

A Brief Guide to Architecture & Urban Design Studio Courses at UChicago

updated for Autumn 2020 by Luke Joyner (lukejoy@) - page 1 of 2

In recent years, the University has begun to develop a range of courses that offer studio experience with architecture and urban design. These courses originate in the [Art History](#) department, count toward the [Architectural Studies](#) minor, and are supported through the [Urban Architecture & Design](#) initiative, but are open to any students interested in buildings, cities and place. We hope this brief guide helps you understand what these courses offer, and how you might navigate them over your time here. If you'd like more information, or have any questions, please contact Luke Joyner (lukejoy@) or Kelly O'Brien (kmobrien@). (If you have questions about the Architectural Studies minor more broadly, please contact Katherine Taylor: k-taylor@.) We'd all be very happy to talk.

Our studio courses range widely in emphasis, process and tone, but all rely on the idea that working immersively on substantial, creative design projects can enrich any student's relationship to the built environment, and to society. These courses support students who want to pursue careers in design, and students who don't... students who have ample experience with a creative or artistic process, and students for whom such a process is new. The courses benefit (we hope) from this breadth of student experience and objective.

These are humanities courses, in the sense that they validate people, ideas, narratives, details, creative possibility, and subjective yet rigorous attention to the world around us. Many, but not all, engage the city of Chicago through exploration. Many, but not all, draw on critical reading and conversation alongside the studio component. Many, but not all, offer opportunities for group work and a collaborative mindset. We strongly suggest consulting with Luke or the course instructor if you have questions about the focus and expectations of a particular course.

Fisher Studio Houses
Reborelli/Miller (1936)



Photo from field trip
in ARTH 24190 studio.

We offer courses at the following levels:

- **Introductory & Skills Courses:** In addition to *Understanding the Built Environment* (ARTH 20700), a non-studio course that nonetheless provides an excellent basis for future studio work, we currently offer a handful of skills courses that acquaint students with useful design techniques and ways of thinking, without the pressure of a major studio project. These courses include *Drawing and the Making of Architecture* (ARTH 17002) and *Skills and Processes for Architecture & Urban Design* (ARTH 24205).

- **Open Studio Courses:** The majority of studio courses offered – ranging from studio/seminar hybrid courses that couple studio work with historical inquiry, to formal investigations of particular techniques or materials, to speculative philosophical courses that challenge accepted standards – fit here. These courses are open to anyone, and will actively support students at all levels, from those with no prior experience whatsoever to those who've taken several of these classes already. (Some instructors may *suggest* a baseline of experience, but no course in this tier will require any.)

- **Advanced Studio Courses:** A small number of studio courses will strongly suggest past enrollment in at least one of the introductory or open courses, and will not directly support students with no background in the topics or techniques. These courses will be clearly marked, and all of them will require instructor consent.

As we develop more studio courses, we hope it's becoming easier and clearer for all students to find an effective path through them. Even if you don't have any specific questions, we're happy to consult with you on such a path.

A Note on Time and Energy: While students can expect introductory and skills courses to represent a slightly more modest commitment of time and energy, all of the Open and Advanced studio courses are likely to be challenging and time-consuming. Different instructors will have slightly different expectations, all studio instructors are sympathetic to students' time and responsibilities, and many students find studio courses fun and engaging; still, we recommend taking these classes when you're able to devote substantial effort to them. Likewise, we discourage students from taking multiple studio classes at once, or taking studio classes alongside four or more additional courses.

A Note on Instructor Consent: Many of these studio courses, including some courses open to everyone and all advanced courses, require instructor consent. This is not meant to be a barrier, but rather an additional means of support to help all students enroll in courses that best fit their academic interests and goals. As with consent-required courses across the College, bidding during pre-registration does nothing, as official enrollment happens during a later period that usually coincides with or follows Add/Drop. We encourage you to contact instructors much sooner, though, so that you're on their radar or provisional list, and they can help provide you with useful information.

For each academic quarter, we also produce an information sheet detailing courses on the built environment from across a range of departments. Studio courses are a small subset of these offerings; if you'd like a copy of this sheet at any point, please contact Kelly or Luke.