

48740 Urban Design Theory & Methods

Urban Design Methods and Theory is a required seminar course for the Master of Urban Design program and a co-requisite course for the Commoning the City ASO studio. The course explores core urban design methods and theories organized into three themes intended to give students a foundational understanding of urban design, examine key critiques of urbanization, and explore urban design's agency. Central to the course approach is a belief that urban design should strive to act in the public interest, negotiating the often conflicting needs and desires of a range of actors in the urban landscape in order to advance positive social and ecological outcomes.

The first module of the course is organized around the themes of form, systems and people, and connects a wide variety of urban design theoretical texts to key urban design methods, with a focus on the postmodern period during which the contemporary manifestation of the discipline emerged. The second section explores critiques of contemporary urbanization processes and methods of their analysis, drawing on critical urban theory, urban planning, geography, political theory, economics, anthropology and sociology. The final module explores urban design's agency to shape cities in response to these critiques. This section uses theories of commoning and transition design as a broad emergent framework for re-organizing design agency and re-framing urban design methods.

This course meets once a week, and assignments include weekly readings, actively participating in weekly seminar discussions, and a multi-part written and graphic project intended to explore analysis, critique, and project scope definition. The project requires drawing and writing and asks students to situate their design approach in relation to urban design theory