

in | VISIBLE

joseph ragsdale
jragsdal@calpoly.edu
dexter 212, 756-2040
office hours: m 2-3pm, t 9-11am, w 1-2 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

LA 402 – DESIGN THEORY AND EXPLORATION FOCUS STUDIO (4 units). Exploration and application of design theory, exploratory design process and form exploration to design and planning projects. Emphasis on incorporation of inquiry techniques based on the synthesis of interdisciplinary frameworks or art and design theory with historical and cultural issues. (CALPOLY CATALOG)

This quarter we will expand our design abilities outward from the studio and into the richness and complexity of the LANDSCAPE. The ability to see and synthesize the complexity of the landscape as FOUND and CONSTRUCTED is primary; for DESIGN is more than just problem solving. We will focus on design as a critical act of DEFINITION versus design as SOLUTION to a given problem.

We will put on our DESIGN goggles and go SITE-SEEING this quarter. Not just for views, snap-shots and vistas, but to look to understand all the things that shape a site, to question what it means to the people and landscape around, within and beyond the site boundaries. We will be looking at truly ordinary landscapes. Through exposure, design and representation, we will envision the transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary – the invisible to the VISIBLE.

Our design subjects will be local, accessible, personal, unique and somewhat ordinary. Our intentions will strive to find, elevate, expand and define the richness and complexity of the landscape. Our methodology will include a proactive role for theory, regenerative processes and landscape performance.

We will be spending considerable amounts of time outside of the studio and ON-SITE – to experience, to record, to react and to propose. Our SITES will be simultaneously theoretical and real, with definition but without limits, with designated functions BUT without assigned program. We will focus specifically on design, representation and technical skill. Our quarter will be rich, complex, challenging, full of growth and development as designers of the LANDSCAPE, and ultimately rewarding.

AGENDA

In and out of studio we will concentrate on an agenda of the following:

DESIGN: as both a form-giving **PROCESS** and as the actual **FORM + CRAFT** given to the product.

LANDSCAPE: as a unique **PALETTE** of materials, qualities, characteristics, processes and experiences.

SITE: as a layered **COMPOSITE** of past cultural + natural events and a **CANVAS** for the next evolution.

REPRESENTATION: as a medium for **SEEING** what is both apparent and hidden in the landscape + as a medium for **PROJECTING** the future of the very same landscape.

VOCABULARY: as more than a collection of **TERMS**, but as a visual language to **COMMUNICATE, EDUCATE** and **ENGAGE** an audience.

PERFORMANCE: as a landscape that performs critical social and ecological functions, provides benefits, creates awareness of the landscape and operates beyond simple aesthetic roles.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through coursework, projects, desk crits and reviews, students will be expected to meet the following learning outcomes:

- interpret the vocabulary of design into projects.
- demonstrate various ways of interpreting and representing the landscape (at a variety of scales) using digital and analog media skills.
- synthesize the application of design theory (-ies) to a process of exploration of a project.
- formulate individual methods (including research, analysis, theoretical positions, and experimentation) in the quest for design form.
- demonstrate an understanding of the social, cultural, theoretical, performance and environmental conditions that go into the evolution of landscape form.
- demonstrate the value of using evaluative techniques in design criticism
- initiate a series of intellectual and practical design skills, tools and techniques to be further developed over time.

These objectives provide a framework for our activities and a basis for evaluating performance.

in | VISIBLE

FORMAT

A quarter-long project will structure student learning throughout the quarter. The site for this work will be the Cal Poly campus. The updated campus master plan and discussions with campus planners will guide project locations and inform student decision making. Sites will be selected to help students assess existing conditions, make proposals for design improvements, and assess changes in performance values. Students are encouraged to make interdisciplinary and professional connections during the quarter. The course will connect with faculty and students in Civil Engineering, Architecture, Planning, Horticulture and Biology. Professional contacts include lectures, workshops, trainings and reviews with the Landscape Architecture Foundation (<https://lafoundation.org/>) and the Central Coast Low Impact Development Initiative (<http://www.centralcoastlidi.org/>), allied professionals and the department's advisory council.

Course activities will be structured around three areas with each area having specific learning outcomes, information sessions and assignments. The technical module and seminar will inform the studio project. The three areas are:

Technical Module – A series of three projects will expand understanding of landscape performance including the definition and scope of the term, communicating opportunities and calculating existing conditions and proposed improvements.

Design Project – A quarter-long exercise will guide learning and expand research, analysis, design and communication skills. The focus will be a self-selected site located on the Cal Poly campus using a design competition. We will also conduct fieldtrips, workshops and reviews during studio hours. Work outside of class hours is to be expected and might include: team meetings, presentation attendance, completing assignments, studio work and consultation with team partners, consultants and professionals.

Seminar – A reading, response and discussion seminar will develop a deeper understanding of design theory and the application of theory to the design process, design projects and the profession. Every student will read and respond to a set of texts. Design Project work should respond accordingly to readings and inform decision-making.

STUDIO RULES

- Report to studio on time and expect to stay the whole studio period. There will be no working from home during studio times.
- Class meets M W F from 8:10 to 12:00pm in studio 252.
- Take advantage of work periods to discuss your work with the instructor, fellow students and other faculty.
- Three unexcused absences will result in the drop of one whole letter grade. Notify the instructor PRIOR to the start of class if it is impossible for you to attend class.
- All students must have **2 desk crits per week – MINIMUM**. Desk Crits will not be given for ideas, notions or thoughts floating in the ether or still being developed inside of your head. Have physical work at your desk for discussion everyday.
- **NO TRACE, NO MARKERS FOR PRESENTATIONS or REVIEWS. PERIOD.** We will be building on your representation repertoire through model-making and digital media techniques. You are expected to grow and extend your representation skills.
- **WORK HARD, PLAY HARD!! NO FOOLIN'.**

in | VISIBLE

ASSIGNMENTS

The course is defined by the following project segments. Refer to Project Assignment Handouts (provided separately) for specific requirements and the attached SCHEDULE for the required due dates. Each segment is weighted as follows:

Technical Module (20% final grade)	Studio Project (60% final grade)	Reading Seminar (20% final grade)
Project 1: Introduction to Landscape Performance: Communication + Precedent Project 2: Establishing Baseline / Existing Conditions Project 3: Landscape Performance Benefits Calculation	Project 1: Hydrological Transect – An Introduction to Campus Project 2: Design Project Project 3: Final Packaging / Presentation	Theory Seminar: Ecology, Sustainability, Design and Performance.

The technical module and reading seminar will be graded on a 100 point scale. Comments and a numerical grade will be provided for all work in these areas. All design project work will be evaluated based on three components of EQUAL value:

PROCESS: The act and actions of design – class participation, desk crits (2 per week), project research and investigations and project evolution. Evidence of design process will require time in class working as a group, as an individual at your desk and in consultation with the instructor. Your task is to continually improve upon and develop your ideas.

CONTENT: The thingness of design – depth, quality and sophistication of ideas, development of conceptual ideas and ultimate transformation into landscape form with attention to detail.

PRODUCT: The representation of design – landscape architects make representations before making landscapes. Effective visual communication from hand drawings, sketches, digital montage, models and final drawings must be completed with an eye for aesthetics, legibility and detail. Exploration and experimentation are considered – it’s better to try and fail, than not.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Your accomplishments will be measured by the instructors and also by peer review. Refer to the ASSIGNMENTS section for the grade percentages for each.

Assignments must be submitted on time. Refer to the attached COURSE SCHEDULE for required due dates and presentation reviews. A penalty of 10% of the total available grade will be assessed for lateness not covered by approved personal or family emergencies. This includes weekend and holiday days. No submissions will be accepted and no credit given after four late days.

LA 402 is a graded course. "I" grades will be issued only upon prior discussion with the instructor and receipt of appropriate documentation.

Letter grades will be assigned on the following basis:

93-100%	A	80-82.9%	B-	67-69.9%	D+
90-92.9%	A-	77-79.9%	C+	63-66.9%	D
87-89.9%	B+	73-76.9%	C	60-62.9%	D-
83-86.9%	B	70-72.9%	C-	Below 60%	F

GRADE LEVELS

Each assignment will be graded based on the following criteria:

- A:** Work which shows a superior understanding and execution of learning objectives and outcomes, design quality, and / or technical ability and which is creative, logically thought out, and well presented. Design intent and resolution are clear and creative, and an excellent overall response to a decision-making process has been undertaken.
- B:** Work which shows a good understanding of the learning objectives and outcomes, design, and / or technical issues. Designs are well presented. Some changes might be warranted to improve the design.
- C:** Work which shows a minimum and satisfactory understanding and execution of the learning objectives, required outcomes and design presentation needs.
- D:** Work which shows poor attainment and an inconsistent and incomplete understanding and execution of the course objectives, learning outcomes and effective presentation techniques. Extensive revisions are necessary.
- F:** Insufficient work and / or a project which shows a failure to comprehend or sufficiently grasp and demonstrate completion and attainment of course objectives, learning outcomes and required presentation techniques.

INTERESTS, ASPIRATIONS AND HOPES

During this quarter, I hope you will:

- **Explore place, theory, design activism, design process, strategic thinking and representation as applied to Landscape Architecture**
- **Analyze, Critic, Draw, Research, Compose, Model, Form, Repeat.**
- **Learn new design, technical and communication skills**
- **Refine your existing skills in order to work efficiently and effectively through the design investigation.**
- **Emphasize process OVER product in the studio.**
- **Challenge the campus landscape and community and give them something to ponder**
- **Do your very best work.**

SCHEDULE (activities and deadlines subject to change).

	M	W	F
week 0			9/23 INTRODUCTIONS Syllabus + Assign Design Project 1
week 1	9/26	9/28 Design Project 1 Due (Webinar) Assign Tech Project 1	9/30 SEMINAR 1
week 2	10/3 Information Session	10/5 Tech Project 1 Due Assign Tech Project 2	10/7 SEMINAR 2 (LADAC VISIT)
week 3	10/10 Information Session	10/12 Tech Project 2 Due Assign Design Project 2	10/14 SEMINAR 3
week 4	10/17 Information Session	10/19 Information Session	10/21 SEMINAR 4
week 5	10/24 LOCAL FIELD TRIP TBD	10/26 LOCAL FIELD TRIP TBD	10/28 SEMINAR 5
week 6	10/31 Design Project 2 MID REVIEW	11/2 Information Session	11/4 SEMINAR 6
week 7	11/7	11/9	11/11 VETERAN'S DAY
week 8	11/14 SEMINAR 7 (wrap up)	11/16	11/18 Design Project 2 Review Assign Tech /Design Project 3
week 9	11/21 THANKSGIVING BREAK	11/23 THANKSGIVING BREAK	11/25 THANKSGIVING BREAK
week 10	11/28	11/30	12/2
week 11	12/5	12/7	12/9 FINAL REVIEW
finals week	12/12	12/14	12/16 Competition Entries Due