

Type of Course: Advanced Studio ARCH 86101 / 51000 / 91102

Class Meetings: M/T/TH: 3:00PM – 7:10PM

Instructor: Alberto Foyo

Location: Room TBD

Semester/Year: Summer 2019

# ruralism meets urbanism

quality versus inequality

denouncing by design



The subject of this studio is the envisioning of alternative developmental models for small sized towns scattered along New York State rural landscape.

These towns are of historic, cultural, and economic importance. However, many of them are in an advanced state of physical and social disrepair.

This studio will explore the future of these towns relative to new opportunities for their re-development within a changing regional and global context.

Taking into account the particular idiosyncrasies of rural culture, as it refers specifically to agriculture and architecture, this studio will create a prototypical development model based on the broad notion of cultural sustainability; a cultural sustainability that responds simultaneously to global and to local dilemmas.

While proposing new economically and culturally sustainable programs, we will reconsider, retrofit, and/or transform the town's infrastructures and will propose possible new forms of human habitation inspired by a critical prognosis of future human migrations (*emi* and *inmi*).

### **the big questions**

- Can we re-introduce social aesthetics as an antidote to formalistic aesthetics?
- Can we get the citizens engaged in the building of a civic environment that cultivates local idiosyncrasies?
- How can we re-engage the constituency back into the decision making processes and the development of bottom up strategies?
- In the absence of 'big money' can we implement alternative micro economies that foster acupunctural interventions (bottom up strategies) and grassroots activism?
- Can we intertwine economic, ecologic and cultural values together instead of treating them as pathological oppositions?





### **studio overview: contextualizing the proposal**

Aldo Van Eyck used to say: *"it is sadly true of architecture that it is not quality that counts but enough quantity of that quality"*. The nature of this 'quality-quantity' dichotomy should be periodically updated. As the spirit of one epoch merges with its successor we ought to make sure that the values that we derive from it remain fertile ground for the evolutionary development of our design culture.

In our epoch, the dichotomy quality-quantity indeed embodies the sine qua non of our cultural landscape and it remains a difficult one for architects to come to terms.

However, tackling issues via design as we do, we constantly emphasize the value of quality. We propose the 'invention' of a new dichotomy: quality versus inequality.

We are combining these two words into an etymological tautology of sorts, but we are doing so with the intent of asserting that in our epoch the notion of quality has to be set against the reality of inequality.

This studio proposes a critical thinking process wherein the concept of quality becomes mediated by the reality of inequality as an intentional provocation to steer architectural proposals towards the understanding of quality not as a luxury but as an antidote to inequality. We are hoping that the reformulation of the concept of quality as it relates to real conditions will inspire more intelligent design decisions by joining the concept of luxury to that of austerity as compatible rather than antagonistic agents.

Focusing on the quality versus inequality dichotomy, this studio will try to deliver a 'hybrid moderne' that fuses the notion of architecture and of landscape into one; a hybrid that guarantees quality in the face of inequality; getting rid of the superfluous without falling into the downfall of over-aesthetized minimalism.

Through an arduous recalibration of concepts such as identity, integration, adaptation, autonomy, belonging, ownership, standards, comfort, sophistication, etc this studio gravitates towards architectural and landscape interventions that explore the potential of our discipline as a social condenser, holistically gearing in the direction of a self-reliant modus vivendi; one that is both ambitious and modest, surgical and acupunctural, progressive and conservative.

To put this system of thought into effect, one that embodies character in architecture instead of rendered form, this studio needs both a physical and a mental set up:

- 1- A client or constituency whose modus vivendi is still in husbandry, for good or for bad, with agricultural culture.
- 2- A site and context characterized by a genetic dependence on soil fertility, that is to say a place whose past can be referenced to through different agricultural models and histories.
- 3- A mental attitude that can place agriculture and architecture as symbiotic rather than antagonistic providers of shelter and habitat.



### **the objectives**

-We will try to install in the studio a 'terroir' mentality that emphasizes the conception of architecture as fabric more so than as object, in obvious empathy with agrarian strategies.

- We will investigate ways in which agricultural techniques can affect architectural techniques and vice versa. We are prioritizing the notion of techno and building technique over building technology and the technocracy apparatus that comes along with it.

-We will experiment with architecture's capacity to organize existence above and beyond it being a commodity.

-This studio will formulate proposals that are inspired by both integration strategies and disintegration strategies, that is to say, 'collaborative dependence' and 'healthy self-reliance' simultaneously.

-We will admittedly envision an 'elsewhere' landscape, a place of rehearsal, a place to try out scenarios that sidestep the conclusiveness of impervious reality.

-We will try to redefine the term utopia as an antidote against the all too soporiferous agents of mass thinking; a liberative thinking tool within which mental landscapes can be tilled alongside physical landscapes. It is, I would like to think, a realistic utopianism, one for which the real conditions are not yet available. The visionary element finding expression just as the utilitarian element does; in fact, the visionary and the utilitarian performing under one roof. As it always was in the agrarian world.

-Subcutaneously, this project will veer to denounce, via design, the inequities brought about in the rural environment by the all too prolonged and obtuse emphasis in architectural discourses on the urban and the urban alone.



### the site

The hamlet of Jefferson, population 1,000, lies on the northern fringes of the Catskills mountains. With one of the highest poverty rates in the U.S., Jefferson currently offers few prospects and little hope for a better life for its residents. With a few exceptions, homes and buildings in the hamlet suffer from neglect due to a general malaise and the lack of funds for improvement. Large dairy farms that were a cornerstone of Jefferson's earlier economy have all but disappeared. The single largest employer in the town is the school, which although widely cited for its excellence is threatened with closure due to a seriously dwindling population of children. Jobs for construction workers, electricians, plumbers, maintenance workers and lawn care are primarily provided by second home owners. Off season, there are few opportunities available for these workers.

### the project:

The project comprises two basic phases:

#### 1-Analysis:

Under the dictum that analysis is an act of design the students will visit the site so as to gain 'in situ' sensitivity regarding the social and economic predicaments that afflict/affect Jefferson. Subsequently students will enter

in contact with local farmers and with state and federal agencies so as to learn about the availability of grants and financial stimuli to implement specific agricultural-architectural proposals. The students will have at their disposal local consultants with expertise in these matters.

Group work will be encouraged during this research-analysis phase.

## **2- Synthesis:**

-Once we have developed an analytical comprehensive empathy that permits us to better understand the opportunities of our site and our context we will embark in the envisioning of the future (design phase).

Each student will select concrete points along Jefferson in where to propose an intervention. The end result will constitute an open ended, loosely knit necklace meant to awaken the forgotten genius loci of Jefferson. The students will be free to create the program for each intervention but an emphasis will be placed on the architect's responsibility to help healing, that is to say his responsibility to think simultaneously about how to build (ie: technique & technology), where to build( ie: site & context), and what to build( ie: program). Equal emphasis will be placed on how not to build, where not to build and what not to build; a logical corollary to the understanding of cultural sustainability.

In essence the pedagogical intent of the studio is to foster the use of both intuitive feeling and critical thinking as complementary tools in the design process. Similarly, we will stress the re-thinking of typical architectural dichotomies, ie: tradition-modernity, rural-urban, natural-manmade, space-place, genius loci-locus geni, etc, not as sets of pathological oppositions but as complementary concepts. By proposing that it is actually in the overlap between the two sides of these dichotomies where the richest design solutions can usually be found the students will be encouraged to 'listen' to the site from different angles and thus think outside the "box" without necessarily resorting to over- aesthetized designs.

In the end result this studio will offer the students the opportunity to design stereoscopically, that is to say allowing for both their sensual sensibility and their social sensibility to act in balanced dialogue with each other.

## **studio bibliography**

- Manufacturing consent, Noam Chomsky
- Discourse on the origin of Inequality, Rousseau
- A short history of progress, Ronald Wright
- Ethics, Aristotle
- The breakdown of nations, Leopold Kohr
- Cluster fuck nation, James Kunstler
- Grass roots architecture, Kropotkin
- Tragedy of the Commons, Wendel Berry
- The Farmer as Conservationist, Aldo Leopold 1939.
- Who "Designs" the Agricultural Landscape? Laura Jackson, 2008.
- New Roots for Agriculture, Wes Jackson 1980.
- From the Corn belt to the Gulf: Societal and Environmental Implications of Alternative Agricultural Futures, Joan Iverson Nassauer, Mary V. Santelmann, Donald Scavia 2007.
- Food Without Thought: How the U.S. Farm Policy Contributes to Obesity, Heather Schoonover and Mark Muller 2006
- Harvest of Change The Des Moines Register,
- Aerial Photo Archive, Iowa Geographic Map Server
- Principles of Permaculture, Bill Mollison
- The thinking hand, Juhani Pallasma

## **weekly course schedule**

June 3<sup>rd</sup>-June 10<sup>th</sup>: intro: syllabus discussion and site/context lecture. site visit: meeting the site and meeting the people.

June 10<sup>th</sup>-June 15<sup>th</sup>: Research phase in conjunction with local, state and federal agencies

June 15<sup>th</sup>- June 22<sup>nd</sup>: master plan design for main street

June 22<sup>nd</sup>-July 22<sup>nd</sup>: design development of new and retrofitted structures

July 22<sup>nd</sup> FINAL REVIEW Note: schedule below is preliminary and subject to revision through the duration of the semester.

## **Grading & Attendance Policies and Studio Culture**

### **Course Expectations:**

- That students will develop a high level of independent thought and rigor and a willingness to go beyond both basic project requirements and their own perceived limits and abilities.
- That students will successfully complete all project requirements. No make-up or postponed project submissions will be accepted except in the case of medical emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances. Excused absences and project delays must be officially cleared by professor in advance in order to be considered valid.

### **Methods of Assessment:**

- Attendance and participation in class discussions: 20%
- Projects development in response to semester schedule: 50%
- Projects presentation, completion and resolution: 30%

*Note: The Research component of the studio will be weighed more heavily in assessment of graduate student work and class performance.*

### **Key Areas of Grading Assessment:**

- **Studio Performance & Work Habits** Ability to respond to studio criticism & discourse in a consistent & clear manner throughout the course of the semester as demonstrated in the evolution and development of design work.
- **Clarity of Representation & Mastery of Media** Ability to utilize both digital and manual drawing and model-making techniques to precisely and creatively represent architectural ideas.
- **Pre-Design:** Ability to prepare a comprehensive program for an architectural project that includes an assessment of client and user needs; an inventory of spaces and their requirements; an analysis of site conditions (including existing buildings); a review of the relevant building codes and standards, including relevant sustainability requirements, and an assessment of their implications for the project; and a definition of site selection and design assessment criteria.
- **Research:** Understanding of the theoretical and applied research methodologies and practices used during the design process.
- **Integrated Evaluations and Decision-Making Design Process:** Ability to demonstrate the skills associated with making integrated decisions across multiple systems and variables in the completion of a design project. This demonstration includes problem identification, setting evaluative criteria, analyzing solutions, and predicting the effectiveness of implementation.
- **Attendance:** Consistent level of preparation and on-time presence for each studio class and scheduled

evening lectures.

- **Portfolio:** Completion of portfolio and attendance at all scheduled portfolio related events (as applicable).

#### **Grading Criteria:**

**Note: C is the lowest passing grade for M Arch I and M Arch II students.**

**A (+/-)** work meets all requirements and exceeds them. Presentations are virtually flawless, complete, and finely detailed. Work exhibits professional, “museum quality” level of craft. Student has developed an individual design process that shows a high level of independent thought and rigor. Work shows evidence of intense struggle to go beyond expectations, and beyond the student’s own perceived limits of their abilities.

**B (+/-)** work meets all requirements. Presentations are complete and finely detailed. Work exhibits professional level of craft. Student has developed an individual design process that shows a high level of independent thought and rigor.

**C (+/-)** work meets minimum requirements. While presentations may be complete, student has struggled to develop an individual design process and/or is lacking in craft or design resolution

**D (+/-)** work is below minimum requirements. Presentations are incomplete, student has struggled to develop an individual design process and/or is lacking in craft or design resolution.

**F** work is well below minimum requirements. Student does not develop adequate design process, and / or does not finish work on time.

**INC** grades of “incomplete” are not given under any circumstances unless there is evidence of a medical or personal emergency. In such cases, instructor and student develop a contract to complete work by a specified date, as per CCNY policy. Classes / work missed due to illness must be explained with a physician’s note.

#### **NOTES:**

***C is the lowest passing grade for M.Arch I and M.Arch II students. No D grades are given to graduate students.***

***Working in teams does not guarantee the same grade for each team member; grades are based on a range of criteria for each student.***

For more information on grading guidelines and other CCNY policies and procedures, consult the current CCNY academic bulletins: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/registrar/bulletins>

#### **Office Hours:**

Office hours are set by appointment. If a student needs to speak in private with a studio critic they must email in advance to request a meeting time. Students may seek office hour appointments to discuss any matters of concern including personal, private matters and general inquiries about course related work, grading, assessment and content.

**Probation & Dismissal:** For program specific information related to grades, academic standing, probation and dismissal, please see your program academic advisors:

**B.Arch:** Amy Daniel [adaniel@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:adaniel@ccny.cuny.edu)

**M.Arch:** Hannah Borgeson [hborgeson@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:hborgeson@ccny.cuny.edu)



**Studio Culture:**

Working in the studio is mandatory. Studio culture is an important part of an architectural education. Please see the Spitzer School of Architecture Studio Culture Policy, which can be accessed on the SSA website here <https://ssa.ccnycuny.edu/about/policies/> for more information.

**Absence & Lateness**

Arriving more than ten minutes late to class will constitute an absence. Two unexcused absences will result in a whole letter grade deduction from a final grade; **four** will result in a failing grade. It is expected that all students will participate in all scheduled working, midterm and final reviews and contribute constructively to the discussion.

**Absences due to Religious Observances**

Students who will miss any class sessions, exams, presentations, trips, or the like due to a religious observance should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate adjustments for observance needs can be implemented. This could include an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirement that is missed because of an absence due to a religious observance on any particular day or days.

**Noise Policy:**

The studio environment should be a quiet and respectful place where all students can work and think in peace. At no time may students play music out loud in studio, even at a low volume. If you desire to listen to music, either during class hours or after hours, headphones are a requirement. Conversations must also be kept to a reasonable volume to respect classmates and those students in adjacent studios.

**Readings & Journals:**

Students are expected to keep a journal or sketchbook throughout the duration of studio to document their thought process & take notes of any texts, books, terms or references that are mentioned by either the studio critic or fellow classmates and to selectively follow up on these and any other assigned readings before the next class.

**Academic Integrity:**

As a student you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner that reflects the ethical ideas of the profession of architecture. Any act of academic dishonesty not only raises questions about an individual's fitness to practice architecture, but also demeans the academic environment in which it occurred. Giving or receiving aid in examinations, and plagiarism are a violation of an assumed trust between the school and the student.

Plagiarism, i.e. the presentation as one's own work of words, drawings, ideas and opinions of someone else, is a serious instance of academic dishonesty in the context as cheating on examinations. The submission of any piece of work (written, drawn, built, or photocopied) is assumed by the school to guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are literally the student's own, executed by the student. All assignments must be the student's original work. Any copying, even short excerpts, from another book, article, or Internet source, published or unpublished, without proper attribution will result in automatic failure of the entire course.

The CCNY Academic Integrity Policy: <https://www.ccnycuny.edu/about/integrity>

For citations, the Chicago Manual of Style is recommended:  
[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

**AccessAbility Center (Student Disability Services):**

The AccessAbility Center (AAC) facilitates equal access and coordinates reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and support services for City College Students with disabilities while preserving the integrity of academic standards. Students who have self-identified with AAC to receive accommodations

should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. (North Academic Center 1/218; 212-650-5913 or 212-650-6910 for TTY/TTD). <https://www.cuny.cuny.edu/accessibility>

#### **Library:**

The school's library is a shared resource that is necessary supplement to all research and design work. Please direct questions to the library staff or the architecture librarian Nilda Sanchez. [nsanchez@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:nsanchez@ccny.cuny.edu)

#### **NAAB (National Architectural Accrediting Board):**

The National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) is the sole agency authorized to accredit US professional degree programs in architecture. Since most state registration boards in the United States require any applicant for licensure to have graduated from a NAAB-accredited program, obtaining such a degree is an essential aspect of preparing for the professional practice of architecture. While graduation from a NAAB-accredited program does not assure registration, the accrediting process is intended to verify that each accredited program substantially meets those standards that, as a whole, comprise an appropriate education for an architect.

More specifically, the NAAB requires an accredited program to produce graduates who: are competent in a range of intellectual, spatial, technical, and interpersonal skills; understand the historical, socio-cultural, and environmental context of architecture; are able to solve architectural design problems, including the integration of technical systems and health and safety requirements; and comprehend architects' roles and responsibilities in society.

The following Student Performance Criteria **from the 2014 NAAB Conditions are addressed in this course:**

**Realm B: Building Practices, Technical Skills, and Knowledge.** Graduates from NAAB-accredited programs must be able to comprehend the technical aspects of design, systems, and materials and be able to apply that comprehension to architectural solutions. In addition, the impact of such decisions on the environment must be well considered.

**B.1 Pre-Design:** *Ability* to prepare a comprehensive program for an architectural project that includes an assessment of client and user needs; an inventory of spaces and their requirements; an analysis of site conditions (including existing buildings); a review of the relevant building codes and standards, including relevant sustainability requirements, and an assessment of their implications for the project; and a definition of site selection and design assessment criteria.

**Realm C: Integrated Architectural Solutions.** Graduates from NAAB-accredited programs must be able to demonstrate that they have the ability to synthesize a wide range of variables into an integrated design solution.

**C.1 Research:** Understanding of the theoretical and applied research methodologies and practices used during the design process.

**C.2 Integrated Evaluations and Decision-Making Design Process:** Ability to demonstrate the skills associated with making integrated decisions across multiple systems and variables in the completion of a design project. This demonstration includes problem identification, setting evaluative criteria, analyzing solutions, and predicting the effectiveness of implementation.

*Students should consult the NAAB website [www.naab.org](http://www.naab.org) for additional information regarding student performance criteria and all other conditions for accreditation.*

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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