

LAA 6231: Theories of Landscape Architecture

Department of Landscape Architecture
University of Florida
Fall 2025

SYLLABUS

I. General Information

CLASS MEETINGS: 100% In-Person, Tuesday Period 7-9 (1:55-4:55 PM)

CLASS LOCATION: RNK 225

CREDITS: 3 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: Nicholas Serrano, Ph.D.

OFFICE: 430 Antevy Hall

HOURS: Wednesdays 8:00 - 10:00 AM

nicholas.serrano@ufl.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Landscape is a uniquely human construct and complex medium of cultural values that underpins design and everyday life in the built environment. It is an interdisciplinary medium that spans the arts, humanities, architecture, and science. Landscape practices have disrupted disciplinary boundaries between art, landscape, architecture, and environmental sciences and forced each to expand and redefine its own terms, field of operations, and image. This course explores the hermeneutics of landscape as medium, vocabulary, and practice particular to the processes of urbanization in the modern era.

The purpose of this course is to develop an understanding of the theoretical framework of the discipline and practice of landscape architecture through an exploration of key philosophies and concepts that have informed or guided the field. This allows students to develop and articulate their own theoretical framework to guide their planning and design decisions. This course addresses primarily aesthetic and cultural principles and values; however, related ecological and social aspects will also be addressed. LAA 3230 is an organized forum for discussion and exploration of current theoretical issues, thus providing a philosophical and critical basis for future and concurrent design studios as well as providing a broader and deeper exploration of theoretical models introduced in previous lecture and design courses. This is a discussion-based class based on assigned readings.

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

LAA 2710: History of Landscape Architecture.

REQUIRED READINGS AND WORKS

All required readings are either available electronically through the University of Florida Libraries or will be provided on CANVAS.

II. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The **course learning objectives** (CLOs) below align with the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) standards and UF's MLA Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are used to guide the assessment of student learning throughout their engagement in the program.

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved an appropriate developmental level of the following CLOs numbered in the chart below (each with an individual name):

CONTENT
SLO 1 – Integrate concepts from the discipline's general body of knowledge in design decision-making.
1 – Theoretical Frameworks: Demonstrate an understanding of the various critical approaches and theoretical frameworks relevant to landscape architecture.
2 – Practice Opportunities & Innovations: Understand current and emerging practice opportunities that use LA skills and knowledge in a variety of private, public, academic, and non-governmental settings.
SLO 2 – Apply core professional landscape architecture skills in design decision-making.
1- Criticism: Develop a personal approach to landscape architecture criticism that integrates insights from various theoretical positions to address the multidimensional aspects of design.
2 - Collaboration: Demonstrate effective leadership, cooperation, and communication skills to achieve shared goals in team-based projects.

CRITICAL THINKING
SLO 4 – Combine and analyze information from multiple sources to support design decision-making.
1 - Design Values: Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of landscape architecture projects in reaching diverse goals such as spatial organization, user experience, ecological sustainability, social equity, resilience, and cultural significance.

COMMUNICATION
SLO 5 – Produce professional visual, oral, and written communications.
1 - Written Communication: Clearly and persuasively express ideas in writing, adapting style and tone to suit proposals, research, and creative contexts.
2 - Oral Communication: Communicate ideas clearly and persuasively, adapting delivery and style based on context and audience.

III. Graded Work

GRADING POLICIES

Grading policies in the course are consistent with [University grades and grading policies](#). Deadlines for assignments are listed in the Annotated Weekly Schedule and on Canvas. Students should submit work on the dates indicated except where university policy provides an exemption.

DESCRIPTION OF GRADED WORK

Discussion Participation (20% of total grade)

Students are expected to regularly complete assigned readings before class and actively contribute to class discussions. The instructor will occasionally provide questions/prompts for the class to consider ahead of time, but students should always arrive to class with questions or discussion points of their own. Participation will be graded at the mid-point and end of the semester. Periodic in-class activities, discussion posts on Canvas before class will also count as part of this grade.

Precedent/Reading Presentations (20% of total grade)

Students will individually complete 2 precedent study presentations during the semester. Guidelines and rubrics will be provided on Canvas.

Discussion Leads (20% of total grade)

Each student will lead our discussion section once over the course of the semester. Guidelines and rubrics will be provided on Canvas.

Readings/Lecture Responses (40% of total grade)

Students will be required to submit written responses to assigned readings and lectures on 3 occasions throughout the semester. These response papers should be roughly 1000 words in length and actively engage with the readings and our conversations in class. Guidelines and rubrics will be provided on Canvas.

All Rubrics for assignments, projects, and engagement are found on CANVAS

The graded work assesses the course learning objectives as follows:

Assignments	LAA 6231 - Course Learning Objectives (CLOs)						
	SLO 1		SLO 2		SLO 4	SLO 5	
	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
Discussion Participation	X	X					
Reading/Lecture Responses			X		X	X	
Precedent Presentation		X	X		X		X
Final Project				X		X	X

GRADING RUBRICS

Participation Rubric

	Excellent (5)	Above Average (4)	Average (3)	Below Average (2)	Insufficient (1)
Attendance	No classes missed	Misses 1 class missed	2 classes missed	3 classes missed	4+ classes missed
Discussion participation	Contributes to discussion at least once every week both an original thought and a reply to a classmates' thought	Contributes to class at least once every week with either an original thought or reply to a classmates' thought	Contributes to class on average every other week with an original thought and reply to a classmates' thought	Contributes to class on average every other week with either an original thought or reply to a classmates' thought	Contributes to class on average less than every other week with an original thought or reply to a classmates' thought
In-class Exercises	Completes all in-class exercises and activities with no faults	Completes all in-class exercises and activities with minor faults	Misses 1-2 in-class exercises and activities with no faults	Misses 1-2 in-class exercises and activities with minor faults	Misses 3+ in-class exercises or activities

GRADING SCALE

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

A	93 – 100%		C	73 – 77%
A-	90 – 92%		C-	70 – 72%
B+	88 – 89%		D+	68 – 69%
B	83 – 87%		D	63 – 67%
B-	80 – 82%		D-	60 – 62%
C+	78 – 79%		E	<60

The Department of Landscape Architecture may retain and use all student work. Digital copies of student work for this course must be turned in at the completion of each assignment. Please follow the instructor's directions on how they will be submitted (e.g., Canvas, CD, PDF, word file, etc.). If an assignment is required to be scanned, it must be scanned; photographs of assignments are not acceptable. If a multipage PDF is requested, do NOT submit each page as a separate PDF. It must be submitted as one file.

IV. Tentative Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Aug. 26 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Narrative • Required Readings: John Wylie, "Introduction." In <i>Landscape</i>, pgs.1-11. NYC: Routledge, 2007; Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton, "Beginning", in <i>Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories</i>, pgs. 3-31 (John Wiley & Sons, 1998); Meinig, D.W. "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene." In J.B. Jackson and D. W. Meinig, eds. <i>The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 1-9. • Lecture: What is Landscape? • Assignment: Discussion post 1 due August 27th. • Discussion: Landscape Narratives, Gasworks Park
Sept. 2 nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Nature • Required Reading: William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," <i>Environmental History</i>, 1:1 (January 1996), 7-55. • Lecture: Wilderness as a Construct • Discussion: Constructs of Wilderness
Sept. 9 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscapes of Modernity • Required Readings: Adam Gopnik, "Olmsted's Trip: How did a news reporter come to create Central Park?" <i>The New Yorker</i> (March 31, 1997): 96-103; Grumbach, Antoine. "The Promenades of Paris," <i>Oppositions</i> (Spring, 1977), pp. 49-67; Schenker, Heath Massey. "Parks and Politics During the Second Empire in Paris." <i>Landscape Journal</i> 14.2 (Fall 1995), pp. 201-219; David Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York." <i>Social History</i> 17, no.2 (1992): 203-227; Dorceta E. Taylor, "Central Park as a Model for Social Control: Urban Parks, Social Class and Leisure Behavior in Nineteenth-Century America" <i>Journal of Leisure Research</i> 31, no.4 (1999): 420-477. • Lecture: Landscape Parks • Discussion: Bryant Park, Millenium Park, National Mall, Emerald Necklace
Sept. 16 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Region • Required Readings: TBD • Lecture: Regional Planning • Discussion: Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan, Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture, Beaufort County Greenprint Plan, Pollocksville Community Floodprint, Lumberton Community Floodprint, Palestine Landscape Agreement,

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Sept. 23 rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Community • Required Readings: Jason Brody, "The Neighborhood Unit Concept and the Shaping of Land Planning in the United States, 1912-1968." <i>Journal of Urban Design</i> 18, no3 (2013): 340-62; Jane Jacobs, "Downtown is for People," <i>Fortune</i> 57/4 (April 1958), pp. 133-139; Adam Rome, "William Whyte, Open Space, and Environmental Activism." <i>Geographical Review</i> 88 no.2 (1998) • Lecture: The Social Life of Small Urban Places • Discussion: Fitzgerald Revitalization Project
Sept. 30 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Art • Required Readings: John Beardsley, "Earthworks: The Landscape after Modernism." In <i>Denatured Visions: Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century</i>, ed by Stuart Wrede and Willima Howard Adams MoMA 1991. Pgs. 110-117; Mary Miss, "On the Redefinition of Public Sculpture." <i>Perspecta</i> 21 (1984): 52-69; Julia Czerniak, "Challenging the Pictorial: Recent Landscape Practice" <i>Assemblage</i> No. 34 (Dec 1997), 110-120; • Discussion: Crissy Field, Tanner Fountain, South Cove, HUD Plaza, Mary Miss, Spiral Jetty, Greenwood Pond, Surrounded Islands or The Gates, Lightning Field
Oct. 7 th /9 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Class: Field Trip Week
Oct. 14 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Ecology • Required Readings: Ervin Zube, "The Advance of Ecology." <i>Landscape Architecture Magazine</i> 76, no. 2 (March/April 1986): 58-67; Holling, C.S. and M.A. Goldberg, "Ecology and Planning." <i>Journal of the American Institute of Planners</i> 37, no.4 (1971): 221-230; • Lecture: Ecological Planning • Discussion: Xochimilco Ecological Park, Andropogon Associates, Berkshire Boardwalk, Crosby Arboretum, Crosswinds Marsh, The Woodlands, George Perkins Marsh
Oct. 21 st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Urbanism • Required Readings: James Corner, "Terra Flexus." In <i>Landscape Urbanism Reader</i>, ed Charles Waldheim. NYC: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. pp.22-33; Elizabeth Mossop, "Landscapes of Infrastructure." In <i>Landscape Urbanism Reader</i>, ed Charles Waldheim. NYC: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. • Lecture: Urbanism • Discussion: Atlanta Beltline, Freshkills Park, Duisburg Nord, Brooklyn Bridge Park, The Highline, Lafitte Greenway, Providence Steel Yard, ChonGae Canal Source Point Park,

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Oct. 28 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Race • Required Readings: George Lipsitz, "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape." <i>Landscape Journal</i> 26, no.1 (2007): 10-23 • Lecture: Race and Space • Discussion: UVA Monument to the Enslaved, African Ancestors Memorial Garden, Landslide 2021, Saint Paul Indian Mounds, Iqaluit Municipal Cemetery,
Nov. 4 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape Justice • Required Readings: Elizabeth Blum, "Environmental Justice." In <i>New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture</i> Volume 8 <i>Environment</i>, 58-62. Eds. Charles Regan Wilson and Martin Melosi. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007; Lulu Ramadan, Ash Ngu and Maya Miller, "The Smoke comes Every Year; the Sugar Companies say the Air is Safe." <i>Pro Publica</i>, 8-July-2021 (https://projects.propublica.org/black-snow/); Monique Michelle Verdin, "Cancer Alley: Istrouma to the Gulf of Mexico." <i>Southern Cultures</i> 26, no.2 Art & Vision (2020); Laura Pulido (2000) Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California, <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i>, 90:1, 12-40; Christopher G. Boone, Geoffrey L. Buckley, J. Morgan Grove & Chona Sister. "Parks and People: An Environmental Justice Inquiry in Baltimore, Maryland." <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 99, no.4 (2009): 767-787. • Lecture: Love Canal and Warren County • Discussion: Cancer Alley, Dakota Access Pipeline, Escambia Woods
Nov. 11 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Class: Veteran's Day Holiday
Nov. 18 th /20 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape as Memory • Note: No class on November 11th • Required Readings: Clint Smith, "Monuments to the Unthinkable." <i>The Atlantic</i> 330, no.5 (December 2022): 22-41; Upton, Dell "Confederate Monuments and Civic Values in the Wake of Charlottesville" in <i>SAH Blog</i> (13 September 2017), http://www.sah.org/publications-and-research/sah-blog/sah-blog/2017/09/13/confederate-monuments-and-civic-values-in-the-wake-of-charlottesville ; • Further Readings: Paul A. Shackel, "Introduction: The Making of the American Landscape." In <i>Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape</i>, 1-16. Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2001 • Lecture: Place and Public Memory • Discussion: Precedent presentation for Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, FDR Memorial, Oklahoma City Memorial, Sandy Hook Memorial, Naval Cemetery Landscape, 9/11 Memorial, Gebran Tueni Memorial, Pompeii Archeological Park, Princess of Wales Memorial
Nov. 25 th /27 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Dec. 2 nd	No Class: Studio Final Review Week
	December 11th, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

VI. Required Policies

Please use this link (<https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolices>) to UF's academic policies and campus resources, including information on:

- Class Attendance
- Make-up Exams
- Assignments
- Accommodations/Disability Resources Center
- Grading Policies
- Course Evaluations
- Guidance on how to Provide Constructive Feedback
- UF's Honesty Policy
- In-Class Recording

As well as **academic resources**, including:

- E-learning technical support
- Career Connections Center
- Library Support
- Academic Resources: ex. General study skills and tutoring.
- Writing Studio: ex. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds
- Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions)
- UF Student Success Initiative: for resources that support your success as a UF student, and

Campus Health and Wellness Resources:

- UF Whole Gator Resources: for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.

VI. Resources

Journals

Landscape Architecture Journals

- Landscape Journal
- Journal of Landscape Architecture
- Landscape Research
- Landscape and Urban Planning
- Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Topos

Geography Journals

- Progress in Human Geography
- Annals of American Association of Geographers
- Cultural Geographies
- Antipode
- Area
- Geoforum
- Geohumanities
- Environment and Planning D

Art Journals

- Art in America
- Art Bulletin
- Art Journal
- Artforum
- Grey Room
- October

Planning Journals

- Journal of the American Planning Association
- Planning Perspectives
- Journal of Planning Literature
- Journal of Planning Education and Research
- Journal of Planning History
- Journal of Urban History

Architecture Journals

- Journal of Architectural Education (JAE)
- Journal of Architectural and Planning Research
- Technology | Architecture + Design
- Harvard Design Magazine
- Journal of Architectural Historians
- Buildings & Landscapes
- Journal of Urban Design
- Places Journal

Other Important Journals

- Nature
- Science
- BioScience
- New England Journal of Medicine
- Journal of the American Medical Association

Landscape Architecture Institutions

The Big Three

American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA)
Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF)
The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF)

Other Important LA Institutions in USA

Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Boards (CLARB)
Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB)
Black Landscape Architecture Network
National Association of Minority Landscape Architects (NAMLA)
WxLA (Women in Landscape Architecture)

International Landscape Architecture Institutions

International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA)
Landscape Institute (LI)
Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA)
Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA)
European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS)

Important Allied Organizations

American Planning Association (APA)
American Institute of Architects (AIA)
International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)
National Complete Streets Coalition
US Green Building Council (USGB)
National Recreation and Parks Association
Urban Land Institute (ULI)
National Association of Landscape Professionals

Landscape Architecture References

General Landscape Architecture Reference Books

Oxford Companion to the Garden
250 Things and Landscape Architect Should Know (Ivers, 2021)
Site Planning and Design Handbook, 2nd Edition (Russ, 2023)
Site Analysis, 3rd Edition (LaGro, 2013)
Site Planning (Lynch and Hack, 1984)

Landscape Technology and Construction References

Time-saver Standards for Landscape Architecture, 2nd Edition (Harris and Dines, 1997)
Landscape Architectural Graphic Standards (Hopper, 2006)
Landscape Architectural Graphic Standards, Student Edition (Hopper, 2007)
Constructing Landscape: Materials, Techniques, Structural Components (Zimmermann, 2015)
Landscape Architecture Documentation Standards (Design Workshop, 2015)
Sustainable Stormwater Management (Liptan and Santen, 2017)
The Sustainable Sites Handbook (Calkins, 2012)
Materials for Sustainable Sites (Calkins, 2008)
Sustainable Landscape Construction, 3rd Edition (Sorvig and Thompson, 2018)
Site Engineering for Landscape Architects (Strom et.al., 2013)
Landscape Grading: A Study Guide for the LARE, 2nd Edition (Aymer, 2020)
Landscape Performance Series Case Study Briefs (<https://www.landscapeperformance.org/case-study-briefs?op>)

Landscape History References

Keywords in American Landscape Design (O'Malley, et.al., 2010)
Pioneers of American Landscape Design (Birnbaum et.al., 2000)
Library of American Landscape History
Dumbarton Oaks Research Center and Library
[Dictionary of Human Geography](#)

Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin, *A Dictionary of Human Geography*. NYC: Oxford, 2013
(https://ufl-flvc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01FALSC_UFL/175ga98/alma990367150490306597)
Raymond Williams, Keywords

Plant Resources

Missouri Botanical Garden
The Morton Arboretum

Important General Archives

Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov>)
Historic American Landscape Survey (<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>)
Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals
ASLA Landscape Architecture Archives Collection (<https://www.asla.org/ContentDetail.aspx?id=22682>)

Notable Landscape Architecture Archives

NC State University Libraries Special Collections
Cornell University Library
UC Berkeley Environmental Design Library
Harvard University Frances Loeb Library
Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Gardens