MIT 4.222  Professional Practice

Fall 2020, F 9:00-12:00
Credits: 3-0-3 G // Online

Instructors
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TA
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Course Overview
4.222 Professional Practice gives a critical orientation towards a career in architectural practice. Through intensive case studies, critical discussions on urgent topics, and role-playing exercises, the course challenges students to explore a range of legal, ethical, political, and professional questions they will face in practice.

Course Description
4.222 Professional Practice is about the making of architecture in the contemporary moment.

In 2020, the course will continue to focus squarely on the state of architecture practice, which is of course not isolated from the systemic societal faults, inequalities, inequities, and deeply-rooted, foundational discrimination and oppression that have been, and continue to be, exposed and laid bare this year. In 2020, guest speakers will join the
class to both review the state of the profession vis-à-vis equity and justice, and to present models of practice that are committing to positive change.

The practice of architecture differs from the academy in significant ways.

Works of architecture are real, not solely abstract or theoretical. They impact the real lives of real people in real places. Real projects take time, they involve stakeholders, and they cost money. Buildings are subject to regulatory approval, building codes, historic districts, and the interests of community members and stakeholder groups. Real projects are not always funded by the people or communities they serve. At times architecture projects involve difficult ethical decisions.

This environment requires that strong design skills be complemented by strong ethics; skills in communication and promotion; stakeholder management; time management; and financial awareness. Building a relationship of trust between a client/patron/stakeholder and a designer is critical to a project’s success and its relevance. Much of the above is developed over time, putting the less-experienced architect at a disadvantage.

Working in this environment requires the understanding that the profession and practice of architecture is as much a sculptor of our world as is it a product of it - a reflection of its context, however faulted. Works of architecture, and architects themselves, can be vehicles for reinforcing the status quo, as much as they can be a means by which desires for real change can be expressed and realized.

The course format is discursive and conversational, which allows for both critique of the profession and the positing of new models of practice. Throughout the semester, students will engage with practicing architects who are disrupting practice in one way or another; they will interrogate built projects from a variety of angles; and they will investigate urgent questions facing practice in 2020.

**Course Structure**

4.222 is structured around in-class discussion and conversation. Having the course online this year will surely make this discussion and conversation different than in past years. Nevertheless, students are expected to come to class sessions prepared for robust and equitable discussion amongst students, instructors, and guests.

This year, students will be asked to continue the conversation between class sessions by contributing to online forums, involving both responding to specific discussion questions posed by the instructors, and less-structured journaling and exchange between students.

**The Landscape**

The first weeks of the course will involve the exploration of practice, and review of required course content, via short lectures and extended discussions. At times this will involve required readings, research of specific topics, and investigation of outside guests and practices.

**Imagining Practice**

Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to articulate their priorities and vision for their own architecture practice. This will involve individual work, where students will outline their personal vision and mode of practice, as well as group work where students will assemble and promote a collective vision. In these exercises, students will focus on both the kind of work they want to bring into the world, and the means by which this could be realized.

**Open Questions – The Disrupting Practice Series**

The best way to learn about what architecture practice is like is to hear directly from practicing architects. This year, the Professional Practice course will organize and host a series of panel discussions. Entitled “Disrupting Practice,”
the series will feature practitioners who are, in one way or another, enabling change in the landscape of practice. Each panel will involve students as well, working in small groups tasked with preparing advance research, preparing questions for the panelists, and compiling a summary of the discussion.

 Profiles in Practice

The practice of architecture is opaque to many. Behind the well-crafted image of an architectural project is a whole world of complexities – client/patron relationships, programming, contracts, consultants, fees, project management, etc. Systemic barriers persist. All of this can seem so foreign to an architecture student, and so different from a studio curriculum, that the professional world can seem confusing if not impenetrable.

The course will feature a series of intensive interrogations of built work. These “Behind the Façade” investigations will crack open projects and dissect them in detail from a variety of angles – mission, cost, strategy, contracts, fees, etc. – all in the interest of laying bare and de-mystifying the inner workings of a project. A small group of students will be tasked with preparing background research and an analytical report for each session.

Course Method and Expectations

While the course will cover the many practical, structural, legal, and ethical questions that define professional practice, the aim is to do so through discussion, exploration of scenarios and case studies, and group-based exercises that allow students to actively learn through role-play.

Collaboration is indispensable to contemporary multidisciplinary environments and necessarily extends out beyond the internal workings of a given practice. The course will expose students to the opportunities and challenges that working with others poses, and to finding ways to excel as a collaborative group by identifying and harnessing individual talents.

The panel discussions and project case studies featured in the course are most valuable and successful with a high level of student participation. The richer the interrogation by students, the more valuable the result. Beyond the specific groups tasked with a particular event, all students are expected to actively participate in the investigations and Q+A sessions, and to be present during the entire class session.

The online course format is new, and the process will be refined along the way. We ask for the following to allow for robust and equitable exchange amongst students, instructors, and guests:

- All participants are asked to keep their video on during Zoom sessions. Exceptions will be made for occasional glitches with technology, bandwidth, or other disturbances that may arise.
- Students are asked to use the “Raise Hand” feature in order to facilitate good discussion, and to use the chat feature as much as possible for other comments and questions that come up.
- The TA will facilitate the conversation by tracking raised hands and the chat. Please be patient as their interest is for equitable and smooth conversations.
- Students should participate regularly and actively on online forums.

Course Objectives

- Students will learn how practice differs from the academy, and in turn how to navigate the professional world they are about the enter.
- Students will learn about the state of equity and access within the profession, and avenues for challenging systemic barriers.
- Open discussions focused on how the profession has addressed, or not addressed, critical contemporary topics will lead the students to see the practice of architecture as malleable and open to change.
• Through long-term group-based work, students will learn both that the practice of architecture is inherently collaborative and that good professional relationships last well beyond a project.
• Students will explore the meaningful difference between communicating a singular project and a body of work.
• Role-play will allow students to understand the critical differences between how projects are communicated between the academy and the profession, and in turn to gain confidence in their abilities beyond design.

Course Assignments

Students are expected to actively participate in all class sessions and online discussions. Weekly questions will be posed on Canvas and students are expected to respond prior to the next class. The hope is that this will allow in-class discussions to continue between class sessions. In addition to this base requirement, there are three specific assignments over the course of the semester.

Assignment 1: Imagining Practice
This three-part writing assignment, stretching over the length of the semester, will ask students to describe the architecture they want to be engaged in, and a model of practice for its realization.

Assignment 2: Practicing Practice
Students, working in groups, will form an “office” and promote their collective body of work.

Assignment 3: Interrogating Practice
The course will feature the “Disrupting Practice” panel discussions and “Profiles in Practice,” which are investigations of architecture case-studies. Students, working in groups, will be assigned to lead the interrogation of one of these panels or case-studies.

Evaluation and Grading

Attendance for the full duration of class is mandatory. 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.

All unexcused absences will result in a reduction to course grading. Each unexcused absence will result in a reduction of the student’s grade by half a letter grade. More than two unexcused absences can result in the student being asked to drop the course, or their receiving a failing grade.

A student’s absence from a class session, either excused or unexcused, does not exclude them from the learning objectives or other requirements of that session, be they readings or group work.

Some course assignments will be undertaken by students working in groups, which will be assigned by the instructors. Students will be evaluated on their overall contribution to their group. Students shall approach the instructors with any issues that are unresolvable by the team or detrimental to the team’s process and progress.

Students will be evaluated on the following criteria, which will be used to determine final course grading.

Quality of In-class and Online Participation 20%

Students are expected to engage with class content in an active and constructive way, to come prepared for active in-class discussion (by reading required text, and researching topics and guests), and to actively participate in discussions and exchanges online.

Assignment 1 25%
Assignment 2 30%

Assignment 3 25%

Group assignments are expected to be undertaken with rigor and a dedication to collaboration among group members. Presentations must be clearly delivered and articulated.

Grades are defined as follows.

A Excellent. High level of participation and engagement with subject matter during in-class discussions. Assignments surpass expectations in terms of inventiveness, verbal and visual ability, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class.

B Above Average. Assignments are thorough, well-researched, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Participation is high. 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 Average. Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter. Assignments and participation meet the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication of rigor. Assignments are incomplete in one or more areas.

D Poor. Assignments are incomplete and participation is marginal. Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating only partial familiarity with the subject matter. Student does not demonstrate the required scholarly skill and knowledge base.

F Failed. Assignments are unresolved and participation is low. Minimum objectives are not met and performance is not acceptable. This grade will be assigned when student has excessive unexcused absences. This grade also signifies that the student must repeat the subject to receive credit.

Academic Integrity + Honesty

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

Writing and Communication Center

The MIT Writing and Communication Center offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are published scholars and writers. WCC lecturers have a combined 130 years' worth of teaching here at MIT (ranging from 1 to 26 years).

The WCC works with undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alumni, and spouses. The WCC helps everyone strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as oral presentations and slide design.

No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, and helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with non-native speaker
issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. To make an appointment, go to https://mit.mywconline.com and register with our online scheduler. The WCC is at E18-233, 50 Ames Street.

**Student Support Services and GradSupport**

If you are dealing with a personal or medical issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, undergraduate students should contact a dean in Student Support Services (S3) and graduate students should contact a dean in GradSupport. These offices are here to help you. The deans will verify your situation, provide you with support, and help you work with your professor to determine next steps. In most circumstances, undergraduate students will not be excused from coursework without verification from a dean. For graduate students, no verification is needed if arrangements are made between instructor/advisor and students. Please visit the S3 and GradSupport websites for contact information and more ways that they can provide support.

**Disability and Accessibility Services**

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. Even if you are not planning to use accommodations, it is recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with the services and resources of the office. If you have already been approved for accommodations, please contact DAS early in the semester so that they can work with you to get your accommodation logistics in place. Please visit the DAS website for contact information.

**NAAB Student Performance Criteria**

*Realm D: Professional Practice*
- D.1 Stakeholder Roles in Architecture
- D.2 Project Management
- D.3 Business Practices
- D.4 Legal Responsibilities
- D.5 Professional Conduct

**Source Texts**

No single book or resource can completely summarize the complexities of Architecture Practice. Those that come close can quickly become obsolete as practice and technology evolve. Some key resources are listed here, and a more extensive bibliography and resource list is available on the course website.

A concise overview:

Lengthy and more detailed:

Less architecture-specific, but with a good overview on business for designers:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Guest(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 1</td>
<td>04 Sep</td>
<td>9:00-10:20</td>
<td>Introductions // Course Overview // Syllabus review</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:40-12:00</td>
<td><strong>ALL THE LETTERS OF PRACTICE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 2</td>
<td>11 Sep</td>
<td>9:00-11:00</td>
<td>ALL THE NUMBERS OF PRACTICE</td>
<td>Guests: Emily Grandstaff-Rice, FAIA + Dr. Kendall A Nicholson</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>11:15-12:00</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Assignment 1a assigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 3</td>
<td>18 Sep</td>
<td>9:00-9:25</td>
<td>MAKING A LIVING IN PRACTICE</td>
<td>Getting work – Networking, “Qualifications”, RFPs, etc.</td>
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<td>9:30-11:25</td>
<td>Guest: James Garrett Jr., AIA - 4RM+ULA</td>
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<td>11:30-12:00</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Assignment 1a due</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 4</td>
<td>25 Sep</td>
<td>9:00-10:20</td>
<td>THE HOW AND THE WHY OF PRACTICE</td>
<td>Lecture/Discussion: Ethics + Responsibility</td>
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<td>10:40-12</td>
<td>Lecture/Discussion: Fees + Contracts</td>
<td>Assignment 1b due</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 5</td>
<td>02 Oct</td>
<td>9:00-9:50</td>
<td>Lecture/Discussion: Models + Modes of Practice</td>
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<td>10:00-12:00</td>
<td><strong>DISRUPTING PRACTICE 1: FOCUSING A PRACTICE</strong></td>
<td>David Goldberg, Mithun</td>
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<td>Marsha Maytum + Bill Leddy, LMS Architects</td>
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<td>Assignment 2 assigned</td>
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<td>W 6</td>
<td>09 Oct</td>
<td>9:00-9:50</td>
<td>Discussion + Check-in</td>
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<td>10:00-12:00</td>
<td><strong>DISRUPTING PRACTICE 2: STRUCTURAL CHANGE</strong></td>
<td>Bryan C. Lee, Jr., Colloquiate</td>
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<td>Priyanka Shah, The Architecture Lobby</td>
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<td>Discussion + Check-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 7</td>
<td>16 Oct</td>
<td>Presentations // Assignment 2</td>
<td>Class Reunion – Alumni Q+A</td>
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<td>W 8</td>
<td>23 Oct</td>
<td>9:00-11:00</td>
<td><strong>DISRUPTING PRACTICE 3: INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE</strong></td>
<td>Rosa Sheng, SmithGroup; Kimberly Dowdell, HoK + NOMA</td>
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<td>Carole Wedge, Shepley Bulfinch + AIA LFRT</td>
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<td>Discussion + Check-in</td>
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<td>W 9</td>
<td>30 Oct</td>
<td>Profiles in Practice 1 - Trevor Bullen / Snow Kreilich</td>
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<td>W 10</td>
<td>06 Nov</td>
<td>Profiles in Practice 2 - TBD</td>
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<td>W 11</td>
<td>13 Nov</td>
<td>Profiles in Practice 3 – TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 12</td>
<td>20 Nov</td>
<td>Collective Review // Assignment 1c // Class Dismissed</td>
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