ARCH 6101 - STUDIO
FALL 2017 SYLLABUS

Thomas Forget, Associate Professor
University of North Carolina at Charlotte, School of Architecture
6 Credit Hours: Mon./Wed./Fri. 2:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Office hours by appointment: tforget@uncc.edu - 704.687.0116

“... (the architect) is one who desires his work to be judged not by deceptive appearances but according to certain calculated standards.”
Leon Batista Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books

PREMISE
Since the turn of the century, new technologies and social conditions have redirected the trajectory of architectural practice—the so-called “post-critical” turn. Design education, in response, must adapt, and foundational design pedagogies have been especially slow to do so. ARCH 6101 confronts the post-critical moment head-on. Its dual mission is 1) to introduce fundamental concerns and questions that have guided the education of architects for centuries, and 2) to contextualize those traditions within the contemporary moment. Students today are tasked with balancing the timeless and the fleeting, and this studio instills habits, skills, and methods to that end. The methodology of the studio is as important as its content. Success in architecture requires both a design vision and a work ethic. Ideas (great and meek) are meaningless without the willingness and ability to interrogate them. At the same time, to seek answers is to miss the point. As the design disciplines integrate data analytics almost seamlessly into their methods, there is a growing sense that the built environment is a problem that may be solved. This studio challenges that assumption. While data may provide design professionals with valuable insight into technological and social conditions and challenges, design is a catalytic aesthetic agent, not merely a responsive functional one. It may follow the facts, but it may also steer trajectories that escape quantifiable analysis. This studio revels in the conundrum of design’s dual role as art and science.

OBJECTIVES
The primary objective of the course is instill a foundational knowledge of the built environment and the design methodologies that create it. To that end, the course seeks:

- to introduce traditions of “form, space, and order”
- to problematize the significance of “form, space, and order” to the contemporary moment
- to demystify the design process and to lay bare its non-linear nature
- to develop habits and methods that allow students to navigate the design process with critical agility
- to reveal representational methods and strategies as ideological discourses that regulate design
- to interrogate the reciprocity between design and representation
- to hone both traditional and emerging modes of representation
- to dispel fallacies regarding the distinction between analog and digital tools
- to problematize distinctions between diagramming and other modes of representation
- to problematize objective notions of craft and to reveal multiple types of craft
- to explore the potential of time-based modes of representation
- to promote history, theory, and criticism as contingencies of contemporary practice
- to confront and counteract the doctrine of the “post-critical” turn in architecture
- to consider to extent to which the objective of design is optimization and instrumentality
- to confront the difference between concepts and ideas in architecture

METHOD
The course is composed of three projects, each of which consists of multiple phases. Briefs are issued for each phase of each project, outlining objectives, methods, and important dates. Each phase of each project is reviewed in a group setting, typically with outside critics participating in the discussion. In between reviews, a typical class day consists of informal group discussions (large and small) and design charrettes that train students to work quickly and with agility.

Project I is a low-stakes design project, meaning that methods and habits outweigh design content—the intention is to jump into the fray without hesitation or inhibition. Project II is an analysis project rooted in the field trip to Chicago. It emphasizes methods amenable to travel and non-instrumental interrogation. Project III, the final project, includes both design and analysis. The program of the final project will be a house for a non-traditional family on a challenging site.