Welcome to PLAN 517 - a course focusing on the fundamentals of urban design theory and methods. This is a required course for Urban Design students and a foundation for anyone interested in gaining a basic urban design literacy. It meets the distributional requirement for the Urban Design and Transportation area within SCARP’s Masters level degree program.

PLAN 517 is an entry point into the urban design field, from which students can build deeper understanding, with additional coursework and focused research. It is open to all SCARP students and they will be given priority during registration. Students from other graduate programs - Architecture and Landscape Architecture, in particular - are encouraged to register early for the waiting list section, however. No prior design or drawing experience is required.

As a course, PLAN 517 provides a preliminary overview of urbanism—history, theory, social science, etc.—mixed with some fundamentals of design. As such, a basic introduction to graphic techniques of representation (section, plan, model, 2D layout, etc.) will be included as a part of the course. Be mindful, however, that this course is more concerned with “how to see the city as a designer” and becoming comfortable with multi-scalar thinking, rather than specifically designing the city or its spaces.

Students will be working in a studio-type environment with a combination of short lectures, group presentations, graphic exercises and individual dialogue with the course instructor. One of the objectives of this course is to provide you with the skills and techniques necessary to succeed in subsequent urban design courses.

The basis of the course content will focus on understanding how urban design theory is applied in the design of the physical environment. Metro Vancouver will be the focus, since we can experience it first hand during the semester. Towards this end, readings will be integrated with site visits and graphical analyses of urban fabric. We will discuss cities at multiple scales and apply our cumulative understanding to local sites and developments. The course is designed to provide a collaborative, interactive, applied and community-based environment for the development of spatial thinking and basic urban design literacy.

Skills introduced in the course include: basic drawing, spatial analysis, urban design measurement and urban cartography. Lectures and presentations will cover topics ranging from design thinking, spatial memory and creativity to land-use, zoning, design standards and graphic and verbal communication of design work.
Objectives

This course has a number of learning objectives nested within the urban design specialization sequence at SCARP. It offers students a number of tools for developing their creativity and design capacities, interpreting/evaluating design work, and representing their own design visions. It also offers conceptual tools for guiding urban design projects.

The course also offers students an environment for developing their spatial awareness and spatial thinking, as well as introducing historical trends and theoretical constructs that will enable you to engage in basic urban design discourse. An emphasis on peer presentations and peer critiques provides students with opportunities to hone public presentation skills, public speaking, and public discussion on urban design, all of which are essential to the practice and implementation of urban design. At the end of this course, you will be able to achieve the following objectives:

• Read 3-dimensional form at different urban scales;
• Articulate the component pieces of urban form;
• Articulate the characteristics of urban form that cities aspire to achieve;
• Interpret the general parameters of zoning and related urban development policy instruments;
• Articulate major trends of urban design theory over the last 4 decades;
• Interpret built form as a convergence of design requirements and competing interests;
• Differentiate between successful and marginal public space;
• Identify spatial relationships across buildings and open spaces;
• Apply the design characteristics of vibrant and economically viable urban centres;
• Conduct critiques of urban design projects;
• Employ a heightened awareness of urban form at different scales;
• Know yourself relative to the field of urban design;
• Apply your memory and experience of cities as a design reference;
• Produce basic orthographic drawing;
• Produce basic graphic design;
• Read and interpret detailed drawings;
• Produce basic 3-dimensional design at a neighbourhood scale;
• Develop conceptual approaches to urban design proposals; and
• Create diagrams that represent design ideas

Format

The class will meet every Wednesday for 3 hours. The course will roughly include two parallel streams of activity; ideas and design actions. In the first session (approximately one hour) the class will include workshops, presentations and/or interactive discussions about readings in urban design.
The second session (approximately one hour and forty five minutes) will centre on analyzing precedents and/or designing a piece of the urban fabric. Site visits will be integrated throughout.

Students will additionally be required to make presentations demonstrating an understanding and critical engagement of course readings. Critiques of precedents and other students’ designs will also play an important role.

The course will follow a traditional design studio format. Brief lectures, site visits, course administration, workshops, quick exercises, and discussion of issues related to the projects will be integrated across the 13 week period. Various methods and techniques will be demonstrated and explained as needed throughout the course. Although we will certainly touch on issues such as critical observation, mapping, graphic representation techniques and site reconnaissance within the class time, students will be expected to venture into these areas of study more comprehensively outside of class times.

Students will set up individual work spaces in the studio where they will be able to work on projects. As mentioned, much of the course time each session will be used for team work and one-on-one instructional dialogue with the course instructor, when required. A successful studio experience demands that students physically work in the studio outside of scheduled class time to enable collaborative work, allow for cross-fertilization of thinking and learning, and provide an outlet for constant feedback and input from peers.

Students will periodically present their work to the class and potentially other guest critics at various points of completion during the course for feedback.

Course Requirements
Certain coursework will be conducted in teams chosen over the course of the semester. Teams will be created to balance skills and experience. Students will be evaluated on their successful completion of the following course requirements. The assigned (approximate) grading weight approximates the time and effort allocated to them in the term schedule:

1. **PARTICIPATION (15%)**
The course requires extensive collaboration and even when students produce individual work it builds on and draws from the efforts of other students in the class. Attending every class and fully participating in all discussions and exercises is essential for the success of the studio learning environment.
There is no separate participation grade but students whose participation is below or above standard expectation for graduate courses will be either penalized or rewarded for up to 15% of the assignment grade.

2. **TAKING MEASURE** (10%)
   An assignment that will get students more aware of the metrics and dimensions of the built world around us.

3. **DRAWING MEASURE** (10%)
   An assignment focused on understanding measure as it relates to the design of a physical space.

4. **FRAGMENTS ANALYSIS** (30%)
   An assignment focused on the critical analysis of a fragment of the local urban fabric. These precedents are intended to inform one’s own work - and that of the class.

5. **DESIGN_1.0** (15%)
   This short-but-intense design exercise will be held in the spirit of a “charette” - facilitating the development of design ideas quickly and spontaneously, without too much deliberation. This will give us a good initial taste for the design process and help develop confidence in one’s initial thoughts.

6. **READINGS/WORD & WORKS** (20%)
   Readings will form a foundation for analysis and design exercises, as they will describe the lens through which one understands and evaluates a particular environment.

7. **METHODS/MANNERS & SKETCH NOTEBOOKS** (5%)
   Deciphering cities requires filtering and interpreting vast amounts of information—sensory and otherwise—and understanding their implications as it relates to design. As a result, one must develop strong observation, abstraction, and analytical skills in order to do this effectively. Drawing and visual note-taking *throughout the term*—within “Sketch Notebooks”—will facilitate the latter. Evaluation will be based on drawing content and not technical skill or ‘prettiness’. In short, drawing used to aid thought.

These assignments are discrete parts of a cumulative whole project. The assigned (approximate) grading weight approximates the time and effort allocated to them in the term schedule. A detailed marking rubric will accompany each assignment. In general, students are expected to achieve the following objectives in all of their coursework:
Creativity / Reflection
Exploration of different ideas and categories of ideas in your work and successful integration of different ideas and complementary fields of inquiry to present problems and solutions in insightful ways.

Critical / Analytical Thinking
Evidence of thoughtful inquiry or thorough analytical thinking for design, writing and presentation assignments.

Industriousness / Effort
How much effort and efficient production did you dedicate to the assignment relative to your skill level?

Professionalism
Attention to detail, completeness, thorough editing and error free work and attractiveness of presentation

Required Equipment
Some basic drafting tools and materials left from the Urban Design Studio may be available (i.e. erasers, sharpeners, colored pencils, markers, etc.), but you will need to purchase additional materials or supplies, such as tracing paper, pens, papers, sticky-back adhesive, photocopying, printing, and sketchbooks. Architectural scales will be needed, so you will be to either borrow or purchase your own. You can expect to spend approximately $20-$30 on tools and materials and potentially another $20-$50 on colour printing.

Readings, Resources & Handouts
Relevant literature titles will be distributed in class, as needed. Specific readings may also be given to the class on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. However, there are a few references that you will find particularly helpful throughout the term.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BOOKS
- Christopher Alexander, *A PATTERN LANGUAGE*
- Francis Ching, *ARCHITECTURE: FORM, SPACE AND ORDER*
- Jan Gehl and Brigitte Svarre, *HOW TO STUDY PUBLIC LIFE*
- Allan Jacobs, *LOOKING AT CITIES*
- Eric J. Jenkins, *DRAWN TO DESIGN: ANALYSING ARCHITECTURE THROUGH FREEHAND DRAWING*
- Edward White, *SITE ANALYSIS*
- Gordon Cullen, *THE CONCISE TOWNSCAPE*
- Kevin Lynch, *IMAGE OF THE CITY*
- Donald L. Elliott, *A BETTER WAY TO ZONE*
OTHER BOOKS

- Christopher Alexander, *THE NATURE OF ORDER*
- Donald Appleyard, *LIVABLE STREETS*
- Edmund Bacon, *DESIGN OF CITIES*
- Lance Berelowitz. *DREAM CITY: VANCOUVER AND THE GLOBAL IMAGINATION*
- Peter Bosselman. *REPRESENTATIONS OF PLACE* and URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS.
- John Clague and Bob Turner. *VANCOUVER CITY ON THE EDGE: LIVING WITH A DYNAMIC GEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE*
- Norman Crowe and Paul Laseau, *VISUAL NOTES FOR ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS*
- Design Centre for Sustainability, *SUSTAINABILITY BY DESIGN: A VISION FOR A REGION OF 4 MILLION*
- Grady Clay, *CLOSE UP: HOW TO READ THE AMERICAN CITY*
- Howard Davis, *THE CULTURE OF BUILDING*
- Konstantino Doxiadis, *EKISTICS: THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS*
- Lorraine Farrelly, *DRAWING FOR URBAN DESIGN*
- Jan Gehl, *LIFE BETWEEN BUILDINGS* and CITIES FOR PEOPLE
- N.J. Habraken, *STRUCTURE OF THE ORDINARY*
- Diana Hacker A CANADIAN WRITER’S REFERENCE
- Derek Heyes, *HISTORICAL ATLAS OF VANCOUVER*
- Jane Jacobs, *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES*
- Allan Jacobs, *GREAT STREETS*
- Paul Laseau, *VISUAL NOTES FOR ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS*
- Paul Laseau, *GRAPHIC THINKING FOR ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS*
- Bryan Lawson, *HOW DESIGNERS THINK*
- Paul Lukez, *SUBURBAN TRANSFORMATIONS*
- Kevin Lynch, *CITY SENSE AND CITY DESIGN*
- Bruce Macdonald, *VANCOUVER: A VISUAL HISTORY*
- George Père, *SPECIES OF SPACES AND OTHER PIECES*
- Nikos A. Salingaros, *PRINCIPLES OF URBAN STRUCTURE*
- Gerrit Schwalbach, *BASICS URBAN ANALYSIS* and URBAN BUILDING BLOCKS
- John Stilgoe, *OUTSIDE LIES MAGIC*
- Emily Talen, *CITY RULES: HOW REGULATIONS AFFECT URBAN FORM*
- Edward Tufte, all his books on information design
- Robert Venturi, Steven Isenour and Denise Scott Brown, *LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS*
E-REFERENCES
City of Vancouver - http://vancouver.ca/
CoV community information - http://vancouver.ca/community_profiles/CommunityList.htm
City of Vancouver Open Data Catalogue - http://data.vancouver.ca/datacatalogue/index.htm
VanMap - http://vancouver.ca/vanMap/
Google Maps - http://maps.google.ca/maps?hl=en&tab=wl
Bing Maps - http://www.bing.com/maps/
Price Tags - http://www.pricetags.ca/pricetags.html
Past Tense - http://pasttensevancouver.wordpress.com/
Urban Futures - http://www.urbanfutures.com/
Spacing Vancouver - http://spacing.ca/vancouver/
The History of Metropolitan Vancouver - http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/
City of Vancouver Archives - http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/archives/
Metro Vancouver - http://www.metrovancouver.org

Apps
The advance of digital, mobile technologies has transformed all facets of life and disciplines - including urban design. The following are ipad and iphone apps for you find useful, especially with respect representing and analysing space. All are available via the Itunes Store:

- *Artstudio* - digital drawing/painting, incl. photo manipulation compatible with Photoshop
- *Sketchbook Pro* - digital drawing/painting, incl. photo manipulation
- *Adobe Ideas* - vector-based drawing application compatible with Adobe Illustrator
- *Photosynth* - 360 Degree photo stitching
- *Sunseeker* - solar path information for specific locations
- *Trace* - the digital equivalent of trace paper overlaying on photos
- *Auryn Ink* - water colour painting application
- *Waterlogue* - transforms photos to water colour images