



Carnegie Mellon University

School of Architecture

College of Fine Arts, CFA 201

Carnegie Mellon University

Pittsburgh, PA 15213



*Commoning the City Studio in conversation with Teddy Cruz and Fonna Forman at Miller ICA
Photo: Christina Brown*

48--718: MUD Thesis Studio - Commoning the City

Instructor: Stefan Gruber

Credits: 18

Commoning the City is a yearlong research-based design studio on social justice and community-led urban transformations. Here, students explore design as an agent of change and how to support citizens in claiming their Right to the City. The first semester, taught by Stefan Gruber, provides a theoretical framing and case study research as a steppingstone toward the development of an individual thesis proposal. Learning from the collective research and based on a shared toolkit, students define their own research question and begin testing their design hypothesis in an urban milieu of their choice. At the end of the semester each student has framed a design proposal and methodology that is theoretically grounded, geographically and culturally situated, and politically informed. Working empirically, throughout the semester students go back and forth between research and design. The second semester, taught by Jonathan Kline, then supports students in fully developing their individual projects culminating in an exhibition. The commons have emerged as a key concept beyond the binaries of public and private space for tackling the challenges of the contemporary city: How to build community resilience in the face of systemic and growing inequity? How to design with finite resources in the face of accelerating environmental crisis? How to articulate common interests despite splintering social ties and political polarization? And how to find agency in architecture and urban design given the scope of these wicked problems? Here, commoning is understood as social practice structured around the production and self-governance of shared resources and spaces beyond contemporary forms of domination, such as class, gender, or race.