

Description

As part of a recent curricular review, the College of Architecture and Environmental Design (CAED) streamlined its introductory offerings in architectural history. A new year-long “Global Architecture History” course will replace a total of five courses --a year-long survey of western architecture as a Kent Core course and a three-semester survey with a global component for architecture majors.

To meet accreditation requirements, students in this course will need to master a large body of information. In addition the CAED faculty would like students to emerge from this survey course with basic skills in historical method and interpretation of theory that they can apply in their studio work. (Those skills are also relevant to the liberal education goals of the Kent Core.) We have concluded that the old model of the lecture-based survey course is not sufficient to meet these goals. The history faculty have therefore agreed to develop a blended course in which much of the factual information required for the course is delivered online through weekly learning modules centered on videos. In-class time will be used to develop specific theoretical and methodological problems, both through interactive exercises and through lectures that model higher order problem solving and historical interpretation.

Goals

This course will serve architecture and design majors as well as Kent Core students. The learning objectives for the professional majors are largely consistent with those of the Kent Core.

Key learning objectives for online component: knowledge of relevant history and geography, recognition and understanding of key buildings, knowledge of key terms and motifs, recognition of style/period markers.

Key learning objectives for the in-class component: ability to diagram and analyze key buildings, interpretation of primary theoretical texts, ability to research and interpret case studies, ability to evaluate historical sources

The first set of objectives is not new, but we have traditionally sought to achieve in them in ways that don't fit well with what we know about student learning. This lecture-based pedagogy developed in part due to technological limitations. The images were on slides, and lecture was the only opportunity to *show* students what they were reading about. As the body of material to be covered in these courses has expanded, this model has become increasingly untenable. In addition, it is now very clear from research on learning that lecture is a singularly bad format for student retention, but potentially a useful one for helping students understand method. A blended model should lead to better outcomes in terms of students' retention of information. It should also create better opportunities for students to develop the higher order skills listed in the second set of learning objectives.

The development of this year-long course is a task that will continue beyond this summer, but there are three primary tasks for the grant period:

First and most labor-intensive will be the development of the learning modules and videos for the first semester of the sequence, along with a detailed outline of tasks for development of

materials for the second semester. These will be hosted in Blackboard, with each week's module including text and about fifty minutes of video (divided into segments of no more than ten minutes). The videos will focus on factual information, terminology, and basic visual analysis of key monuments and periods/styles. Each module will also include a review of relevant history and geography, as my experience with survey courses shows that many students have insufficient background to "place" the information presented against an existing repertory of knowledge. Each module will include a self-administered assessment, with the intention that students review the material and repeat the assessment until they achieve mastery.

Second is to work with CTL staff to identify topics for in-class problem solving and interaction that are workable in a large class and to figure out how they will relate to lectures. The goal for the summer will be to develop at least one of these exercises for every third class (8-9 total) for the first iteration of the fall semester course.

Third is to work with CTL to develop assessments and evaluation tools that will be used to refine the course after the first year. Efficient and reliable assessments will be particularly important when the course runs at full enrollment in its second year.

Impact

This course will serve several different populations in and out of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design on the main campus. Starting in fall 2016, it will be required for all second-year students in the professional architecture major and the liberal arts architectural studies major. Starting this fall, it will be taught as a Kent Core course, and the second semester will be required for all first-year students in the interior design major. There is also a supplementary honors section of the course. When the course is at full enrollment in 2016-17, we anticipate around 130 students in the fall semester and 180 in the spring.

For students in the CAED this course serves as their primary introduction to historical method, which is relevant to precedent research and case studies for design projects, and to architectural theory, which is currently lacking in the undergraduate curriculum. For students in the architecture and architectural studies major, this course is also a prerequisite for a required upper-level architectural history elective.

Activities and Timeline

The process of developing this course has already begun with the goal of completion when the course goes to full enrollment in fall 2016.

Before Summer II

Develop detailed topical outline, learning objectives, and list of key buildings and texts in consultation with colleagues, identify possible topics for in-class assignments, make final selection of textbook, identify software and hardware needed, update Blackboard training, get up to speed on smartphone apps etc., develop templates, draft module for prehistoric/ancient near east/Egypt, script videos, make test video

Grant Period Week 1

Critique test video and draft module, revise module, make quiz database, record videos for prehistoric etc., start module for Greek

Week 2

Finish Greek module, make quiz database, script videos, devise in-class exercise, record Greek videos, draft first exam, write module for Roman through Pantheon

Week 3

Critique and edit in-class exercise and exam, make quiz database for Roman through Pantheon, script videos, devise in-class exercise, record videos, write module for Roman through Byzantine

Week 4

Critique and edit in-class exercise, make quiz database for Roman through Byzantine, script videos, devise in-class exercise, record videos, write module for early Islamic/Romanesque

Week 5

Critique and edit in-class exercise, make quiz database for Islamic/Romanesque, script videos, devise in-class exercise, record videos, draft second exam, start module for later Islamic/Gothic

Week 6

Critique and edit in-class exercise and exam, finish module for later Islamic/Gothic, make quiz database, script videos, devise in-class exercise, record videos, write module for South Asian

Week 7

Critique and edit in-class exercise, make quiz database for South Asian, script videos, devise in-class exercise, record videos, write module for East Asian, meet on assessment survey tool

Week 8

Critique and edit in-class exercise, make quiz database for East Asian, script videos, devise in-class exercise, record videos, write module for African, start module for Americas, follow-up on assessment tool

Week 9

Critique and edit in-class exercise, make quiz database for African, script videos, record videos, finish module for Americas, make quiz database, script videos, record videos, draft assessment tool

Week 10

Write modules for renaissance, make quiz database, script videos, record videos, devise in-class exercises, finalize assessment tool

Early August

Critique in-class exercises, write module for baroque, make quiz database, script videos, record videos, devise in-class exercise, draft third exam, finalize syllabus, reading assignments, and short research-based assignment. Develop detailed outline of tasks for preparation of ARCH 10012

Fall 2015

Develop and refine in-class lectures for ARCH 10011, administer assessment tools and make adjustments to course process, make conference presentation on the course, submit abstracts for publication and/or conferences. Make modules and devise exercises for first 10 weeks of ARCH 10012 by beginning of Spring Semester

Spring 2016

make modules and devise exercises for remainder of ARCH 10012 as it is being taught, follow through on publication/presentation

Summer 2016

review course based on assessments and surveys, make adjustments to materials and exercises, figure out best use of TAs in full-scale course

Communication Plan

In addition to presenting at the annual UTC conference and CAED faculty meetings, I plan to write a paper about the development of this course for submission to the Journal of Architectural Education. National and regional meetings of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture also have session tracks devoted to pedagogy, and I'm confident there would be interest at those. Finally, I have been in contact with colleagues at the Wentworth Institute of Technology and the Savannah College of Art and Design who are assembling bibliographies of up-to-date survey content (rather than pedagogy) under a grant from the Mellon Foundation. I will share the model I'm developing with them and the national network of architectural historians who will use the work they're developing. As I've been attending more conferences over the last two years, I've discovered that colleagues around the country share some of my frustrations with the current survey course model, and I believe that there will be great interest in the model we're developing at Kent State.

Evaluation Plan

One of the key goals for the grant will be to work with CTL staff to develop an exit survey that—combined with student performance on exams—will provide a basis for refining the course structure. I will also investigate using clickers or a smartphone app to get quicker feedback on elements of the course.

Professional Background