

Syllabus – FALL 2017

College of Environmental Design – **ENVDES 4A: Design and Activism**

Course attributes: meets L&S breadth for Arts + Literature; Social + Behavioral Sciences

Location: 112 Wurster Hall

Class time: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-5:00

Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Control number: #12080

Prerequisites: None

Instructors: **Greg Castillo** gregcastillo@berkeley.edu

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Office Hours: TBA

### ***COURSE DESCRIPTION***

This course explores relationships between design and activism, raising critical questions about what design is and how designers serve as guardians of culture and agents of change. The course surveys the ways in which activism has historically played a role in design practice at the scales of products, architecture, landscape, and cities.

Through lectures, readings, and exercises, students will be exposed to a broad spectrum of design interventions that have attempted to instigate change (design activism) and the ways in which design has been wielded as a transformative tool (activist design) in the realms of public space, technology, aesthetics, materials, and ecology.

During the course of the semester, students will consider their own potential career trajectory of design activism. Through three major assignments, participants will identify the contemporary issues and client groups they want to address by designing of objects, spaces, and collective empowerment processes that redress problematic relationships between people and their environments.

Design and Activism will expose students to ways in which design can be a vehicle for change - and the fact that, as future designers, they must understand the complexities involved in working as an agent of cultural transformation through reform of the built environment.

### ***COURSE MODULES***

ED4a is divided into three modules, each taught by a faculty member with expertise specific to module content.

The module sequence begins with an exploration of design's human subjects, exploring historically neglected or underserved client populations and how activists develop the knowledge base needed to serve them.

The second module examines practices by which client groups and activists come together to assess local needs, formulate design approaches, and engage in the political process in order to effect change.

The final module expands the perspective from the local to the global through readings and case studies of popular struggles and activist interventions aimed at advancing social and environmental justice.

### **Module 1: Design Activism and Human Subjectivity:**

Designers too often approach clients as human abstractions created in an act of imaginative self- projection. Passive, invented subjects reflect the designer's values and career aspirations, populating spaces that conform to criteria established by the profession's glossy media outlets. Imaginary non-people inhabit space without any of the messy vitality of the human condition. They don't lose sight or mobility; they know no fears or anxieties; they never experience conflict or move beyond behaviors predetermined by the designer. The first module of ED4a examines how design activists can better serve the needs of client groups by exploring their history and committing to modes of engagement aimed at client empowerment rather than top-down "problem solving."

### **Module 2: Local Institutional & Cultural Systems**

This module examines the institutional and cultural systems that help shape the built environment and social context in which design activist work. Starting with a survey of the history of community activism in American cities and ending with lectures by guest activists, this module will demonstrate ways in which students can partake in design activism in the Bay Area.

### **Module 3: Sustainability & Global Practices**

This module addresses global design practices using examples from many countries. Lectures and readings will explore the sustainability of the built environment with a specific focus on public space. Two case study examples will highlight the importance of practices employed to enhance civic engagement and the drawbacks from reduced public participation: The Aga Khan public space rehabilitation project in historic Cairo, and a USAID project for citizen participation in the planning and design of a public plaza for a Red Sea nomadic village. In addition, a lecture will be analyze Cairo's Tahrir square as a civic space used by citizens to express public opinion. Readings and lectures will examine the complex forces that shape public space and influence people's experience and use of neighborhood parks and community plazas, streets, and alleys.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To understand humanistic applications of architecture, landscape architecture, and city planning through the social context of design interventions;
- To understand the implications of environmental design in local, national, and global settings;
- To recognize the value of sustainability at all levels of design;
- To understand major debates in the literature of design activism;
- To develop effective communication skills – graphic, written, and verbal;
- To gain familiarity with the language and process of design through media including drawing and making.

## **EXPECTATIONS:**

The goal of this course is to expose you to design activist legacies and contemporary practices. *As a course participant, you too must be an activist.* Your active participation will be assessed through the following course endeavors: *a reading and reflection notebook, class discussions, pop quizzes and interval assignments, three successive activism research projects, and a final design activism project and statement.*

## **GRADING RUBRIC:**

- Attendance and class participation (15%)
- Interval assignments and quizzes (20%)
- Module 1 Capstone Assignment (15%)
- Module 2 Capstone Assignment (15%)
- Module 3 Capstone Assignment (15%)
- Final Course Project (20%)

## **Attendance and participation:**

Attendance at lectures is required and will be taken at each class meeting. *Your physical presence at lectures is not enough, however.* We want you to share your ideas and questions; we want you to be heard. **Attendance and class participation is 15% of your final grade.**

You may have one unexcused absence; missed lectures without a doctor's written permission will result in one letter-grade drop in your final grade (e.g. from A to B).

For each class session involving a guest speaker, be prepared to share a 'burning question' or critical issue that has been raised for you by that session's required readings as put into the context of practice by the visiting speaker.

***Interval assignments and pop quizzes:***

Several times during the course of the semester, you will be given an unannounced *pop quiz*. It tests your comprehension of the required readings: you will not be able to pass the quiz without doing the assigned readings and taking notes on them. *Pop quizzes will be averaged into the 20% of the course grade represented by interval assignments and quizzes.*

*Interval assignments* will vary with each ED4a module. Your interval assignments for Module 1 will ask you to scan and submit pages from your *reading and reflection notebook* for a specific lecture and its set of course readings. Your first submission will not be graded, but instead is intended to provide feedback on your use of note-taking and mental mapping as a tool of design research - an important part of your active engagement in ED4a, which will continue throughout all three modules. *Subsequent interval assignment submissions will be graded and averaged into the 20% of the course grade represented by interval assignments and quizzes.*

***On the reading and reflection notebook:***

This syllabus lists readings to be done in advance of each class lecture or guest visit. Readings accessible through an electronic source are listed with their web link: to access these from an off-campus location, you'll need to configure your laptop accordingly:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/using-the-libraries/connect-off-campus>

While reading, write down your ideas, reactions, and questions (*legibly*, please) in a hard-bound lined notebook – the classic Moleskine is ideal, but any 5" x 8.5" notebook will do. (You can find Moleskine notebooks in many local bookshops as well as online). When doing readings that prepare you for a class discussion with one of our invited guest lecturers, *use your notebook to record at least one 'burning question' or critical issue that you would like to discuss with the visitor*. Your notebook is not only a place for reading and class notes, but also a repository for your brainstorm, inspired ideas, contentions and doubts as you consider the legacies of activist design you will hear about in lectures and the prospects for your own career as a design activist.

**Use your notebook for class notes as well: *during lectures, just as during takeoff and landing, personal computers and phones must remain turned off and stowed away.*** (Your GSI, Heba, will be exercising her eagle eye to insure your compliance with this course requirement). Why is handwritten thought-mapping required in this course? Because researchers now have proof that this method of notetaking is far more effective as a learning tool. Check it out for yourself: <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>

***Be sure to bring your reading and reflection notebook to each class meeting.*** Your ED4a faculty will ask for you to scan your notes for a past lecture and its readings as one of the course written assignments: they'll be looking for evidence that, as you read and listen, you're making the information your own by synthesizing it with other readings, your own interests, and your personal analysis and reflection. This works best when by exploring notetaking as a personal design tool that maps thoughts and visual information diagrammatically in a way that works for you and feels fun and rewarding.

### ***Capstone Assignment - Module 1***

Each module will have its own final research project - a 'capstone' offering an opportunity for you to explore the client groups, forms of political and social engagement, and global design interests that engage your passion as a design activist. Each module's capstone assignment is described in its portion of the syllabus; *each of the capstone assignments accounts for 15% of your final course grade (with all three capstones accounting for 45% of the final grade).*

The capstone assignment for Module 1 consists of a six page ***original research paper*** (double spaced, 12 pt. font = approximately 1250 words total) *due at the start of class on Tuesday, 26 September*, will identify and assess a specific client population that you could imagine serving with your design interventions. *The paper will consist of three parts, each worth one-third of the total paper grade.*

In the first part, you will provide an analysis of the client group's history that examines the relationship of social, economic, cultural conditions and builds toward an understanding of the contemporary needs. *This part of the paper must draw upon at least three published accounts from library sources* in addition to any web research.

The second part of the paper will propose how you would position yourself as a design activist dedicated the client group's empowerment and self-determination, rather than as an expert dispensing top-down problem solutions. Through what processes might you encourage members of the client group to share their points of view, perception of needs, desire for change? How might you make them full participants in the design process rather than passive subjects?

The third part of the paper is more subjective. Reflect upon your role as a design activist with respect to your chosen client group. Explain, as you might to your clients, what attracts you to working with this group in the service of positive change? What sets of experience have nurtured this interest? What do you bring to this collaboration that would make your clients feel comfortable with you and engender a sense of mutual trust and respect?

***Capstone Assignments for Modules Two and Three of ED4a will be described in the upcoming syllabi for those sections of the course.***

**Final Course Project:**

Summarize how your notions of design activism have developed during the course of ED4a in a **Personal Activism Statement** approximately five pages in length (double spaced, 12 pt. font = approximately 1250 words total). Your personal activism statement should reflect your thoughts about readings, discussion, lectures, and guest presentations as learning experiences. In addition to the new 5-page statement, *bundle the three Capstone Assignments for all three ED4a modules* as a final report, revising and polishing them as needed in response to comments on the first versions of those assignments. Together the three revised capstone assignments plus your personal activism statement will articulate a preliminary vision of how you might position your future practice as a design activist. This provisional career statement will be there for you to revisit, rethink, amend during the course of your design education.

*The bundle of all three written assignments is due in final revised form – in lieu of a final exam – on the scheduled day of the ED4 final: no later than 7PM on Friday, 15 December, at Heba’s GSI office. (You may, of course, turn the paper in early; please arrange this with Heba in advance). The Final Course Project is 20% of your final grade: the Personal Activism statement accounting for half of that.*

**Statement on Academic Integrity:**

Any notes, paper, or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. *Sign-in sheets for class attendance will be checked for falsified signatures: students who have participated in schemes to falsify class records by being signed in by friends or signing in others not in attendance will forfeit 10% of their grade credit for the course.* As a member of the campus community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. So be proud of your academic accomplishments and help protect and promote academic integrity at Berkeley.

**Policy on Religious Holidays:**

If you will be observing any religious holidays this semester which will prevent you from attending a regularly scheduled class or interfere with fulfilling any course requirement, you need to notify Professor Castillo within the first two weeks of the semester. Otherwise, absences due to religious holidays will be treated as a missed class.

**Disability Statement:**

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class, if you have emergency medical information which you wish to share, or if you need special arrangements in case the building

must be evacuated, please inform Professor Castillo at the start of the semester, either privately after class or during office hours. Students who need academic accommodations (for example, a note taker) should request them from the Disabled Students' Program (DSP), 260 César Chávez Center: 642-0518 (voice or TTY). DSP is the campus office responsible for verifying disability-related need and for planning accommodations in cooperation with students and instructors as needed, and consistent with course requirements.

## **SCHEDULE**

Class themes are organized by week, so that we will generally devote two class period to each broad topic. Students will: 1) to do all readings listed on the syllabus in advance of the class under which they are listed, and 2) write responses, reflections, and 'burning questions' provoked by the readings in their personal notebook to prepare for lectures and visitor discussions.

### **MODULE 1: *Design and Human Subjectivity* – Professor Castillo**

#### **Week (1) Theme: Introduction & lecture: Universal Subjects**

**Thursday 24/Aug**

#### **Week (2) Theme: Gender**

How have architects imagined their design clients as universalized, standardized, or 'normative' subjects? Why have theorists from Vitruvius (Roman, 1st C. BC) and Leonardo da Vinci (Italian Renaissance, late 15th C. AD) through Le Corbusier (French modernist, 20th C.) envisioned a universal male design subject? What impact has the status of males as universal subjects had upon the built environment, the architecture and planning professions, and the status of non-normative users of design objects and environments?

How does behavior rather than physiology define the notion of gender? How are different kinds of spaces defined as gender specific, and what are the consequences for different users of the built environment? How might a design activist intervene to address inequities that have resulted from the ways in which normative gender conceptions are locked into built form and thereby institutionalized?

**Tuesday 29/Aug**

- **Readings:**

Cynthia E. Smith, "Designing an America of the People, By the People, For the People" in *By the People: Designing a Better America* (New York: Cooper Hewitt / Smithsonian Design Museum, 2016), 13-24.

UC Berkeley Professor Judith Butler (video), "Your behavior creates your gender," YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc>

“An Introduction to Judith Butler’s *Gender Troubles*,” YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7M6kD5Qt5M>

- **Writing Assignment**

*Reading and Reflections notebook: reactions, notes, and mind-maps of readings; thoughts about videos; thoughts about how these relate to the Universal Subjects talk. Feel free to combine notes, drawings, diagramming and other ‘mind mapping’ techniques*

**Thursday 31/Aug** -- Guest discussion with Antonio Leony, Project Manager, Construction and Design, UCB

- **Readings:**

Martha C. Nussbaum, “Introduction: “Shame and Disgust: Confusion in Practice and Theory,” in *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton: 2009), 1-18.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/reader.action?ppg=38&docID=10284181&tm=1471482010120>

Matt Pearce, “What it’s like to live under North Carolina’s bathroom law if you’re transgender,” Los Angeles Times, 12 June 2016 (<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-north-carolina-bathrooms-20160601-snap-story.html>);

Esther Sperber, “Bathrooms by Size: How Architecture Can Solve Problems (video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRwfZMceRcl>)

- **Writing Assignment:**

*Reading and Reflections notebook: reactions, notes, and mind-maps of readings; thoughts about how readings relate to the guest discussion.*

**Week (3) Theme:      Class**

How are wealth, education, language, race, and ethnicity factors in the construct of class? What role does architecture play in how a person’s class status is assigned by others, and whether class status is reproduced over subsequent generations or disrupted? To what extent is class a part of cultural identity? Do housing reformers, in attempting to eliminate impoverished living conditions, also eradicate cultures and traditions? Can anything be learned from housing generally considered to be substandard? How does the design activist exercise responsibility in advocating for the wholesale transformation of alternative life environments?

**Tuesday 5/Sept** -- Research orientation with David Eifler, Environmental Design Librarian  
*Lecture: Housing the Worker*, part 1

- **Readings:**

Alana Semuels, “The Power of Public Housing,” *The Atlantic*, 22 Sept. 2015

<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/09/public-housing-success/406561/>



PBS: "A public housing project where healthy living is the foundation" (July 7, 2017)

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/public-housing-project-healthy-living-foundation/>

Alan Durning, "Bring Back Flophouses, Rooming Houses, and Microapartments," *Slate.com*, 17 July 2013

[http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2013/07/sros\\_flophouses\\_microapartments\\_smart\\_cities\\_are\\_finally\\_allowing\\_the\\_right.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2013/07/sros_flophouses_microapartments_smart_cities_are_finally_allowing_the_right.html)

"Las Abuelitas Kinship Housing," and "Outside in Outreach Center," in *By the People: Designing a Better America*, 234-239.

- **Writing Assignment:**

*Reading and Reflections notebook: reflect upon readings, lecture notes, mind-map thoughts*

#### **Thursday 7/Sept -- Housing the Worker, part 2**

- **Writing Assignment:**

*Reading and Reflections notebook: reflect upon readings, lecture notes, mind-map thoughts*

#### **Week (4) Theme: Homelessness / Race**

How have cities approached problems of homelessness? What accounts for the emphasis on temporary fixes and the lack of longer-term solutions? In what ways does homelessness defy simple design-based solutions?

How have architects approached the production of domestic objects and environments as cultural and social interventions? How have architectural and urban form expressed disputes about race, culture, class, and assessments of human potential?

#### **Tuesday 12/Sept -- Guest discussion with Julie Leadbetter, SF Navigation Center**

- **Readings:**

Benn Quinn, "Anti-Homeless spikes are part of a wider phenomenon of 'hostile architecture,'" *the guardian*, 13 June 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/13/anti-homeless-spikes-hostile-architecture>

Donald Frazier, "Confronting the causes and solutions of mass homelessness," *Berkeleyside*, 28 July 2016. <http://www.berkeleyside.com/2016/07/28/op-ed-confronting-the-causes-and-solutions-of-mass-homelessness/>

Mary Rees, "Homeless advocates in Berkeley say officials are dumping too many prized personal possessions," *Berkeleyside*, 3 August 2016. <http://www.berkeleyside.com/2016/08/03/homeless-advocates-say-officials-are-dumping-too-many-prized-personal-possession/>

Tracey Taylor, "A Possible First in Berkeley: Housing for the Homeless in People's Park," *Berkeleyside*, 28 June 2017.

- **Writing Assignment:**

*Reading and Reflections notebook: reactions, notes, and mind-maps of readings; thoughts about how readings relate to the guest discussion.*

**Thursday 14/Sept -- Lecture: Urban Renewal and the Politics of Race**

- **Readings:**

Robyn C. Spencer, "Communalism and the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California," in Iain Boal et. al., eds., *West of Eden: Communes and Utopia in Northern California* (Oakland: 2012), 92-121.

Kyle Shelton, "When Black Lives Matter Protesters Take to the Streets, It's Part of a Long History of 'Infrastructural Citizenship,'" *The Urban Edge*, 13 July 2016.

<http://urbanedge.blogs.rice.edu/2016/07/13/3782/#.V7U3ET4rIng>

- **Writing Assignment:**

*Reading and Reflections notebook: reflect upon readings, lecture notes, mind-map thoughts*

**Week (5) Theme: Childhood & Disability**

How has difference in physical or developmental ability produced in marginalization in environmental choices? How does 'perfectionist' bias in normative conceptions of human design impoverish everyone at some point in their life cycle? What would be the broader benefits of cities designed with children and 'differently abled' citizens in mind?

**Tuesday 19/Sept — Lecture: Free Schoolers and the Right to Build**

- **Readings:**

Marta Gutman, "The Physical Spaces of Childhood" in Paula Fass, ed., *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (New York: 2013), 249-66.

\* John R. Gillis, "The Islanding of Children: Reshaping the Mythical Landscapes of Childhood," Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith, eds., *Designing Modern Childhoods: History Space, and the Material Culture of Children* (Piscataway: 2008), 316-330.

- **Writing Assignment:**

*Reading and Reflections notebook: reflect upon readings, lecture notes, mind-map thoughts*

**Thursday 21/Sept – Guest discussion -- guest TBA**

- **Readings:**

Martha C. Nussbaum, "Protecting Citizens from Shame: Shame and People with Disabilities," *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton: 2009),

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/reader.action?ppg=324&docID=10284181&tm=1471539998960>

\* Joseph P. Shapiro, "The New Civil Rights"

<http://codi.tamucc.edu/archives/pubs/articles/aarp/.civil.htm>

Bess Williamson, "The People's Sidewalks," Boom 2, No. 1 (Spring 2012)

<http://www.boomcalifornia.com/2012/06/the-peoples-sidewalks/>