COURSE DESCRIPTION
This seminar explores how the field of urban design contends with pressing urban issues. This semester we will examine the practice of contemporary urban design through a focus on how urban design practitioners (broadly defined) are confronting the climate crisis. The impacts of climate change on urban regions are both enormous in their scale and existential in their implications for many places and people. The field and practice of urban design has the potential to make significant contributions to urban climate action, both in decarbonizing urban regions and in adapting to now-inevitable shifts in landscape hazards, from drought and wildfire to floods and coastal storms.

However, climate change is also challenging many underlying assumptions and practices of urban design. How can designers accommodate the deep uncertainty of future climate change into their proposals? How can they address the enormously uneven impacts of climate change given dominant state and private client driven modes of practice? If we conceive of equitable urban climate change adaptation as requiring a generations long process of pluralistic deliberation and debate about how cities will adjust to climate change, how can urban designers enable and shape such a process?

The seminar features five public lectures by contemporary practitioners and scholars who have been invited to share their work with our community this semester. The speakers will address five critical and contested dimensions of the climate / design nexus: 1) the role of the state action, 2) designing with natural processes and forces, 3) user and community participation; 4) designing with and for data; and 5) reimagining property and ownership.

While each of the speakers will address their climate crisis related work, the questions and concerns that they raise are relevant to the practice of urban design more broadly. Through the lectures, in-class discussion, and a term project the course will explore some basic questions about the practice of urban design: What do urban designers know? What do urban designers do? And, what is the agency of urban design? While the focus of our lectures this term is on design and the climate crisis, the issues raised and discussed are relevant to broader debates in contemporary urban design practice.
FORMAT & ASSIGNMENTS
The course is comprised of public lectures, in-class discussions, reading responses, and a term project. Class meeting times alternate based on the public lecture schedule: unless otherwise stated, public lectures are held in 12:30-2pm City Arena, while seminar meetings are held on alternating weeks on Wednesday mornings in the classroom (10-401). Class discussions, led by student groups, will explore implications for contemporary urban design practice as formulated through the public lectures and supporting reading material (including a mix of readings supplied by the guest lecturers and instructor).

There are three main assignments for the course: 1) reading responses, 2) group discussion leading, and 3) an individual term project.

Reading Responses
Students will individually submit a 250-word written reading response in advance of each in-class discussion session that critically reflects on urban design themes as presented by speakers and in course readings. While you are encouraged to apply the ideas in the readings to your own experiences of practice and urban living/observation, your responses should always directly engage with words and ideas in the assigned readings. There will be a total of five reading responses, to be uploaded digitally on the Stellar class website by the start of each in-class discussion.

Lead Discussion Lead & Typology
In groups, students will develop a 30 to 40-minute presentation, supported by slides, exploring the topic for the week’s discussion, relating the work of the public lecturers to the reading assigned for the week and other materials, as appropriate. Group size will depend on class enrollment. The main goal of the presentation is to provide a theoretical context to complement the lectures. Groups are encouraged to introduce precedent projects (by the lecturer and others within the field) and basic graphic/visual analysis in their presentations.

While the content and format of the presentation is flexible, each team will include, as part of their presentation, a preliminary typology, laying out different ways that urban designers have engaged with the phenomena of the week (e.g., state, nature, participation, data, and property). For instance, during the first section of the seminar we will discuss the role of the state as an actor in urban design. The team leading the discussion for that week might construct a typology of state roles in urban design, including: state as builder/client, state as regulator of private market actors, state as place marketer, state as provider of infrastructural framework, etc. The typology should be coherent and well-reasoned, but it will necessarily be incomplete and open to debate and discussion. The discussion leading team should illustrate different components of their typology with examples and should discuss whether and how the demands of the climate crisis alter pre-existing urban design typologies.

The group will then lead a 45-minute class discussion based on key questions that they pose from the readings. As a group, we will amend and expand on the proposed typology.
Term Project
Over the course of the term, we will explore five dimensions of urban design and climate change: state, nature, data, property, and participation. Each student will choose a topic for in-depth research within one of these areas.

- **Proposals** for the term project are due during the final class before Spring Break, **March 18**. The proposal should be no more than two pages of text explaining the topic/question, key references, and case studies from recent/contemporary urban design practice.

- **The final products** of the term project will include both a **presentation** and a written **paper**. The presentations will take place during the final two class sessions of the semester, **April 29** and **May 6**. The final paper will be due on **May 12**. Given that urban design, as a discipline, requires written, oral, and visual rhetoric, **students are encouraged to make use of writing, speaking, and original visualization in their analysis**.

SCHEDULE
*Note: schedule is subject to change*

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>2/5</th>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>*2/10</td>
<td>12:30-2pm</td>
<td>City Arena</td>
<td>STATE: Daniel Aldana Cohen...............................</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>*2/24</td>
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<td>BOSTON: Panel....................................................</td>
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<td>12:30-2pm</td>
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BIOGRAPHIES
A preliminary list of invited lecturers was generated through fall semester meetings between a small group of CDD faculty and students. Lecturers were chosen to represent a range of background experience, geographic location, and approach to urban spatial practice.

Daniel Aldana Cohen
University of Pennsylvania, Data for Progress
Cohen is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, where he directs the Socio-Spatial Climate Collaborative, or (SC)2. He is also a Senior Fellow at Data for Progress. In 2018-19, he was a Member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. He is the co-author of A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green Deal. He is currently completing a book project called Street Fight: Climate Change and Inequality in the 21st Century City, under contract with Princeton University Press, to be published in 2021. His research and writing have appeared in Nature, Public Culture, The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, The Guardian, The Nation, Jacobin, Dissent, and elsewhere. He works on the politics of climate change, investigating the intersections of climate change, housing, political economy, social movements, and inequalities of race and social class in the United States and Brazil. He is working on Green New Deal policy development, including the Green New Deal for Public Housing Act, through collaborations between (SC)2, the McHarg Center, Data for Progress, People’s Action’s Homes Guarantee campaign, and several progressive members of Congress.

Matthijs Bouw
One Architecture and Urbanism
Matthijs Bouw is a Dutch architect and urbanist and founder of One Architecture (est. 1995), an award-winning Amsterdam and New York-based design and planning firm. He is the Rockefeller Urban Resilience Fellow for the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design. Bouw’s work at Penn theorizes and positions design as an integrator and innovator among scales, disciplines, actors and issues in urban resilience and water management projects. He is a driving force between RBD U, a network of design schools that collaborate on resilience issues, and is developing the Chief Resilience Officer curriculum for 100 Resilient Cities. Additionally, he researches how to achieve and increase ‘resilience value’ in the implementation of complex projects. Bouw’s practice is known for its unique approach in which programmatic, financial, technical and organizational issues are addressed, communicated and resolved through design. Bouw has been a pioneer in the use of design as a tool for collaboration, for instance through the development of ‘Design Studios’ as an instrument to support the
Netherlands’ Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment with its long-term planning. In New York City, the office co-leads the BIG Team that won the Rebuild by Design competition for the flood protection of Manhattan, and is currently part of the multi-disciplinary teams executing the first phase of the East Side Coastal Resiliency project for Lower Manhattan, as well as planning the Lower Manhattan Coastal Protection project. In Panama City, he is the urban designer in the ‘Water Dialogues’ team. In the Netherlands, One are part of the ‘Hackable City’ team for Buiksloterham, a large scale brownfield redevelopment in Amsterdam-Noord based on the principles of the circular economy.

Boston Climate Resilience Panel
This panel will include representatives from firms that have played a leading role in recent climate resilience planning and design efforts in Boston, including:

- **Matthew Little**  
  *Principle Urban Designer, Utile*  
  Mr. Little led Utile’s work on the BPDA’s recent “Coastal Flood Resilience Design Guidelines.”

- **Ken Goulding**  
  *Principle Planner and Director of Sasaki Strategies & Tamar Warburg*  
  *Director of Sustainability, Sasaki*  
  Sasaki was a key member of the team behind the initial “Climate Ready Boston” study and report issued in 2016.

- **Meera Deean**  
  *Senior Urban Designer, Boston Planning and Development Authority*  
  As an urban designer in both the public and private sector, Ms. Deean has been involved in reshaping the future of Boston’s coastline in response to the threats of climate change.

Property, Climate, Design Panel
This panel will feature speakers whose work engages with the question: how can designers create, support, and deploy alternative property regimes in response to the climate crisis. The panel will include representatives from:

- **Michael LaFonda**  
  *id22: Institute for Creative Sustainability*  
  Id22 is a multidisciplinary, non-profit organization based in Berlin. A focus is on the theory and practice of creative sustainability, emphasizing self-organization and local urban initiatives. The Institute coordinates educational services, networking events and publications exploring CoHousing and related projects like CoWorking and community gardening in the context of a post-growth, common good, non-speculative and democratic urban development.

- **Cristina Gamboa**  
  *Lacol Architectural Cooperative*  
  Lacol is a Barcelona-based cooperative architecture and planning firm. They seek to use architecture as a tool to intervene critically in their environment. They root their activity in a horizontal system of labor, acting alongside society with justice and solidarity in mind. Recent projects including the LaBorda cooperative housing block innovate in their participatory design processes, their reimagining of spatial relations for cooperative living, and improvements in energy and ecological performance.

- **Bertrand Fouss**  
  *Co-Founder, Solon Collective and Director of Strategy, Coop Carbone*
Solon is a Montreal-based non-profit organization which stimulates and supports citizen action in the deployment of local collective projects, for the creation of friendly, united and ecological living environments. Coop Carbone is a solidarity cooperative whose mission is to contribute to the fight against climate change by supporting the implementation of collaborative projects. Active on the carbon market and in the energy, agriculture and mobility sectors, Coop Carbone relies on relationships with its members and its various public and private partners to create collaborative, creative projects.

**Barbara Brown Wilson**
*University of Virginia*

Barbara Brown Wilson’s research and teaching focus on the history, theory, ethics, and practice of sustainable community design and development, and on the role of urban social movements in the built world. Dr. Wilson writes for both academic and mainstream audiences, and is the author of *Resilience for All: Striving for Equity through Community-Driven Design*, and co-author of *Questioning Architectural Judgement: The Problem of Codes in the United States*. Her research is often change-oriented, meaning she collaborates with community partners to identify opportunities for engaged and integrated sustainable community development that creates knowledge to serve both local and educational communities.

**Javier Vergara Petruscu**
*Ciudad Emergente*

Javier is a Co-founder and the CEO of Ciudad Emergente a Lab of Tactics and Tools for Citizen Urbanism. He specializes in combining social innovation projects, entrepreneurship, citizen participation and technologies to improve the quality of life in cities. He has worked on several urban development projects in Chile, Europe and the United States. Javier is also a co-founder of Plataforma Urbana, Plataforma Arquitectura, and CitiSent. In 2006 he was voted one of the 100 Young Leaders of Chile by the publication El Sabado and the Center for Strategic Leadership of Universidad de Adolfo Ibáñez. He is currently a professor of Tactical Urbanism at the Universidad Diego Portales (UDP), a professor of Urban Start-Ups at Universidad del Desarrollo (UDD), and a professor of the Masters in Urban Design (MPUR) at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

**READING LIST**

*Note: Reading selections may change. Any changes will be announced by email and/or in class and appropriate materials will be posted on the course’s Learning Modules site.*

The reading selections for the seminar are drawn from a range of sources. For the public lecture sessions, the readings are primarily based on recommendations from the speakers themselves. Readings for each of the discussion sections include: 1) one or more piece laying out a conceptual model for the understanding the practice of urban design; 2) pieces that illuminate some aspect of the relationship of the phenomena of
interest (e.g., state, nature, etc) to the practice of urban design; 3) pieces on the relationship of urban design and climate change.

It is essential that you read all of the main readings for each session. If your team is responsible for leading the class discussion on a particular topic, you should also read and comment on the optional readings.

2.05 Class Introduction
10-401, 9-11am

Reading

Optional Reading


*2.10 Speaker 1: State
Daniel Aldana Cohen
City Arena, 12:30-2pm

Reading


Optional Reading


**2.19 Discussion 1: State**
*10-401, 9-11am*

**Reading**


**Optional Reading**


**2.24 Speaker 2: Infrastructure/Nature/Landscape**
Matthijs Bouw, One Urbanism
*City Arena, 12:30-2pm*

**Reading**


3.4 Discussion 2: Nature/Landscape/Infrastructure
10-401, 9-11am

Reading


Optional Reading


3.11 Speaker 3: Panel: Urban Design for Climate Resilience in Boston
City Arena, 12:30-2pm

Reading


3.18 Discussion 3: Data (TERM PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE)
10-401, 9-11am

Reading


**Optional Reading**


**4.1 Speaker 4: Property, Design, and Climate Panel**
*City Arena, 12:30-2pm*

**Reading:**
Lacol: *Barcelona Coop Planning and Design*


Id22: *Berlin Coop Housing*


**4.8 Discussion 4: Property**
*10-401, 9-11am*

**Reading**


4.15 Speaker 5: Pluralism, People, and Participation
Barbara Brown Wilson
City Arena, 12:30-2pm

Reading


4.22 Speaker 6: Javier Vergara, Ciudad Emergente
*10-401, 9-10am

Reading
Ciudad Emergente, “Projects and Processes.” https://ciudademergente.org/build

Discussion 5: Pluralism, People, and Participation

Reading


4.29 Final Proposal Presentations
10-401, 9-11am

5.6 Final Proposal Presentations
10-401, 9-11am
Grading
Participation in class discussions: 20%
Reading responses: 25%
Group lecture presentation: 25%
Term Project: 30% (10% Presentation, 20% Written Paper)

Policies
Attendance: Attendance is required at all public lectures, alternating with in-class sessions on Wednesdays, see schedule. Excused absences must be cleared in advance with instructor due to religious holiday, family emergency, or illness, with a maximum of two excused absences. Further absences will result in decrease of final grade or failure to pass the course. Unexcused absences and arriving to class more than 15 minutes late will result in decrease of final grade or failure to pass the course.

Disabilities: If you have a documented disability, or any other problem you think may affect your ability to perform in class, please see the instructor early in the semester so that accommodations can be made.

Academic Integrity: Refer to MIT’s policy https://integrity.mit.edu/
Grading standards: Refer to MIT’s policy http://web.mit.edu/faculty/governance/rules/2.60.html

Writing and Communication Support
From the Writing and Communication Center at MIT: The WCC at 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. Not counting the WCC’s director’s years (he started the WCC in 1982), the WCC lecturers have a combined 135 years’ worth of teaching here at MIT (ranging from 5 to 25 years). The WCC works with undergraduate, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alums, and spouses. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with all English as Second Language issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in E18-233, 50 Ames Street. To guarantee yourself a time, make an appointment with our online scheduler. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to https://mit.mywconline.com/. To access the WCC’s many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.