4.001 Where is & What is Architecture & Design
Instructor: Paul Pettigrew (paulpett@mit.edu)
Teaching Assistant: Christopher Masahiko Moyer (cmoyer@mit.edu)
Day/Time: Friday 3:00-5:00
Classroom: Virtual
Credit Units: 3

4.001: Where is & What is Architecture & Design

Course Description

4.001 Where is & What is Architecture & Design introduces Architecture and Design through conversations and presentations with MIT architecture and design faculty and Course 4 alumni, architects, and designers. 4.001 discusses the two undergraduate majors, two undergraduate minors, and two HASS concentrations offered through Course 4 along with careers in architecture and design.

Situated within MIT’s rich and intense educational environment, 4.001’s class content emphasizes the interconnected relationship between art, architecture, design, building technology, computation, culture, history, theory and criticism. Course 4’s extensive class offerings reflect a commitment to the cultural, social, political, technological and ecological issues of the built environment, and the teaching of architecture and design not just as a means to an end, but as a form of knowledge and creative practice. Committed to a rigorous and interdisciplinary approach, architecture and design programs challenge students to be creative, innovative, and responsible leaders in research, academia, and practice.

Learning Objectives

Most high school students encounter calculus, physics, biology, chemistry, humanities and social sciences as part of their high school education. Very few high school students encounter architecture or design, which means very few MIT first year undergraduates know what architects and designers do and/or what happens inside architecture and design classrooms and companies.

- 4.001 will introduce students to a diverse array of architecture and design voices both in academia and in practice.
- 4.001 will act as an orientation to contemporary architecture and design practices within the context of the history of architecture and design.
- 4.001 will be an examination of the changing role of architects and designers throughout history.
- 4.001 will be an introduction to the formal language and vocabulary of the architecture and design disciplines.
- 4.001 will be an opportunity to develop research and presentation skills in the context of architecture, design, and the academic and professional worlds within which architects and designers learn, teach, and practice.
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Course Exercise

To better understand the breadth of architecture and design education, thinking, and practice, students will have the option of pursuing a mens or manus exercise.

Mens = Interview, document, and present to your classmates, the academic and career trajectory of an (MIT alumnus/alumna) architect or designer, and the business or institution within which they currently work, practice, or teach.

Questions you might ask of somebody currently working as an architect or designer.

1. Why did you choose to attend the college/university you attended?
2. What did you think you were going to study prior to starting college/university?
3. When/how did you settle on your undergraduate major/minor/HASS concentration?
4. What did you do after graduation?
5. What are you doing now and how did your undergraduate experience prepare you for your current career?
6. Was there a course, instructor, or activity that you remember as particularly influential on your career path/current career?
7. What would you have changed about your undergraduate experience in order to better prepare you for your current career?

Manus = Identify and document a design problem inside or outside your home. Conceptualize various solutions to the design problem you’ve observed. Develop through drawing or modeling one of your design solutions. Present both your observed design problem and proposed solution to your classmates.

Design problems might be both current and local in nature.

1. What works or doesn’t work about your current home-school live-work space? How might you modify your current home-school live-work space in order to better accommodate your everyday home-schooling-working activities?
2. How have businesses in your community been affected by Covid? Have any local businesses altered their way of doing business? For better? For worse? What Covid related alterations to a local business would you keep and/or how might you improve those alterations both in the short term and the post-Covid long term?
3. Design problem of your choosing?
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(Tentative) Schedule:

09.04.20  Where is and What is Architecture + Paul Pettigrew Architect, Designer, and Educator
09.11.20  What is and Where is Design, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow? + Master of Architecture Student, and Teaching Assistant Christopher Masahiko Moyer
09.18.20  Caitlin Mueller (Assist. Prof. MIT Arch. & Digital Structures Lab Lead)
09.25.20  Jory Bell (General Partner at Playground)
10.02.20  Speaker TBD
10.09.20  Speaker TBD
10.16.20  Speaker TBD
10.23.20  Speaker TBD (Virtual Family Weekend)
10.30.20  Speaker TBD
11.06.20  Speaker TBD
11.13.20  Speaker TBD
11.20.20  Student Presentations

Evaluation Criteria and Grading:

The goal of the course is to expose you to as many voices in the architecture and design world as we have time to hear. If you miss class, you miss out on an opportunity to hear from an architect or designer who might be of particular interest to you.

The interview (mens) and design (manus) assignments for the course are an opportunity for all of us to learn from each other. Ideally each of you would complete and present your interview or design work to your classmates on the final day of class.