

University of Southern California School of Architecture
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM

ARCH 793aL/795aL

ARCH 793aL Architecture Directed Design Research Option I (2 units)

ARCH 795aL Architecture Thesis Option II (2 units)

Critical Topics in Architecture

The DDR or Thesis are the titles given to the advanced design exploration that is the final studio-based requirement for both the MARCH degree and the Post Professional MAAS degree. The sequence of research develops progressively in depth and scope from one semester to another. There are two tracks that have similar methods: The Directed Design Research [DDR – a design based inquiry – Option I] or the Thesis [a written research based inquiry – Option II].

Option I - 793

The DDR begins with ARCH 793a, the research component, and continues through to the final semester of the program with ARCH 793b, the design component. ARCH 793a therefore covers the preparatory background research for ARCH 793b. All requisite skills, whether theoretical or technical, and background knowledge of the subject matter should be acquired in ARCH 793a, so that ARCH 793b can be devoted to the design project itself.

Option II - 795

“Option II” is the title given to the independent exploration using written academic inquiries rather than design. As a basis for thesis study, each student chooses a subject and issues requiring initiation of creative research and authorship of a scholarly paper that includes original findings. The written Thesis begins with ARCH 795a, the research component, and continues through to the final semester of the program with ARCH 795b, the writing component. ARCH 795a therefore covers the preparatory background research for ARCH 795b. All requisite skills, whether theoretical or technical, and background knowledge of the subject matter should be acquired in ARCH 795a, so that ARCH 795b can be devoted to the design project itself.

As a basis for the DDR or Thesis studies, each student chooses either a faculty focused studio and project or develops an independent topic requiring initiation of creative action, authorship of an appropriate program, and a response that is consequential both as a design and as an exploration of clearly identified issues and principles.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The course structure consists of two parts: 1) a series of seminars on a range of topics as outlined by each instructor, and 2) classes/individual meetings structured to support the selection, development and preparation of the DDR/Thesis related to the seminars and preparation for ARCH 793b/795b.

The seminar topics are selected to address issues from recent directions in architecture. Within this broadly described range of topics, individual students will be challenged to test their own experience and insight in critical thinking, writing and discussion with other students and instructors as they develop individual research to further investigation in support of their DDR/Thesis. The goal of ARCH 793a/795a is to provide graduating post-professional MARCH degree students with an in depth study of a selected topic(s). The course will challenge students to develop critical reasoning skills through active exercises in thinking, writing and arguing the issues involved in a seminar setting. This course is taken as a prerequisite or co-requisite to Architecture 793b/795b.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

To this end, the course has three broad objectives:

1. To support DDR/Thesis students in developing their individual interests and strengthening their independent voices as they formulate their approach to their Research Project.
2. To strengthen understanding of how contemporary cultural and technological factors shape the development of the built environment in general and architectural practice in particular.
3. To further develop critical reasoning and research skills.

TOPICS AND ISSUES

The beginning of any study is a choice of general topics. Within an overall consideration of urban life, five sets of investigations are fully supported by the faculty and other resources of the University and the region.

· ***urban culture and the city***

the contemporary city in globalization; large scale urban systems and the infrastructures of transport and communication. Planned development and uncontrolled growth. "Modernization" and the megalopolis; old manufacturing centers and contemporary spaces of commerce and exchange; crowds, masses, and public spaces.

· ***performative architecture: sustainable systems***

housing, cultural and educational institutions, civic and social service facilities, centers for health and well-being, and environments for business and commerce, for production and markets.

· ***materiality, technology, and ecology***

building construction, materials and methods of assembly, digital fabrication, structures, environmental systems, manufacturing procedures, industrialization, energy and natural forces and systems.

· ***digital technologies: advanced computation/fabrication***

theories of architectural design, process structures, visual communication, computer studies, methods and techniques of architectural simulation, digital intelligence+technologies, and computational systems.

· ***contemporary issues of theory, history, and criticism***

methods of historical inquiry, theories of interpretation, architectural criticism, cultural and social implications of urban architecture form and production.

The identification of a topic does not yet define a direction of study. Students are encouraged to integrate and assimilate topics and advisors from the different programs to form a holistic and interdisciplinary project.

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. Students pursuing an independent topic will propose this option to the faculty. Upon review of their topic and performance to date they will be evaluated for the maturity and independence to undertake this independent mode of operation. If appropriate, these students working on an independent topic will form and meet with faculty advisors and committee members each week.

The initial work of the first semester will be to define topics, associated issues and research veins for each student. Faculty Driven Research focused studio will be directly scheduled and led by the pace and focus of the instructor. Independent Topic students will identify principal faculty advisors by the middle of

February. These students will begin regular weekly meetings with their principal faculty advisors as soon as they have been selected. Two additional committee members will be selected. The principal advisor and one of the committee members must be from the School of Architecture faculty. An additional committee member may also be from the School of Architecture, or from another program at USC, or an outside practitioner whose interests and accomplishments are highly related to the DDR exploration.

Progress reviews will be held at the beginning of October and again at the beginning and end of November. The purpose of these reviews will be to assess the quality of the work already started, to provide other advice as appropriate, and to develop an independent study program for the summer. Three interim reviews will be held during the spring semester, at the end of February, March and April. The final review for each student will be held in May.

<i>SPRING SEMESTER - Date</i>	Activity Faculty Research Studio	Activity Independent Research
August week one	First class meeting	First class meeting
week two	Project analysis due	Draft statements due /
September week three	Individual consultations	Individual consultations
week four	Meetings with studio faculty	Second draft statements due
week five	Meetings with studio faculty	Final draft statements due / advisor proposals
week six	Meetings with studio faculty	Meetings with faculty advisors; appointment of faculty committees
October week seven	Meetings with studio faculty	Meetings with faculty advisors
week eight	Review- research	Student-Committee Presentations re: research
week nine	Meetings with studio faculty	Meetings with faculty advisors & committee members
week ten	Spring Recess	Spring Recess
November week eleven	Meetings with studio faculty	Meetings with faculty advisors & committee members
week twelve	Review- issues, project, site	Student-Committee Presentations re: issues, methods, focus
week thirteen	Meetings with studio faculty	Meetings with faculty advisors & committee members
week fourteen	Meetings with studio faculty	Meetings with faculty advisors & committee members
week fifteen	Meetings with studio faculty	Meetings with faculty advisors & committee members
December week sixteen	Final Exam	Final Exam

FINAL REPORTS

For both the Independent DDR and the Thesis, a report is required at the conclusion of the initial semester and a Final Report will be due at the conclusion of the study, at the date specified by the University for thesis submission, and no later than the end of final weeks in May for the DDR. These reports are required to be printed or drawn on 8½" x 11" sheets, portrait orientation, with 17" x 11" and 34" x 22" foldouts as necessary and appropriate. Additionally, all materials must be documented and submitted electronically to provide a complete digital file. The format for the Thesis is specified by the University.

The following outline is the required structure of the Independent DDR/Thesis final report. Items "I-V.1" and initial conceptual design studies will constitute the interim report at the end of the initial semester. The outline for Thesis reports will include some of the same elements, but will be tailored to the individual studies.

I. Summary

This section shall not exceed two pages. The information and findings of items I-VI below are to be summarized (the Executive Summary for the interim report will include only the study of the spring semester).

II. Topic

Presentation of the subject as an aspect of architecture from one of the five general topics, shall be described in sufficient detail to distinguish this study from other possible studies within the topic area.

III. Issues

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. Representations of the methods by which the project design was developed.
- b. Representations of means and sources by which critical information and relationships were discovered through the process of design.

3. Design Proposal

VI. Summary

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. Bibliography and References

SEMINAR READINGS

Students are expected to complete all of the weekly assigned course readings prior to that week's class. Each student is required to submit a research response that critically reflects upon each week's seminar readings.

SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

For each seminar there will be assigned a pair of students who will have primary responsibility for having become thoroughly knowledgeable about the topic and will lead the seminar in a critical assessment in which one student presents the material and the other challenges the presentation by, i.e., engaging other points of view or theories, materials not considered or misrepresented. It will be decided in advance which student is to be assigned to each role. A second pair of students may be added and the topics subdivided at the discretion of the instructor. The presentation represents 20% of the final course grade and will be graded on a 20-point scale, with 20/20 designating excellent.

These Presentations will be graded on:

- Preparation
- Critical Argument
- Clarity of Presentation
- Ability to engage class in discussion

GRADING STRUCTURE

Seminar Response/ Reflection Research	5@5% =	25%
Seminar Research Presentation		20%
DDR/Thesis Research + Annotated Bibliography		10%
Annotated Outline		10%
DDR/Thesis Research Presentation		5%
Draft DDR/Thesis Research		15%
Final Submittal DDR/Thesis Research		15%

COURSE POLICIES

THE 2010 IMPERATIVE STATEMENT

As the Architecture Faculty have voted to accept the 2010 Imperative-- to improvement of ecological literacy among the students and faculty and to achieve a carbon-neutral design school campus by 2010. The following statement should be added to all design studio syllabi where appropriate:

"The design should engage the environment in a way that dramatically reduces or eliminates the need for fossil fuel."

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/>.

PLAGIARISM

University guidelines relative to plagiarism pertain to original design work. You are expected to do all of your own design and presentation work. Assistance received, in the form of model construction, drawing preparation, or the flagrant appropriation of the design work of others will be considered as non-original work and will be treated as plagiarism.

Plagiarism, the copying of any work in whole or in part without citation, will not be tolerated. If plagiarism is committed by any student and is confirmed by the instructor, the student will receive an F grade for the assignment, and possibly the course. The severity of the violation will also determine whether the student is reported to the appropriate University offices for further sanctions.

ATTENDANCE

Attending classes is a basic responsibility of every USC student who is enrolled in courses at the School of Architecture. The School of Architecture's general absence policy is to allow a student to miss the equivalent of one week of class sessions, without directly affecting the student's grade and ability to complete the course (this is for excused absences for any confirmed personal illness/family emergency/religious observance or for any unexcused absences). For each absence over that allowed number, the student's letter grade can be lowered up to one full letter grade.

If additional absences are required for a personal illness/family emergency/religious observance, the situation should be discussed and evaluated with the faculty member and appropriate Chair on a case-by-case basis.

All students should understand that any false representation of their attendance is grounds to be considered for a violation of ethics before the University.

Any student not in class within the first 10 minutes is considered tardy, and any student absent (in any form including sleep, technological distraction, or by leaving mid class for a long bathroom/water break) for more than 1/3 of the class time can be considered fully absent. Each tardy class counts as half an absence. If arriving late, a student must be respectful of a class in session and do everything possible to minimize the disruption caused by a late arrival. It is always the student's responsibility to seek means (if possible) to make up work missed due to absences, not the instructor's, although such recourse is not always an option due to the nature of the material covered.

Being absent on the day a project presentation, exercise or other study is due can lead to an "F" for that project presentation, exercise, or study (unless the faculty concedes the reason is due to an excusable absence for personal illness/family emergency/religious observance).

STUDENT DISABILITY

Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The University of Southern California is committed to full compliance with the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As part of the implementation of this law, the University will continue to provide reasonable accommodation of academically qualified students with disabilities so those student can participate fully in the University's educational programs and activities. Although USC is not required by law to change the "fundamental nature of essential curricular components of its programs in order to accommodate the needs of disabled students," the University will provide reasonable academic accommodations. The specific responsibility of the University administration and all faculty serving in a teaching capacity is to ensure the University's compliance with this policy.

The general definition of a student with a disability is any person who has "a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities," and any person who has "a history of, or is regarded as having, such an impairment." Reasonable academic and physical accommodations include but are not limited to: extended time on examinations; substitution of similar or related work for a non-fundamental program requirement; time extensions on papers and projects; special testing procedures; advance notice regarding book list for visually impaired and some learning disabled students; use of academic aides in the classroom such as note takers and sign language interpreters; early advisement and assistance with registration; accessibility for students who use wheelchairs and

those with mobility impairments; and need for special classroom furniture or special equipment in the classroom.

OBTAINING ACCOMMODATIONS

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 your instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 AM. – 5:00 PM., Monday through Friday. Disability Services & Programs contact:213.740.0776

ACCREDITATION STATEMENT

The USC School of Architecture's five-year Bachelor of Architecture program and the Master of Architecture program are accredited professional architectural degree programs. All students can access and review the NAAB Conditions of Accreditation (including the Student Performance Criteria) on the NAAB Website, http://www.naab.org/accreditation/2009_conditions.aspx.