

# SA+P | School of Architecture and Planning

Spring 2018 | 4.154 | Architecture Design Option Studio | **THRESHOLD: West meets East**

Credits: 0-10-11 G | Prerequisite: 4.153 | **Schedule: TH/F\* 1-6pm | 7-403**

Instructor: Yolande Daniels <jyd@mit.edu>; TA: Pavlo Kryvozub <kryvozub@mit.edu>



## STUDIO DESCRIPTION

The studio will explore "thresholds" and a range of threshold conditions found in architecture and daily life. Students will develop a series of interrelated architectural design projects for spaces to tease out the thresholds of daily life to design for the rituals—both sacred and profane--that demarcate change through the stages of a life. The programs will range in intimacy and publicness.

A threshold is on the verge of, the opening to, the locus of, and, point of departure, it is also multi-scalar, spatial and manifested materially. The Threshold is a “point of entry” – a line and a “tread.” It is a literal material element that demarcates the approach to and crossing of a boundary.

The Threshold is the pause that allows for recognition of the magnitude or intensity of a phenomenon or condition, and, the limit beyond which something changes unalterably—it is the space before crisis is intelligible and the moment of crisis that ushers in change. There are ritual thresholds of experiences such as: Birth, Aging, Marriage, Divorce, Passing away.

The studio approaches the threshold as an open ended spatial moment of varying depths, material relations. Moving from instances of the threshold without a building, we will shift to explore buildings as threshold conditions. The Threshold is a space of transition that demarcates a shift in the built environment and psyche—a gate, street, porch, vestibule, lobby, a wall or roof, etc.

The studio will ask “What is a threshold and of what cultural significance is a threshold.” As potent architectural tropes and physical demarcations of boundaries, thresholds reveal cultural approaches to space and construction. The studio will explore both formal and cultural approaches to thresholds in a collection of sites of varying scale and location. Unless provided, the instructor will work with students to locate appropriate sites.

During spring break, the studio will travel to Japan to examine thresholds in traditional Japanese architecture: temple interiors and grounds, zen gardens and castles. We will study the metaphorical and literal space of gates, the elongated pause of entry in the genkan as shoe removal, material changes and a step up demarcates the shift from exterior to interior at temples and domestic spaces; and, the mechanics of sliding doors in temples, houses, and shops versus hinged doors in gates and military battlements.

The space in between “here” and “there” is a locus of social and spatial and material affects and relationships. For the Threshold studio this space will serve as a way to analyze and create architecture.

#### STUDIO METHODOLOGY/LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The studio will engage architectural design through a series of architectural problems or challenges. Each challenge is delivered without advance notice at the completion of the preceding challenge. Each brief shares the studio theme and is structured by client/context or site, a rule set, resources, deliverables and a deadline. The program, scale, and length of time spent on the challenges vary. Studio research will be pooled as a joint endeavor to generate a catalog of existing conditions and support individual design projects.

The intent is to simulate the potential varying demands of an applied theoretical architectural practice. The pace and independent directives of the challenges necessitate that each student develop and commit to a specific design interest within the parameters and studio theme. Commitment to conception and follow through are critical components of success.

By the end of the semester, each student will have a body of architectural designs united by the studio theme, design research and architectural design projects. It is intended that this body of work reflects individual interests and may serve as a springboard for your future independent work.

## STUDIO SCHEDULE\*

The Studio Schedule Overview will be updated to include Assignments and Deliverables. Should there be a need to revise the Studio Schedule, the class will be notified in advance.

wk1	TH 2/08 F 2/09	<i>YD out</i> Class Introduction/ In-class Assignment Issue C-1: Threshold Matrix   due 2/15 (1 wk)
wk2	TH 2/15 F 2/16	Internal Review Issue C-2: Threshold Exposé   due 2/22 (1 wk) In-class Assignment/Desk crits
wk3	TH 2/22 F 2/23	Internal Review Issue C-3: The Threshold is It   due 3/01 (1 wk) In-class Assignment/Desk crits
wk4	TH 3/01 F 3/02	Review w/guest Issue C-4: Threshold as Index   due 3/15 (1 wk) In-class Assignment/Desk crits
wk5	F 3/08 F 3/09	<i>YD out</i> Internal Review/In-class Assignment Issue C-5: A Building without Thresholds   due: 3/22 (2 wks)
wk6	TH 3/15 F 3/16	Internal Review Desk crits
wk7	TH 3/22	Review w/guest Issue C-6: Ecosystem Threshold   due: 4/6
wk8	<i>F 3/23-SA 3/31</i> 3/27	<i>Class travel/research; schedule forthcoming</i> Issue C-7: Ritual Thresholds   due: 4/6
wk9	TH 4/05 F 4/06	<i>YD out</i> In-class Assignment/In-class Assignment Issue C-8: Building as Threshold   due: 4/12 (1 wk)
wk10	TH 4/12 F 4/13	Review w/guest C-8+: Building as Threshold + C-5: Threshold-less Building In-class Assignment/Desk crits
wk11	TH 4/19 F 4/20	Internal Review C-8+: Building as Threshold + C-4: Indexical Threshold <i>YD out</i>
wk12	TH 4/26 F 4/27	Internal Review C-8+: Building as Threshold + C-3: Threshold Components In-class Assignment/Desk crits
wk13	TH 5/03 F 5/04	Mock-up Final Presentation <i>YD out</i>
wk14	TH 5/10 F 5/11	Desk crits <i>YD out</i>
wk15	TU 5/15	Final Review**

**\*\*NOTE:** *The studio will hold a review the week prior to the official final exam period.*

#### PROJECT COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

Parameters of Program, Site and Completion Requirements for each architectural design problem/challenge shall be assigned separately.

#### READING RESOURCES

In general, bibliographic resources shall be assigned as appropriate for architectural design problems/challenges. A few basic references:

Gaston Bachelard, Maria Jolas, Trans., *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture: 1943-1968* (New York: Columbia Books of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993) 419-426.

Subha Mukherji, Ed., *Thinking on Thresholds: The Poetics of Transitive Spaces* (New York: Anthem Press, 2011).

Georges Perec, David Bellos, Trans., *Life: A User's Manual (Verba Mundi)* (English and French Edition) 2nd Edition (New Hampshire: Verba Mundi, 2009).

Georges Perec, John Sturrock, Ed., Trans., *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (New York: Penguin Classics, Penguin Random House, 2008)

Joan Ockman, *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, *Harvard Design Magazine*

<http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/6/the-poetics-of-space-by-gaston-bachelard>

#### FILM RESOURCES

In general, film resources shall be assigned as appropriate for architectural design problems/challenges. A few basic references:

*Thermae Romae*, Hideki Takeuchi, Dir., 2012, 1h 49m

*Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter . . . and Spring*, Kim Ki-duk, Dir., 2003, 1h 43m

## CLASS CANCELLATION

In the event of a canceled class due to weather or illness, there will be notification of the canceled session and the syllabus will be adjusted to include the material in one or more later classes.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

**Concept:** Work will be evaluated by the synthesis of concepts into a resolved architectural response appropriate to the spatial-temporal context and site, and, by how clearly the design intentions are articulated.

**Design Process:** Designs are evaluated by how well they address the design problem presented in a given program brief. The process of conceptual development toward an analytical response will be evaluated. The process of conceptual development includes design and material research. Final design responses are expected to be the logical conclusion the process of design development.

**Production/Representation:** All work will be evaluated by the quality of representation and production. Evidence of skill/craft must be evident.

**Graphic Sensibility:** Representations and models will be evaluated for the ability to convey information, clarity of construction, and the development of a graphic sensibility that is appropriate to the design problem.

**Spatial/Material Sensibility:** Architectural designs will be evaluated by their performance as logical programmatic and site responses, as the product of design research, and for spatial, structural and material clarity.

**Pin-ups/Reviews:** Participation at all reviews is required. The studio will have two types of reviews: internal studio reviews and reviews with external critics. It is expected that the work presented at reviews be complete and thoroughly represented.

**Design Revisions:** The studio will encourage the use of thresholds in the design process as points to rethink, revise and advance work.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Ability to research, conceptualize, develop, and represent design research, the design process and final designs.
- Learn how to translate architectural and urban ideas and concepts into two-dimensional and three-dimensional diagrams, drawings and models.
- Learn and gain confidence in spatial, representational and material skills.
- Learn, practice and perfect presentation skills.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class participation is required and includes: attendance, advance preparation of assignments, in-class work and group activities, and participation in all pin-ups and reviews.

## ATTENDANCE | ABSENCES

Attendance for the full duration of each class with the instructor and/or TA is mandatory. Three excused absences are allowed for the semester. An excused absence is defined as one that was discussed with and approved by the professor at least 24 hours prior to the date of absence, or a family or medical emergency that is confirmed by your physician or a dean in Student Support Services. Absences beyond

the three allotted will result in a decrease in your final grade. If you miss six or more classes, you will be asked to drop the subject or receive a failing grade.

## GRADING

Studio assignments are assigned as a series and graded both individually and cumulatively.

- Attendance 10%
- Class Participation 15%
- Assignments to ¼ term 15%
- Assignments to ½ term 20%
- Assignments to ¾ term 15%
- Assignments to final 25%

## GRADING DEFINITION

A Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.

B Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.

C Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems, and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field.

D Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems, but also demonstrating deficiencies serious enough to make it inadvisable to proceed further in the field without additional work.

F Failed. This grade also signifies that the student must repeat the subject to receive credit.

Grades as defined by the University are “related more directly to the student's mastery of the material” and that fulfills the standards of “elegance of presentation, creativity, imagination, and originality” set by the instructor. <http://catalog.mit.edu/mit/procedures/academic-performance-grades/#gradestext>

## FINAL STUDIO DELIVERABLES

Grades will not be posted for students to view on their grade report until all work both complete and archived. Projects must be properly prepared and formatted. Detailed requirements and instructions for formatting will be posted to CRON, the Department website. Studio TA's will collect project archives from each student immediately following the review and deliver to the Archiving TA.

## STUDIO CULTURE

The Department of Architecture promotes a learning environment that supports the diverse values of the entire MIT community of students, faculty, administration, staff and guests. Fundamental to the mission of architectural education is the stewardship of this diversity in a positive and respectful learning environment that promotes the highest intellectual integrity and cultural literacy. As architectural design learning is often accomplished through project-based activities during and outside of class times, maintaining this environment at all times is the responsibility of the entire community. Faculty and students should strive to understand and mutually respect the varied commitments of each other and

work together to manage expectations of time and effort devoted to assignments, pin-ups, and public reviews.

#### LAB FEES (IF ANY)

There are no lab fees. The cost of materials are the responsibility of the student.

#### WRITING AND COMMUNICATION CENTER

The WCC at MIT (Writing and Communication Center) offers free one-on-one professional advice and is staffed completely by MIT lecturers with advanced degrees, experience teaching communication in college classrooms. All are all are published scholars and writers. The WCC works with graduate students to assist to strategize all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with all English as Second Language issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in E18-233, 50 Ames Street). To register online go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/>. To access WCC advice on writing and oral presentations, go to <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/>.

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY + HONESTY

MIT's expectations and policies regarding academic integrity should be read carefully and adhered to diligently: <http://integrity.mit.edu/>

#### NAAB STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

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|---|--|
| A.1. Communication Skills                     | B.2. Accessibility                       |
| A.2. Design Thinking Skills                   | B.3. Sustainability                      |
| A.3. Visual Communication Skills              | B.4. Site Design                         |
| A.4. Technical Documentation                  | B.8. Environmental Systems               |
| A.5. Investigative Skills                     | B.9. Structural Systems                  |
| A.6. Fundamental Design Skills                | B12. Building Materials and Assemblies   |
| A.7. Use of Precedents                        |  |
| A.8. Ordering Systems Skills                  | C1. Collaboration                        |
| A.9. Historical Traditions and Global Culture | C.2. Human Behavior                      |
| A.10. Cultural Diversity                      | C.9. Community and Social Responsibility |
| A.11. Applied Research                        |  |