision (1000 words plus appropriate graphic and photographic illustrations)

4 Possible places and projects
Provide either general or specific descriptions of the type of place and project that appears to provide important opportunities to explore the issues that are the basis for this design research. (500 words plus appropriate graphic and photographic illustrations)

5 Some ideas about how the study should go forward
What are the areas of investigation that seem essential towards better definition of issues and opportunities? Identify the subjects that deserve highest priority as the study begins. (500 words)

6 Resources:
Personal Experience (for example, previous studies and projects) (500 words plus appropriate graphic and photographic illustrations)
Annotated Bibliography (research studies, precedents, theoretical works, etc) (no fewer than 10 citations)
Availability of data (location of documents, opportunities for direct observation of sites)
Individuals (annotated list of no fewer than 6 persons including current and previous faculty and other professionals and consultants)

Final Draft of Study Interest (due at beginning of class, week five)

1-6 Second Draft - REVISED and EXPANDED

7 List of Possible Faculty Advisors:
Identify at least two as “committee chair” possibilities
Identify others as “committee member” possibilities

DDR: Maps; diagrams; site/place information; identification of precedents to study; proposition about methods, calendar, and products; essential bibliography and resources

THESIS: Study outline; research methods; calendar and products; essential bibliography and resources
Interim Report (due May 10) See outline of contents under “C” above - items I through V.

F. GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Attendance
Attendance policy is to allow a student to miss no more than one class session (by pre-approval or emergency), and no committee meetings. If absences are required for a personal illness/family emergency, or preapproved academic reason/religious observance, the situation should be discussed and evaluated with a co-coordinator and suitable arrangements made to make up for the time and opportunity lost. Absences beyond this policy will be reviewed by the MLA Program Director, and if warranted, by the Chair of Graduate Studies on a case-by-case basis. Absences jeopardize the probability of achieving appropriate progress to engage the second semester of studies.

Accreditation
The Master of Landscape Architecture degree program includes three curricula. Curriculum +3 for students with no prior design education and Curriculum +2 for students admitted with advanced standing have full accreditation by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board. Curriculum +1.5 for students with advanced placement is a post-professional study and is not subject to accreditation. Information about landscape architecture education and accreditation in the United States may be found on-line at http://www.asla.org/Education.aspx.

Statement for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to my TA) as early in the semester as possible. DPS is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30AM-5PM, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/

The following website provides assistance in avoiding plagiarism: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/grad_ai.htm

Religious Holidays
The University of Southern California recognizes the diversity of our community and the potential for conflicts involving academic activities and personal religious observation. The University provides a guide to such observances for reference and suggests that any concerns about lack of attendance or inability to participate fully in the course activity be fully aired at the start of the term. As a general principle, students should be excused from class for these events if properly documented and if provisions can be made to accommodate the absence and make up the lost work. Constraints on participation that conflict with adequate participation in the course and cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the faculty and the student need to be identified prior to the add/drop date for registration. After the add/drop date the University and the School of Architecture shall be the sole arbiter of what constitutes appropriate attendance and participation in a given course.