The Design Studio + Mississippi State University School of Architecture

Studio learning is a unique experience which calls upon the student's ability to make judgments regarding their own investigations. Because architecture is a visual discipline the studio setting was developed to afford the student an opportunity to create and observe their work relative to a field of similarly distinguished investigations. The notion of comparison and contrast is critical to the successful implementation of studio-based learning (SBL) and is therefore at the heart of the School of Architecture (S/ARC) learning objectives. The studio environment is intended to offer a venue for shared learning through adjacency and common objective. The notion of a Studio Culture implies a shared atmosphere for learning and because design and artistic creation do not conform to the traditional class schedule format the studio is made available at all times of the day. It is intended to offer a place for investigative academic pursuit equipped with the resources and infrastructures needed to perform the rigorous exploration of ideas. The faculty encourages students to take advantage of the open nature of the studio environment with the understanding that great ideas don't always come between 8 and 5. This being said the students themselves are responsible for their conduct and use of the environment as a shared space for learning.

Studio-based learning is the generative armature for the study of architecture at the Mississippi State, School of Architecture. Studio projects are intended to delineate a shared field of inquiry, open discussion and creative design explorations enabling spirited, rewarding, interactive, and exciting academic engagement. S/ARC encourages all members of the studio community to offer constructive criticism, knowledge, methodology, techniques, and experiences.

> *"Studio-based learning is a shared learning environment in which ambiguous problems are addressed iteratively through multi-modal analysis, proposition, and critique" (Prof. Monson and Prof. Poros, 2003).*
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> *In studio-based learning, the teacher and students work through design problems that are ambiguous in beginnings, means, and ends. The student is engaged in a sequential process of proposition: the design of an artifact, which may be physical, conceptual, or a combination of both. The teacher—who is called a "critic"—has the responsibility to define the design problem and anticipate what particular required academic content those ambiguities might uncover. This is one of the places where teacher content mastery is a key issue to the pedagogy. All of the discursive aspects of the pedagogy are used by students in the critique of their work: teacher-student discourse, student-student discourse, and design object-student discourse, which is the feedback provided through the manipulation of and reflection on the artifact being made. Studio Based Learning propositions are evaluated by critique, since there is never only one answer to a design problem. Formative forms of critique are embedded in the activity of the studio, and the teacher's role in these constant discursive corrections is the other place where teacher content mastery is a key issue to the pedagogy. Because SBL problems are ambiguous, they must be worked at iteratively. Students engage failure and correction to build their skills of self-reflection.*

As the primary means of assessment studio instructors conduct individual critiques with students and document their evaluations of each student's performance in objective written or oral assessments that address both process and product with, emphasis on the growth and development of student designers. Students are also asked to evaluate each other's work as peers and are asked at the close of each semester to evaluate their design studio faculty. Through this evaluation process, we promote honest communication while working to improve the success of future studios and the success of individual students and faculty members. Success in the program is a personal responsibility. Students must meet all design studio performance expectations and take an active role in their own development as designers by maintaining a portfolio of design work and making efforts to respond to the feedback they receive from their studio instructors and outside critics alike. In many cases student design work is assessed prior to the end of the semester with time awarded to respond to criticism and improve the students' semester outcomes.

Collaborative Engagement + the Design Studio

The studio learning experience challenges every student at an appropriate level supporting individual student strengths and helping to remedy weaknesses. The S/ARC fosters an environment of inclusion and mutual respect for individual abilities. The mission of the S/ARC is not the education of production technicians but rather the education of critically minded future architects able to work thoughtfully and progressively through complex issues of design. For students to get the most benefit from individual and group critiques, they are expected to work in a consistently productive manner throughout the semester. This will ensure a high degree of faculty feedback and facilitate student directed learning throughout the entire semester.

Reviews are intended to be learning experiences that foster an open two-way dialogue between students and reviewers with diverse perspectives (outside reviewers brought in). Students should be active participants in the reviews of their peers. S/ARC utilizes numerous review formats including formal reviews, small group, individual student desk critiques and a "science fair" like format in which all students simultaneously exhibit their work while guest and faculty critics meet with individual students or student teams at locations throughout the building. In this kind of review there are several scheduled critique discussions taking place concurrently, and students generally have more than one discussion over the course of the review. Between scheduled critiques, students visit the exhibits of other students, participate in one another's critiques, engage in informal discussions about projects, and present their work to upper and lower classman peers.

A Greater Context for Architecture

At Mississippi State University we support a diversity of approaches to studio instruction and offer a broad range of studio experiences in our curriculum. All members of the faculty participate in design studio teaching so that students are exposed to the diverse knowledge base of the faculty and can therefore develop a more extensive understanding of architectural practice. We value the lessons and contributions we make to the university and local community alike. S/ARC based research is often instituted through design studios that undertake interdisciplinary collaborations and encourage collaborative learning experiences that prepare graduates for the professional environment.

S/ARC envisions the study of architecture to be in close association with the study of related building arts. We remain committed to the highest standards of tectonics and beauty, to understanding how works of architecture are assembled, while continually exploring the meaning of craft in the context of increasingly sophisticated practices and technologies that characterize contemporary society. We are idealists and pragmatists, viewing design as a form of research, with innovation the consequence of persistent studio exploration and unremitting discourse. We encourage intellectual inquiry as the basis for design exploration, and we seek design excellence without dictating a specific design aesthetic, production method or ideology.

Our studio culture is based on a tradition where studio teaching serves as the primary means of integrating all the meaningful design issues - social and behavioral, cultural, theoretical, technological, economic, political, environmental and professional - necessary for meaningful design solutions. S/ARC faculty support student interests in diverse approaches to design, and students are encouraged to initiate and take interest in new or speculative approaches to studio projects.

Where + How we work

Situated in a culturally rich and unique region of the country S/ARC celebrates the architect's responsibility and capability to improve (impact) human conditions and environmental quality. Our endeavors in the design studio are multipart, where physical, social, ecological and cultural concerns demand acknowledgement, and diverse stakeholders warrant a voice. Studio projects explore architectural issues found in many forms of context and building type while addressing the individual and collective needs of people.   Opportunities for students to travel nationally and internationally, and with numerous research centers hosting design studios, S/ARC demonstrates a commitment to encourage students to make thoughtful, meaningful, and appropriate contributions to the diverse physical and cultural contexts they encounter after graduation. The school encourages approaches to design-based learning that engage students in meeting the needs of real communities and learning from the world.

Environmental Stewardship

Operating at a series of scales, all studios, regardless of emphasis, are encouraged to incorporate methods for enabling students to address the issues of environmental stewardship. Mississippi is a state poised for intense economic development and population growth, the S/ARC realizes and puts great importance toward its position as a creator of independently minded and thoughtfully prepared critical practitioners.

Experimentation with New Methods and Media

The studio environment fosters speculative and innovative work; students are encouraged to explore new technologies and materials in both the proposed architectural project as well as in the representation of the designed artifact. S/ARC is committed to facilitating speculative student based research via the employment of emergent design methods and media.

Student Development

Students are expected to bring their full passion for architecture and a desire to explore and learn new skills. They are expected to demonstrate academic dedication, excellence and critical attention to work. Students are expected to exhibit the core values of academic/studio culture through their actions and work ethic. Students are expected to recognize the studio working environment as a precursor to professional studio involvement. Students are expected to be the keepers of the shared studio environment, adhering to the Mississippi State University Honor Code and rules of student conduct put forth in this document.

Responsibility of students:

- Respect differences in values, background, and interests of students and other faculty
- Lead by example and embody the ideals of life learning and continuing education
- Facilitate healthy debate and discussion
- Respect class time
- Engage community and profession
- Communicate goals and expectations for individual learning outcomes
- Respect for the studio and the working environment
- Take responsibility of one's actions and the actions of those brought into the studio

Time Management + Pacing One's Work

As members of active learning communities, students taking studio are expected to define for themselves a balance between design studio and their other curricular and extra-curricular responsibilities. Design studio education is intended to address time management strategies that help students achieve success in all their endeavors.

Over tiredness

The studio / lab environment requires that students are aware at all times that they are in a potentially dangerous work environment. It is necessary that students are aware of potential hazards for their own safety and that of others. The dangers of over tiredness are of serious concern to S/ARC. Students should alert each other to situations when they should not drive without being a danger to their own lives and those of others. Students should not drive, use power tools or shop equipment when overly sleep deprived. Studios should balance the demand for production, development of ideas and critical reflection and the process work derived.

Studio Culture Assessment + Maintenance of the Studio Culture Policy

- Dialog among and between the CAAD administration, faculty and students, is an important component to developing and measuring studio culture. Productive dialog (student to faculty, student to administration, CAAD Dean's Council, student organizations) for the state of the school is encouraged and should be solicited by the administration and faculty alike.
- A studio culture committee of students and faculty has been formed. The charge of the committee is to develop a yearly forum as follows: 1) student issues will be brought up through AIAS, NOMAS, Deans Council; 2) after a set date, the committee will meet to discuss and organize the issues; 3) a date for a discussion forum with a facilitator, a panel of students and faculty, and feedback from the audience will be set; 4) feedback will be noted, summarized, and acted on accordingly.
- Particular questions about studio culture should be developed by AIAS and faculty to be included as part of assessment.
- The studio culture document should be revisited and updated each spring semester.
- This policy statement and the recommendations it contains will be reviewed periodically in open forums that invite the participation of all students and faculty members.

Faculty Development

The faculty are responsible for educating, inspiring and mentoring students. They can be expected to bring their full passion for architecture and wealth of experience to class and provide attention to each student. In return, faculty can expect students to demonstrate academic dedication, excellence and critical attention to work. Faculty are to lead by first practicing the core values of academic/studio culture while students are expected to demonstrate those values through their actions and work ethic.

Responsibility of faculty:

- Work individually to develop with students self-defined learning objectives
- Respect differences in values, background, and interests of students and other faculty
- Lead by example and embody the ideals of life learning and continuing education
- Facilitate developmental debate and discussion
- Respect class time and educational concerns outside the S/ARC
- Engage community and profession in Mississippi and beyond
- Communicate course goals, expectations, and deadlines at the beginning of the semester and as they change, including documentation of schedule for classes in the syllabus when possible at the beginning of the semester.

Administrative Development

The Administration is responsible for upholding the vision and direction of the school and engaging faculty and students in decisions about the future of the program. The Administration is also responsible for facilitating the faculty and students living up to their responsibilities.

Responsibility of administration:

- Provide a healthy and safe learning and work environment that enables exploration and up to date means of creative production
- Maintain and monitor building condition and physical resources relative to peer institutions via annual report made available to both faculty and students
- Support a challenging and diverse curriculum (lectures, concerts, gallery events etc.)
- Manage resources to provide opportunities for scholarships and study abroad
- Respect differences in values, background, and interests of other students and faculty
- Communicate expectations to students and faculty
- Dialog with students pertaining to current issues in the studio (Dean's council)
- Engage the community and profession

S/ARC Operating Procedures

1. The S|ARC building is open 24 hours a day during the fall, spring, and summer terms. After 5 p.m., the studio doors in the original building are operated by an I.D. card-reader coded for architecture students only. It is important that students observe this security policy in order to assure the safety of personnel and property.

2. Specialized facilities such as the computer lab and woodworking shop are available to authorized students during posted hours of operation, or by special arrangements. The shop should never be used without proper training and supervision.

3. Neither the School of Architecture nor Mississippi State University has an insurance program to cover the cost of theft that may occur in conjunction with the S|ARC program. Therefore, each student is responsible for maintaining and protecting his/her own property and should seek to protect the property of others. Any theft of property should be reported immediately to the CAAD administration and a police report filed.

4. The multi-level spaces in the building create visual excitement and enhance the learning environment. At the same time, multi-level spaces present the potential for bodily harm if not used as intended. Students are expected to act as mature individuals and to refrain from behavior that might result in injury to themselves or others, or damage to the building.

5. Each student in the design studio will be assigned a desk and will then be responsible for maintaining the equipment and surrounding areas. The studio must be kept in an orderly professional manner, with clear access through them at all times. Plants and other such personalization of spaces are welcomed. Students are expected to show respect for their immediate environment by cleaning up after themselves and refraining from littering in the common spaces and on the building grounds.

6. Sound equipment with speakers is not allowed in the studio. Headphones must be worn for all sound equipment (including TVs) at all times. Violators will have their equipment confiscated.

7. Surge protectors and power blocks may not be ganged together in a series; use only ONE continuous UL Approved surge protector from each outlet. Extension cords are NOT allowed in the studios.

8. The use of cellular telephones during any class time is prohibited. Students who bring their cell phones into the design studio area outside of class time must keep the phones in a silent or vibrate mode and must exit the studio area to take or make phone calls. This policy will be enforced in order to protect the interests of all students. Violators will have their cell phones confiscated.

9. Students may build models and work on other projects in the carpeted areas of the barn. However, if this material is not removed by 7:00 a.m. each morning, it is subject to being thrown away.

10. Students are prohibited from using any type of aerosol, (spray cans) including spray paint, glues or fixatives in or outside of the building. Acrylic or latex-based paints only.

11. Students may use corridor wall areas as pin-up space only when directed by the studio faculty. However, if this material is not removed by 7:00 a.m. each morning, it is subject to being thrown away. The glazed greenhouse section adjacent to the library may never be used for pinup space. When using public space for pinning up and discussing work, it is the student's responsibility to clean all surfaces of tape residue.

12. Students are not permitted to bring animals inside the building, and may not leave animals on leashes outside the building.

13. Students are not permitted to bring bicycles or motorcycles inside the building. Students should park bicycles and motorcycles only in designated areas. Bicycles found inside the building will be confiscated.

14. Cigarettes or other tobacco products are not permitted in the building at any time and if consumed outside the building must be used a minimum of 20' from the entrance to the building and/or may NOT used on any of the patio/paved areas outside Giles Hall. Any associated refuse MUST be placed in appropriate receptacles.

15. No alcoholic beverages are permitted in the building at any time.

16. Any student involved in criminal behavior may be subject to prosecution by civil authorities.

17. At the end of the fall semester, all projects and equipment must be placed in - or on top of - the desks to allow for floor cleaning. At the end of the spring semester, all projects and equipment must be removed from the studios, hallways, and the Gallery by the last day of final exams. Equipment and projects left behind will be thrown away. Community Service hours will be charged to the student(s) found not complying with this requirement.

18. Any maintenance problems should be immediately reported to the CAAD administration.

19. Fire extinguishers and first-aid kits are located in various parts of the building. Students should familiarize themselves with the locations and alert the CAAD administration of first aid items that need to be replaced. The extinguishers are to be used only in case of emergency.

20. All trash collected in the building shall be placed in the dumpster on the loading dock, or in bags at locations designated by the faculty. All faculty and studios are responsible for managing studio generated trash. Recycling bins are provided for plastics, aluminum, paper and cardboard. They should be emptied when full.

21. A 6"-0" egress path must be maintained at all times along the south wall of the barn ground floor studio. A 5'-0" egress path must be maintained at all times along the north wall of the barn ground floor studio at the glazed greenhouse section of the library. A 4'-0" egress path must be maintained at all times in all other studio spaces in the building. Any projects, equipment, or furniture found blocking these paths will be discarded and community service hours will be charged to the student(s) found not complying with this requirement.

22. Any outside visitors (students, family and children) to the studio are the responsibility of the inviting party. Damage done to the work of other students by outside visitors becomes the responsibility of the inviting party.

Studio Culture Policy Arbitration Process

If any party to the academic/studio culture relationship structure (individual student, group of students, faculty, administration) feels that another party is not complying with the Academic/Studio Culture Policy, the aggrieved party can file an Arbitration Request with the Architecture Director subject to certain exceptions discussed below and in accordance with the Policy Implementation Outline. The intent of this process is to provide a mechanism for the timely resolution of an Academic/Studio Culture Policy issue within the course of a semester or outside the semester boundaries.

The Arbitration Process under this Policy is subject to all official Mississippi State University policies and procedures, including without limitation MSU's code of student conduct and sexual assault/misconduct policies. In the event an Arbitration Request pertains to a code of student conduct violation, an allegation by a student of harassment or sexual misconduct, or involves a grievance by one student against another student, the Dean of Students should be promptly notified.

Policy Implementation Outline

Step 1: The aggrieved Party meets with Architecture Director to discuss the aggrieved Party's complaint.
Step 2: The Architecture Program Director will determine if informal resolution is appropriate, and if appropriate, will meet with both Parties to attempt to reconcile the issue(s) at hand.
Step 3: File Policy Arbitration Request: If informal resolution is unsuccessful, the aggrieved party can complete an Arbitration Request Form and file it with the Architecture Director.
Step 4. Assemble Committee: The Director receives the request and assembles an Academic/Studio Culture Policy Review Committee within 5 days of receiving the request.
Step 5. Convene First Arbitration Session: The Director convenes an Academic/Studio Culture Policy Review Committee Arbitration Session to hear verbal positions presented from both parties.
Step 6. Meet to compile Report/Recommendation: Academic/Studio Culture Policy Review Committee meets to complete a report and define recommendations.
Step 7. Convene Second Arbitration Session: Academic/Studio Culture Policy Review Committee reconvenes Arbitration Session within two days (or at the discretion of the Director) of the first Arbitration Session to make verbal presentation of recommendation.
Step 8. Process complete: The recommendation is submitted to the Architecture Director.

Students found to be in violation of S/ARC Operating Procedures

As a means of addressing violations to the Operating Procedures the faculty/program director will determine an appropriate number of "S/ARC community service hours" to be completed by the student offender. Examples include:

- Cleaning of studio and/or communal work areas
- Re-painting of communal areas
- Construction / Repairs to communal areas
- Or more specific tasks linked to specific infractions to the Operating Procedures outlined above