
Fall 2019 – Michael T. Swisher

ARCH 4050, 6050-006 – Diagramming the Big Idea: Visual Composition

Credit Hours: 3

Tuesday 2:130 –5:15, TBA

Pre-requisite: 3rd year standing, or 2nd year Graduate standing

Catalog description:

The class investigates the means and effects of graphic and three-dimensional procedures in a collaborative seminar setting.

Premise:

Design in architecture is both visual and procedural. It is also self-reflexive. Materials and means used in investigation and presentation must embrace inherent qualities and clarity before addressing other concerns.

Objectives:

The objective of this course is to practice scrutiny of visual form. It focuses on the intersection of particular practices – media – and the possibility of communication – context. It attempts to address the imperative to 'Show that you mean it.' It will broaden students' awareness of the effect of materials and methods on visual communication.

Students will develop the ability to recognize and develop the inherent impact of formal procedures before they attempt to influence outcome. This includes keen observation of visual artifacts and the inquiry possible through intense subtle iteration.

Content:

The content of the course will focus on the following goals:

- Identifying visual artifacts as crucibles for ideas;
- Identifying pathways and procedures for meaningful iteration;
- Exploring visual means that lead to analysis, abstraction, transformation and realization;
- Making connections among visual conventions as a prompt toward intention and meaning;
- Researching visual precedent;
- Crafting and making relevant notes - visual and verbal – to aid in understanding the problematic and the practical investigation;
- Exploring methods of presentation – formal and casual, public and private – that clarify your purpose.

Method:

Course work begins with crafting and interrogating images, discussing results and identifying possible alternatives. Extensive self-governed exploration, disciplined creative thinking and broad peer interaction should supplement class time.

Students will engage a critical process that both engages non-linear thinking, toward focused categorical responses. Intentional acts and accidental discoveries will evolve into particular iterative processes.

The course will weave instructor presentations, in-class discussion and critiques will include evaluations with other students in the class. The class meets formally once a week.

Most classes will end with a questions and/or tasks aimed at fostering an adequate work flow. These will begin with a presentation by each student of their evolving efforts. A general discussion and summary will follow. This will be the responsibility of the instructor.

Students will collect all material into a well maintained journal and portfolio. As part of this activity, notes, thoughts, sketches and formal presentations will be present in your journal.

Please note that this is a student-centric course. Methods may shift over the semester to reflect student-elected tactics.
