Prospectus / Syllabus
Thesis Studio 2016 – 2017
Instructor Ansgar Killing & Gregory Wynn
Introduction

This course intents to be a place where you make architecture. Good projects. Smart solutions. Cool designs. And then share them with other people.

Much of it will be in models, drawings, and renderings (...in that order), but if you want to do more magic using a drone, your phone, or 'Grasshopper', knock yourself out. Note one thing though: All will be displayed and edited on a medium because there will be a strong emphasis on working with others in this course, and a medium is collaborative.

While designing is often a solitary activity, great architecture emerges in the spaces between people. We will be working in groups with peer and teacher edits. There will be a number of smaller assignments, but the goal is that you will leave here with a single piece of work that reflects your capabilities as a maker.

In contrast to other fifth year studios, this class will be taught by two instructors: Ansgar Killing and Gregory Wynn. In Fall, Ansgar will lead the studio; in Winter and Spring, Greg will be at the helm. To ensure consistency, both instructors will be participating in major studio events such as milestone critiques, shows, or trips.

This format is intended to allow for more instructor face-time and flexibility throughout your thesis year. It is new and different. Think about it.
Maybe this is a good moment to talk about the structure of the thesis year. Here is our view:

**Fall Quarter** enables you to engage in your thesis project: You explore topics, acquire skills, produce, get acquainted with your studio, travel, and formulate your thesis through basic artifacts. **Winter Quarter** is rigorous design: No need to hang out at the beach, it is raining anyway. Various 5th year shows and critiques will keep you busy. **Spring Quarter** is pure production: The best design is worthless if it is not refined and finally communicated in an effective manner.
Fall

Vellum: It is expected that you - either as part of a team or as individual - participate in the competition. Through sketches, work models, and rapid prototyping you will fast-forward through the product design process, culminating in the show at the end of October.

General Research: A series of selected readings will inform your quest for a suitable thesis project. Please expect a fair amount of reading, writing, and fast-paced TED talks that distills your passion into a tangible submission to the ...

5th Year Abstract Show: ...happening some time in Fall

Thesis Research: To hit the ground running in Winter, you need to finalize a briefing that defines all needed requirements for your thesis project: Whether you design a house, make a movie, or write a book: Without this roadmap you will get lost.

Travel Preparation: Traveling as part of your fifth year experience is a privilege and an opportunity. It is expected that you actively participate in preparing for the trip through research and organization.
Winter

**Step Assignments:** Throughout the quarter you will work on weekly assignments that are due at the beginning of class on Friday. The assignments are accessible on Poly Learn and can - to some extend - be sequenced based on your individual project and preference. Milestone presentations throughout the quarter ensure that you stay on track for your project.

**Section Show:** At some point in Winter Quarter, you will participate in another 5th-year show case, exploring a cross-sectional aspect of your design proposal. This is a great opportunity to examine where your project stands in comparison to your peer group.

**Thesis Book and Journal** are great ways to explore, document, and trace your thesis progress. These artifacts are a firm part of the individual desk critiques and are part of your overall grade.
Spring

5th Year Qualifying Review (Va-NoVa): At the beginning of Spring Quarter, a committee of faculty and professionals will review and critique your project. This is a very unique opportunity. Quality of feedback is directly proportional to the quality of work at display. The more you show the better the guidance.

Detail Show: Trained through the comprehensive project (Fall), you will detail a selected aspect of your proposal and prove your professional maturity.

Project: Your Colleague Blake Freitas, Class of 2011
Showtime

Presenting your work is essential. It is expected that you participate in selecting, designing, and producing and show concept that supports both end-of-the-year show events in an attractive, creative, and yet sustainable way. Usually, you will spend around $75 for your display and prints.

**Studio Show:** Around 8th week of Spring Quarter, there is a studio show, usually in a gallery space on Campus or – if you are up for it – at a downtown venue. Good time to reflect on both, your work and the group that you spent most of your time with over the past 9 months.

**Chumash Show:** Memorial Day weekend brings all 5th year projects together in a remarkable show case in the University’s largest exhibition space – the Chumash Auditorium. The logistics of this event are daunting, but well worth the pride that your parents will sense when they see your projects.
Studio

We prefer an interactive studio environment, and, therefore, will encourage (sometimes even enforce) discussions about your projects.

Throughout the week, you and the instructor will map out the way forward in individual desk critiques. On Fridays, the class will review each project in a timed power critique. Pinky-promise: Takes only 2 minutes per project.

At three milestones throughout each quarter you will present and defend your design choices to a greater audience. Usually, this is the time where you receive some sort of evaluation that later compiles into your grade.

Respective assignments, rubrics, and resulting grades are accessible on Poly Learn, so there won’t be any surprises at the end of the quarter or year.
More Info on Studio

For this section, we are using the words of a great writer and teacher, David Carr:

“Grading: 30% project | 30% collaboration, based on assessment of your comments on others’ work | 20% class participation and demonstrated familiarity with the assigned reading | 20% smaller assignments. I grade based on where you start and where you end. Don’t work on me for a better grade — work on your work and making the work of those around you better. Show industriousness and seriousness and produce surpassing work if you want an exceptional grade.

Personal Standards: Don’t raise your hand in class. This isn’t Montessori, I expect people to speak up when they like, but don’t speak over anyone. Respect the opinions of others. This is an intense immersion on the waterfront of Architecture. If you don’t show up for class, you will flounder. If you show up late or unprepared, you will stick out in unpleasant ways. If you aren’t putting effort into your work, I will suggest that you might be more comfortable elsewhere. If you text or email during class, I will ignore you as you ignore me. It won’t go well. I expect you to behave as an adult and will treat you like one. I don’t want to parent you — I want to teach you.

Excuses: Don’t make them—while a spoken-word performance might explain everything, it will excuse nothing. The assignments for each week are due by start of class without exception unless specific arrangements have made based on an exceptional circumstance. If you truly have a personal or family emergency, your welfare comes first. But nothing short of that will have any traction with me. If you are having trouble understanding expectations or assignments or instruction, please speak up. I care a lot about not leaving anybody behind.”
Field trips

...are an important way to perceive and explore architecture and its cultural context. You cannot see this in magazines or on Google.

Usually, the studio decides on the trip destination, but due to the recent expansion of Germany Off Campus program, this year is different: For the out-of-state one-week field trip Ansgar has prepared an itinerary for Germany that includes stops in metropolitan areas, presentations at Architecture Schools, and visits of architectural firms.

The trip expenses will be around $1,300 per person, and the trip will occur at the end of Fall Quarter’s finals week. Financial aid might be available to eligible individuals through the ‘Student-in-Need’ program and other sources.

A short, in-State trip will keep your excitement up when your motivation hits recession.
I am the guy who holds his head. This picture tells you a lot about me:

The picture was taken when I was partner in an architectural firm back in Germany with a lot of responsibility and a lot to worry about, but also with exciting projects.

What does this picture tell you about me?

(1) I don’t have a lot of hair and I like to wear white T-shirts.

(2) Look at the wall behind me: I really like (...and demand) physical models.

(3) Look again: See the material sample? You need to get specific. Just call it a ‘Screen’ won’t do.

(4) Noticed the binder in the front? This binder contains detailing for a single project. You need to prove that what you design is actually doable.

(5) Finally: Imagine how desperate I would appear if there wouldn’t be a second person in the picture: Exchange, Teamwork, and Feedback are crucial.
And this is me... Greg

I believe:
The Architect is Always Learning-
The architect is a student of human nature and interaction. Always researching, observing and categorizing, dissecting and re-assembling, evaluating the result, then striving to improve.

The Architect is a Graphic Thinker
Like the composer that imagines a symphony and translates to paper the musical score or the choreographer that uses Labanotation to document fluid body movement, architects design space with sketches and doodles. Seemingly random scratches of ink on trace can contain a multi-level discourse within the designer’s head. It is this focused and concentrated iterative cycle of graphic thinking that generates architecture, not the “Eureka” light-bulb moment.

The Architect must Communicate
Design does not happen in a vacuum. Architects gather information from multiple points-of-view, they listen well, they ask questions, and they present their ideas effectively. All in the hope of improving humanity.
Questions? Don’t hesitate: akilling@calpoly.edu gwynn@calpoly.edu