

F18 THESIS syllabus

INTRO

The opportunity to produce thesis work is valuable both for the criticality that is contained within it and for the examination of disciplinarity that we look for. In simple terms, the thesis process first raises open ended questions and diligent exploration follows. While the focus of the thesis might be anything from material to meta- the significance of the production will be contextualized within a changing world.

Tied to the question of 'what is a thesis' are of course varying opinions on what constitutes research in architecture¹—and whether we do research to frame a project, its argument, and methods, or if in conducting a design investigation we are in fact doing research. In either case, if we agree that research is being done, then we can also say that in crafting a thesis project, you are entering a wider conversation and exploring problems that have puzzled and inspired others. By proposing your own set of critical questions and methods of inquiry, you recognize your responsibility to engage seriously and rigorously with prior work, and to extend its intellectual scope through your own contribution. This studio adopts this view.

1. see Mark Jarzombek
'What is a Thesis?'
Thresholds, Spring 1996

The aim of this studio is to guide you to through the process of clearly defining and structuring a thesis project. The Spring semester for Thesis students will follow the successful completion of the thesis development in the Fall semester. The studio is a venue for constructive discussion and mutual critique. While a project is not expected to be a 'building,' it should rigorously address spatial concerns including how space informs and intersects with other processes (social, ecological, historic, etc.). The scale of consideration can range from bodies to territories.

In this studio students are expected to engage and develop a wide range of interrelated capacities, including critical thinking, analytical writing and reflective design production. This studio recognizes that diversity of racial identities, religious backgrounds, sexual orientations and gender identities are foundational to our strength as a culture. We endeavor to create safe spaces for self-identification, self expression and inclusivity.

William Kentridge
from exhibition **ThickTime**, 2017
Whitechapel Gallery London



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*William Kentridge
The Head and the Load 2018
with Philip Miller, Thuthuka Sibisi
Gregory Maqoma, The Knights*

STRUCTURE

Participation 10%

You are required to work independently and collaboratively, you will set regular studio hours to suit your schedule. The days are organised with Reviews and general discussion on Tuesdays. At least 7 hours a week will be set aside for work in studio. Each week you will have regular individual meetings. The times are set out as a schedule but can be changed by swapping with each other. Please advise me if you are making changes.

Reviews are related to concentrations and stages in your work flow. These major reviews should be taken seriously as they serve as a milestone for the three sections defined as 'Context + Framing', 'Methods and Propositions', and 'Synthesis'. Visitors and advisors will be invited to discuss and critique the work. Attendance to the SoA Lecture series is mandatory and your contribution to the school response to the lectures will be to attend the Back2Front sessions @ 4.40pm 9/12, 10/3, 11/7.

These three sections do not describe discrete operations but are periods of emphasis. You will continue to consider context and framing throughout your project. The undertaking is to create an argument, devise methods and propositions to explore the questions, develop and refine a project and form reflective conclusions.

Part 1 CONTEXT+ FRAMING 20% weeks 1-4

This part of the semester will be devoted to refining your main argument (or debateable proposition) and conceptual framework. You will build an understanding of the critical issues and existing contexts within which your project is situated as well as a thorough analysis of the relevant literature that helps frame the problem, as well as texts and case studies that suggest new openings and directions for investigation.

You will be expected to demonstrate the evolving understanding through a series of preliminary design speculations. This work does not stop as we focus on the next section. Your calendar of operations for this semester should be created in week 2 and become a working tool to be adjusted as you proceed.

Part 2 METHODS + PROPOSITIONS 30% weeks 5-9

In this part of the semester you will outline the methods of design inquiry and investigation best suited to your project. You will apply these methods in an iterative process to test the design speculations you put forth in the first part. By the end of this part you should have revised your abstract, references, method statement and developed a draft calendar for thesis completion in the Spring semester.

Part 3 SYNTHESIS + PRESENTATION 40% weeks 10-15

The final part of the semester will be devoted to refining your project and its arguments, based on the comments and critiques from prior weeks. In addition you will be expected to develop your work into a summary document which will act as a summary of work to date and of projected development. The format for these documents should be established and agreed during October.

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William Kentridge
Streets of the City
tapestry 2009

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As thesis and independent project students we expect you to engage in the application of these learning objectives to the subject, method and means of your own project.

CRITICAL INQUIRY You will demonstrate creative synthesis, organisational logic and an understanding of an effective relationship between concept and proposition. Through fluid reasoning you will use this capacity to devise questions and interrogate problems in novel situations.

RESEARCH + CONTEXT You will apply research and planning methods to a design project and utilize critical and contextual research to place your proposition in terms of historical and contemporary theoretical cultural issues.

COMMUNICATION You will communicate effectively through visual, verbal and written form.

ORGANISATION You will demonstrate motivation by employing organisational skills to work productively both individually and collaboratively.

ADVISORS

Each Thesis project will be required to find two signed-up Advisors, one from within the SoA faculty and another advisor from any other sphere.

Your advisors should be encouraged to attend the scheduled reviews. As the project develops you might need to reassess the relevance of your advisor or include new advisors, so be considerate of their time and make clear the transition if you want to make changes to your team. These are very valuable contacts and you should use peoples' willingness to work with you with respect.

P.S.

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax.

This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

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	MON	INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS 9.30-1.00pm	TUES	REVIEWS 12.00-1.30	WED	THUR	DISCUSSION+ GROUP PRESENTATION 12.00-1.30	
wk1	27-Aug		28-Aug	2.00pm Henry 3.00pm Samson		1-Sep		9/2 10.45am Zain
		ALL SCHOOL MEETING + BBQ						
wk 2	3-Sep		4-Sep	12.00pm Zain 1.00pm Henry 3.00pm Samson		6-Sep	12.00pm ZAIN 1.00pm weekly discussion	
		LABOR DAY						
wk3	10-Sep	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	11-Sep			13-Sep	12.00pm HENRY 1.00pm weekly discussion	
					12-Sep			
		5.00pm Marlon Blackwell Lecture			B2F 4.40pm			
wk4	17-Sep	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	18-Sep			20-Sep	12.00pm SAMSON 1.00pm weekly discussion	
		5.00pm Dwayne Oyler						
wk5	24-Sep	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	25-Sep	12.00pm REVIEW 1 pt1 1.30pm CONTEXT + FRAMING		27-Sep	12.00pm REVIEW 1 pt2 CONTEXT + FRAMING	
		5.00pm Dang Qun						
wk 6	1-Oct	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	2-Oct			4-Oct	12.00pm ZAIN 1.00pm weekly discussion	
					3-Oct			
					B2F 4.40pm			
wk 7	8-Oct	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	9-Oct			11-Oct	12.00pm HENRY 1.00pm weekly discussion	
			5.00pm Eyal Weizman					CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL OPENING
wk 8	15-Oct	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	16-Oct			18-Oct	12.00pm SAMSON 1.00pm weekly discussion	
								10/19 MID-SEMESTER BREAK
wk 9	22-Oct	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	23-Oct	REVIEW 2 pt1 METHODS + PROPOSITIONS		25-Oct	REVIEW 2 pt2 METHODS + PROPOSITIONS	
		5.00pm Brian Evans						
wk 10	29-Oct	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	30-Oct			1-Nov	12.00pm ZAIN 1.00pm weekly discussion	
		5.00pm Beatriz Colomina						
wk 11	5-Nov	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	6-Nov			8-Nov	12.00pm HENRY 1.00pm weekly discussion	
					7-Nov			
					B2F 4.40pm			
wk 12	12-Nov	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	13-Nov			15-Nov	12.00pm SAMSON 1.00pm weekly discussion	
		5.00pm Heather Bizon						
wk 13	19-Nov	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	20-Nov			22-Nov	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
wk 14	26-Nov	8.30am Samson 10.30am Henry 11.30am Zain	27-Nov			29-Nov	pre REVIEW PIN UP	
wk 15	3-Dec		4-Dec	FINAL REVIEW SYNTHESIS		6-Dec	FINAL REVIEW SYNTHESIS	
wk 16	EXIT mtgs to be arranged		14-Dec			15-Dec		