

GSAPP A4510 Studio I: Historic Preservation Studio

Fall 2017

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Teaching Assistants: tbd

SYLLABUS

Introduction

Studio I is the central focus of the first semester of the Historic Preservation program, and a foundational course for a three-studio sequence within the program. It is the only full-class studio in the sequence where all students gather to engage studio objectives together. It is simultaneously broad in reach and narrow in focus. Studio I both complements and benefits from other first semester coursework; it is the space for engaging overarching historical and contemporary issues of preservation, urbanism, planning, and architectural design. The goal for Studio I is to equip students with skills, techniques, and critical thinking – the means to engage practice and research – in order to engender leadership, interpretation, and advocacy – the ability to exercise judgment and propose informed solutions.

Course Description

Studio I will engage students in questions of preservation and its role in a larger context of environmental, social, cultural, historical, and physical built environments of New York City. It will encourage students to think about non-traditional partnerships to explore, existing preservation tools and tools to create, and diverse potential outcomes. The studio will offer models for approaching preservation, planning, and design questions and explore the role of the preservationist, planner, architect, conservator, advocate, and historian in contemporary practice.

We do this by the collective study of a neighborhood as well as through individual student study of individual historic resources.

Learning Objectives

This course will help students to:

- Understand the practical applications for skill sets taught in parallel classes;
- Investigate the materials of construction and physical condition of the built environment;
- Analyze the context and parameters of a site (building, landscape, neighborhood) in order to define its limits and the forces at work within its physical and social territories;
- Propose short and long-term solutions and recommendations that critically engage historic buildings and propose strategic interventions;
- Demonstrate the ability to identify defining characteristics and significance;
- Engage the social, material and historical context and existing condition of a building and neighborhood;
- Exercise judgment regarding preservation from an engaged, informed, and critical position; and

- Understand diverse roles for the preservationist in contemporary practice.

Associated goals are:

1. Students will critically engage in studio material through all phases, including the identification of problems and exploration of solutions.
2. Students will learn how to photograph, diagram, draw and document an existing site and building conditions.
3. Conservation, restoration, historic research, planning and design work will occur based on an in depth understanding of historic and existing conditions, culminating in finely calibrated proposals and solutions.

Coursework will build on the parallel and complimentary courses taught in the Fall semester, including Digital Visualization for Historic Preservation, Historical Research Methods: Interpreting Architecture, and Preservation Planning & Policy, with synchronized exercises so that students are engaged in both theory and practice.

Methodology

The Studio utilizes a three-step methodology as the means to engage each building site. This approach will yield diverse outcomes – both in format and in proposed solutions. There will be pinups and group discussions as well as one-on-one desk critiques with students and faculty to advance outcomes for each step. The three-step process consists of Investigation, Analysis and Proposition phases. At the outset of the semester, students will select individual building sites to work with throughout all phases. During Investigation, students will focus on neighborhood context as well as on the individual building through observation and documentation. During Analysis, students will employ archival research skills to study the history of the neighborhood and individual site and will delve deeper into the current study area's culture and values. Discussion of impacts to the physical and social context of the site and building will be introduced, in order to test possible outcomes, and weigh them against each other. During Proposition, students will be tasked with proposing a design approach to the individual building site that is informed by an understanding of its social, material, and historical context. In all phases, but in particular during Proposition, questions of architectural integrity and significance will be explored.

Basic required deliverables will be consistent for all students. The format and focus of deliverables may vary slightly, based on instructor approval, as students have diverse existing skill sets and interests in aspects of historic preservation.

Studio Format

Studio is many different things simultaneously. It is the physical environment within which you will create the majority of your work. It is the space within which we will meet as a large group or on an individual basis, with faculty, peers and outside critics. It is the group of individuals, of diverse background, who comprise the Studio unit – students, faculty, teaching assistants. It is the intellectual environment for research, exploration, risk-taking, and leadership. It is the core and central focus of your work within the program and for your degree.

Studio will at times demand intense, collaborative work and at other times demand individual, tremendous effort.

We challenge each student to take risks and explore territories outside of your individual discipline or familiar areas of comfort. And we encourage you to observe and learn from your peers; other students can often be your best critics, role models, and instructors.

We expect that students will work in studio on a regular basis, both inside and outside of class time. This is essential to the discourse and identity of the Studio. We expect students to discuss, share, and present work during the majority of classes, either in an individual desk critique, a crit (conversation and discussion) with faculty, or in a group crit with varying formats (pin-up, review or jury, presentation to others).

Site visits and other field trips will be scheduled over the course of the semester. Students should spend class time at work in studio unless other arrangements are made with faculty.

Course Requirements

Specific course requirements are outlined in the project brief and weekly plan, and consist of a combination of presentations and deliverables. Grading will be based on achievement of Studio learning objectives, participation, attendance, and the quality of presentations and deliverables due at the conclusion of each phase, with an emphasis on demonstrable evidence of skill advancement through the course of the semester. Midterm assessments will be given to each student via an individual meeting and discussion with studio faculty. Grading criteria are as follows:

Presentations (40%): summary of critical thought progression; clearly stated approach and recommendations; clearly articulated case for proposed action, addressing integrity and significance; acknowledgement of challenges and unknowns; clarity and quality of presentation visuals; documented sources for factual or archival information; completion within time allowed; and responsiveness to critique and ability to address questions raised.

Deliverables (40%): succinct and well-organized work product; recommendations that consider short and long-term solutions; clarity, quality, and thoughtfulness of approach to building, site and neighborhood; clearly articulated case for proposed action, addressing integrity and significance; relevance, quality and clarity of graphics, drawing, writing, and overall deliverable format; and, citations for research, drawings and photos.

Overall Assessment (20%): quality and completeness of work during all phases; responsiveness to instructor comments and criticism; participation, timeliness and attendance; and growth in understanding and incorporation of new information.

Files for presentations and digital deliverable must be in PDF format unless otherwise approved in advance. In addition, at each phase-end milestone, 2-3 key drawings or visuals from each student will be required, submitted under separate cover (i.e. not within the body of a presentation or report).

Supporting Coursework

Digital Visualization for Historic Preservation

The fall semester also offers the course “Digital Visualization for Historic Preservation” specifically as a compliment to Studio I. This course is strongly encouraged for students, especially those without direct experience drawing and representing the built environment and spatial ideas. It is relevant for students of all backgrounds, and will introduce a variety of software available in studio; their use is required for the completion of Studio assignments.

Historical Research Methods: Interpreting Architecture

Historical Research Methods: Interpreting Architecture is offered to support historical and archival research in conjunction with Studio I. This course is strongly encouraged for all students as a deep understanding of the site's history is critical to evaluation of the appropriateness of interventions. The research and evaluation methods taught in this class are needed for the completion of Studio assignments.

Preservation Planning & Policy

Preservation Planning & Policy is required for first year students, and the skills that students acquire in this class will be utilized in Studio.

Supporting coursework will at times consist of assignments and deliverables that are complimentary and/or shared. Faculty from supporting courses will participate in reviews, and will provide feedback that informs grading.

Studio Brief

Project sites for Studio are sited within an eastern section of the Bedford-Stuyvesant (Bed-Stuy) neighborhood of Brooklyn. The selected area is defined by largely residential use, with schools and churches, and mixed-use commercial arteries along Ralph Avenue and Broadway. Bed-Stuy today is composed of two formerly separate areas – Bedford to the west and Stuyvesant Heights to the east. During the 1700s, the area was developed from farmland into housing lots; while slaves historically comprised a portion of the population, by the 1830s free blacks began purchasing land in the area. With increasing population and the introduction of the subway, the neighborhood became increasingly ethnically diverse. By 1940, the area was predominantly African-American, and Bedford and Stuyvesant Heights became known as Bedford-Stuyvesant. The Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, founded in 1967 with the bi-partisan support of Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Jacob K. Javits, was the first nonprofit community development corporation in the United States.¹

The historic fabric of Bedford-Stuyvesant is a contributing factor to sustained and increasing real estate value in the area. Changing demographics, the real estate market, and the introduction of new commercial corridors will impact the neighborhood and its sense of community. Shifting local demographics call for increased commercial and retail, community services and support, and varied housing solutions. Defined as “gentrifying” by New York University’s Furman Center, in its annual report “State of New York City’s Housing and Neighborhoods in 2015,” Bed-Stuy is experiencing an increase in housing units; in the number of college graduates, young adults, childless couples, non-family households and white residents; in average household income; and in rent burden for low- and moderate-income households. (For the purpose of the report, gentrification is defined as rapid rent growth in low-income neighborhoods; the report also includes analysis of changes in the characteristics of neighborhood residents.)² Bed-Stuy has also experienced an increase in food insecurity from 2012-2014, with a meal gap rise of 8%.³

What is preservation’s role in a neighborhood that is undergoing significant physical and social change? How can historic buildings be meaningfully maintained under the pressure of development? What uses and programs might respond to community needs – for both long-term residents and newcomers? How can the character and integrity of a neighborhood be maintained when development, building renovation, and adaptive reuse are requirements for economic development, and to address shortages in housing and social services?

Sequence

Each student will choose a structure/site from a list of pre-selected sites chosen by faculty. Students will draw a number from a “hat” that will dictate the order in which they choose a structure/site. Throughout the course of the semester, each student will then work through a number of different assignments related to that resource.

I Investigation

During the Investigation Phase, students will first use Visualization skills to describe the neighborhood and the selected sites. This will include site surveys and development of graphic representations. Following this, students will begin to learn about the various materials that clad historic buildings in the study area, and will incorporate this information into graphic studies. Work will include the following activities:

- Observe and document the built environment
- Explore the construction of the building and/or site
- Establish a baseline understanding of the neighborhood
- Establish a baseline understanding of the building’s materiality and context.

Guidelines:

- Site observation will occur as a studio-wide effort, but with unique work products produced by each student.
- Students are responsible for observing and documenting their individual building and building sites.
- An introductory lecture on the history of Bed-Stuy will be provided by Andrew Dolkart.
- Lectures on materials will be provided by Norman Weiss and Richard Pieper, followed by a site tour and talk (refer to the Weekly Plan for planned dates).

Tools for *Investigation* include:

- Documentary photography
- Measured drawings
- Materials identification
- Visual architectural descriptions

Exercises:

- 1 **Context Photography.** Building and context photography, observation and notes.
- 2 **Building Typologies.** Typological building research in small groups. Hard copy deliverable for pin-up.
- 3 **Individual Building Site Documentation.** Additional photography, including elevational building photographs, perspectival neighborhood photographs, and material detail photographs.
- 4 **Identification of Materials and Elements.** Annotation of materials usage; incorporation of architectural vocabulary.

Required final deliverables for *Investigation’s* review include:

- Site documentation, including site maps, plans, sections and street elevations, documenting the characteristics of the built environment
- Site photography (consistent with baseline site orthographics)
- Individual existing building orthographic drawings, including plans, sections and exterior elevations
- Existing conditions materials identification (using photography, drawings, and text)

- Identification of building typologies and their locations in the neighborhood, considering similarities and differences.
- The above deliverables will be provided in digital and presentation (live) formats. Presentations should provide a high-level summary of work completed, focusing on key conceptual and historical points and findings. Include slide titles and/or captions. The digital submission will consist of the PDF for the live presentation.

2 Analysis

In the Analysis phase, students will use the information gained and documents produced during Investigation as tools to gain a deeper understanding of the selected sites. This will include more advanced graphic representations, studies of materials conditions, and research into precedents (both within the neighborhood as well as elsewhere). Students will perform archival research to learn about the history of the neighborhood and the assigned individual building sites, including additional research on similar typologies, and other buildings by the same architect. Students will develop an understanding of current activities and concerns in the area. The Studio will reach consensus on key issues to address in the final Proposition phase, and the potential programs that engage these issues. By the conclusion of this phase, each student will have tested preliminary scenarios at the individual building site. Using the knowledge gained and graphics produced during Investigation and Analysis, each student will propose options for potential program for his/her site and will articulate a preliminary view of the appropriateness of interventions required to execute the propositions. Work will include the following activities:

- Research the general history of the neighborhood. Identify historic trends and current challenges (physical, environmental, economic, logistical, social)
- Establish a baseline understanding of the neighborhood
- Research the history of the site – its provenance, construction techniques in use, alterations, social history (i.e. previous residents or businesses)
- Establish a baseline understanding of the building's history, significance, materiality, and context.
- Observe and document physical conditions of materials of construction.
- Observe and document current usage and activity patterns (programmatic, environmental)
- Explore possible future usage and activity patterns
- Research potential constructional, programmatic, economic, and logistical solutions
- Test scenarios (programmatic, usage, architectural, etc.) that contemplate varied outcomes

Guidelines:

Erica Avrami will lead an in-studio workshop on methods for assessment of contemporary values in our study area. In addition, faculty will arrange for interaction between students and various groups representing neighborhood constituencies, to inform the conversation about opportunities and challenges within Bedford-Stuyvesant. With faculty approval, students may also choose to engage individuals and other groups as relevant to individual building sites. These activities will facilitate our engagement in a studio-wide discussion about primary issues, and the potential programs that could address them. As a Studio, we will select several programmatic directions that support the needs of local constituents. These programs will form the basis of all students' work in the Proposition phase.

Students will engage issues of conservation, design, and historic precedent and case study research during this phase. Questions to consider and explore include:

- Conservation: What are the materials found on the site(s)? Are they original or historic? How are they performing and why? How do current material conditions inform future interventions?

- **Design:** How has the site been used and how does this inform future usage? How could future users adapt the space to make it functional for desired programming? What types of programs might situate well within your site?
- **Historic precedent and case study research:** Are there other similar programs in comparable buildings? How are they working/not working, as viewed through a number of lenses (interpretation, resiliency, programming, access)? What do these examples tell us about adaptive reuse of similar sites? What are some key criteria (i.e. footprint, budget, funding) that can be gleaned from case studies? Are there other historical research elements needed to fill timeline voids or potential needs?

Tools for *Analysis* include:

- Skills gained in Archival Research Methods and in Preservation Planning & Policy.
- Advanced photography and measured drawings
- Precedent research
- Community engagement

Exercises:

- 5 **Precedents.** Research three to five precedent case studies. Consider local, regional and/or international examples.
- 6 **Alterations Chronology.** Identify likely alterations, including original, historic, and newer building elements. Hard copy deliverable for pin-up.
- 7 **Test Fits.** Begin preliminary test fit variations in plan, section and elevation. Consider site impacts. Hard copy deliverable for pin-up.
- 8 **Program in Context.** Research, photography and site mapping relative to proposed program, considering community issues. Hard copy deliverable for pin-up.

Required deliverables for *Analysis*' review are:

- Individual building orthographic drawings, including plans, sections and exterior elevations. Drawings must clearly indicate historic vs. altered/replacement elements. Drawings must explore 2-3 possible approaches to the existing building, relative to proposed program.
- Alterations chronology.
- Revision of A. Dolkart paper on historic research of individual building site. Digital PDF.
- Diagrams that explore programmatic adjacencies and usage, relative to existing building fabric.
- Summary of precedent case study findings relative to building typology and/or program, following prescribed outline. Maximum 1500 words; digital PDF.
- Brief description of three potential options for a Proposition for the site, following prescribed outline. Statement should position each option relative to the existing building's integrity and significance as well as researched contemporary values, needs, and priorities. Maximum 900 words; hard copy deliverable at Review and digital PDF.
- The above deliverables will be provided in digital and presentation (live) formats. Presentations should provide a high-level summary of work completed, focusing on key conceptual and historical points and findings. Include slide titles and/or captions. The digital submission will consist of the PDF for the live presentation, plus separate deliverables as noted above.

3 Proposition

At the start of the Proposition phase, faculty will meet with each student to confirm which proposed option will be pursued for the remainder of the term. Each student will then study the appropriateness of interventions required to execute the proposition. Work will include the following activities:

- Identify and prioritize solutions and accompanying recommendations
- Consider short and long-term strategies
- Outline a framework, make a case, and propose a design approach for the site and project that addresses historical significance and studies the impact of the proposal on the significant features of the site
- Contemplate realistic possibilities as well as more exploratory outcomes
- Define a purpose, envisioning a sustainable and resilient future for the site

Guidelines:

- For Proposition, one of the options outlined at the end of Analysis will be explored in more detail for a final design and preservation approach. For this purpose, an end user will be defined in the form of a stakeholder and/or owner.
- We encourage students to be creative in their approach and let discovery and examination from the previous two phases inform the outcomes.

Tools for *Proposition* include:

- Skills gained in Historical Research Methods: Interpreting Architecture and in Preservation Planning & Policy.
- Advanced photography, measured drawings, and other graphic/digital tools
- Precedent research
- Community engagement

Exercises:

- 9 **Final Test Fits.** Generate at least three test fit variations of final selected program.
- 10 **Building Impacts.** Explicate implications of proposed program and design on existing building, including clarity on elements that are retained, restored, and/or new.
- 11 **Draft Presentation and Drawing Formats.** Outline presentation draft, including drawing types, for review.

Required deliverables for *Propositions's* review are:

- Site plan and elevation; building floor plans, sections and exterior elevations
- A conditions assessment
- A three-dimensional drawing (axonometric, oblique or perspective) that is illustrative of the design approach
- At least one wall section or component detail that shows both historic and new materials
- Diagrams and drawings that explicate the design and its usage
- Project approach statement that clearly articulates validity of approach relative to community issues, program, and context. Maximum 750 words, digital PDF.

- The above deliverables will be provided in digital and presentation (live) formats. Presentations should provide a high-level summary of work completed, focusing on key conceptual and historical points and findings. Include slide titles and/or captions. The digital submission will consist of the PDF for the live presentation, plus separate deliverables as noted above.

Work in Studio is cumulative: each phase builds on research, conclusions, and criticism from the previous phase. End-of-semester deliverables include, in addition to Proposition deliverables, a final presentation and final report comprising all three phases.

Weekly Plan (forthcoming)

Resources and Bibliography (forthcoming)

¹Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., The Encyclopedia of New York City (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 94-95.

²NYU Furman Center. State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2015 (New York: NYU Furman Center, 2015) 1-21.

³Food Bank for New York City. New York City's Meal Gap; 2016 Trends Report (New York: Food Bank for New York City, 2016) 1-6.