ARCH 4102 - TOPICAL STUDIO
HOUSING INQUIRY

Spring 2016 Syllabus
University of North Carolina at Charlotte, School of Architecture
Instructor: Thomas Forget, Associate Professor
5 Credit Hours: MWF 2:00 – 5:30 pm; Prerequisites: ARCH 4101

PREMISE
Housing Inquiry confronts the nature of contemporary urban housing, with a specific emphasis on the changing lifestyles of millennials and subsequent generations. As cultural norms and socioeconomic conditions evolve in a globalized society, housing design must respond. The studio examines existing typologies and practices with a critical eye, foregrounding charrette-based design methods, precedent research, and field visits to built projects. A primary objective is to explore interactions between the various scales at which housing operates: city, site, living unit, details, building technologies, etc. Emphasis is placed on questions not answers—provocation over caution.

The studio is a collaborative funded research endeavor with Northwood Ravin, a Charlotte-based real estate developer, offering undergraduate students a rare opportunity to engage in advanced design research. The academic–professional exchange is designed to yield a mixture of practical and theoretical lessons. Students are exposed to practical and economic aspects of contemporary housing through regular and direct exchanges with the firm, steering their design experiments in ways that would be inconceivable in a purely academic setting. Meanwhile, Northwood Ravin, as it seeks to redirect its trajectory as a leading housing provider in the region and nation, gains an opportunity to delve into studio-based research untethered to, albeit informed by, real-world concerns.

METHOD
Housing Inquiry strives to produce a peer-reviewed publication co-authored by all students and the instructor, who operates, in a sense, as the lead designer on the team. It adheres to a different model of student–instructor collaboration and engages a complex range of real-world influences. It thereby reflects, in a critical manner, the ongoing evolution of both professional practice and academic research, interrogating the nature design authorship and design agency in the contemporary era.

The studio is organized through a series of prompts rooted in specific questions regarding housing: technology integration, circulation, entrance/threshold, unit planning, public/open space, co-habitation, economic and cultural diversity, construction type, materials and detailing, parking, site planning/ unit aggregation, density, urban context, etc. The semester begins with a phase of discovery and experimentation, as site visits and quick charrettes expose students to a complex range of concerns, each one isolated, as much as it can be, for the sake of research inquiry. As the semester progresses, experiments evolve and cross-pollinate, becoming more complex and attuned to how different prompts may be synthesized for both practical and theoretical ends. The final project is a comprehensive housing design on a compelling site that argues for a new direction in contemporary living, and the semester ends with an exhibition and symposium presenting the findings of the studio to a panel of distinguished guests.

Students are encouraged to conduct experimental design methods, especially through GIS mapping, BIM, and time-based modes of representation enabled by Grasshopper. Regardless of media, all students are tasked with constructing rich analytical and design graphics that exhibit a high level of craft. Students also learn how to manage different types of craft, working in ways that foster spontaneity, agility, and critical thinking.

TRAVEL & FUNDING
Over spring break, the studio travels Los Angeles. Student travel costs, except for airfare, are completely funded by Northwood Ravin, which also funds printing and modeling expenses throughout the semester. The trip to LA includes tours of historical and contemporary projects (including but not limited to housing), office visits at leading firms, and joint reviews with students and professors in the LA area also engaged in questions of housing.
Oderberger Straße 5, BAR

Ypenberg, MVRDV

Stahl House visit, part of field trip in LA
Arch 4102-002 Topical Studio Description
Preservation as Provocation/ ACSA Design Competition

Spring 2016
Professor Deborah E. Ryan
deryan@uncc.edu MWF 2:00 – 5:30pm at Storrs

The truth is that in this house with its four walls of glass I feel like a prowling animal, always on the alert... I can rarely stretch out and relax. (Edith Farnsworth speaking about her home in House Beautiful, May 1953)

PREMISE
Most historic house museums (HHMs) begin their life as museums through a passionate urge to preserve, a perspective that usually grows out of a state of high anxiety. Family, friends, and neighbors who hold personal attachments to an often run-down house organize alongside architectural enthusiasts and preservationists to protect it because they desperately fear for the home’s loss. But once the house is saved, museum stewards usually re-present the house not as a place for living, but rather as a container for collections, or worse, a pristine work of art in and of itself. These HHMs move from being wooly, sloppy and impressionistic, to being places that are systematic, objective, and professional. In the process, the poetry of HHMs is often lost in the translation.

CONTENT
Students will compete in the ACSA Farnsworth House: Preservation as Provocation Design Competition.

Considered by some as one of the most important buildings of the twentieth century, the Farnsworth House, is now an HHM and open to visitors. Guests are greeted to the property in what was a quickly constructed visitor center that has now become inadequate because it "does not reflect the character and quality that Farnsworth represents."

The primary project of the semester will be for the design of a new visitor space that better relates to the iconic structure, "while at the same time rests comfortably in the present and provides insight to the physical and social context of the Farnsworth House and site. The goal of this competition is to explore how the collaboration between historic buildings and new design can produce uniquely accretive-layered landscapes.”
(Excerpts from the competition description) See http://www.acsa-arch.org/programs-events/competitions/2015-2016-preservation-as-provocation for more information.

METHOD
Students will complete class readings, analyze the site, and research precedents in visitor centers and guest experiences. They will also become familiar with the history of sculptural earthworks and the possibility of their use as a method for flood control, a natural hazard that directly affects the Farnsworth House. These studies will be ongoing throughout the course of the semester as students engage in a reiterate design process, exploring alternative solutions that are based in landscape and architectural solutions from the theoretical perspective introduced in the Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums.

EVALUATION & GRADING
Anarchist and Precedent Studies 35%; Final Project Development 65%.

CLASS READINGS (will be excerpted from the following)
- Beardsley, John. Earthworks And Beyond: Contemporary Art In the Landscape, 2006.
**i-arch**

**museum of interactive technology**

School of Architecture, UNC Charlotte  
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“The objects which surround my body reflect its possible action upon them.” – 

[Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 1892]

**Course Description / Objectives / Content**

This studio considers the various ways in which buildings can be designed and theorized as *interactive* environments. The studio project will look at ways of making buildings more responsive, adaptable, dynamic and engaging - through the use of both 'traditional' and contemporary digital technologies. 

With input from the College of Computing and Informatics, the project will begin by considering a series of case-studies of the work of artists, architects and designers, in order to develop a conceptual framework for the design of a building exploring the future relationships between architecture and interaction.

**Topical Outline**

1.0 **INTRODUCTION** (*i-arch: interactive architecture*): study of interactive environments, historical themes, and relationships between architecture, technology and the body.

2.0 **DEVICE** (*exploration through fabrication*): development of the design of a device or instrument which enhances the link between a site condition and the manner in which it is presented to and received by the human body.

3.0 **EXHIBIT** (*spatial exhibition*): development of the device to inform the spatial interactions, and enhance the experience / operation of the device in connection to a larger scale.

4.0 **SPACE** (*architectural integration*): development of a tectonic language for a wider architecture (i.e., museum of interactive technology) based on initial interests.

- Students are highly advised to schedule a meeting with the instructor of the course prior to registration.