It is my feeling that living things and non-living things are dichotomous….But I feel that if all living plants and creatures were to disappear, the sun would still shine and the rain still fall. We need Nature, But Nature does not need us.

- Louis Kahn

“Resident” vs. “Inhabitant:” “A resident is a temporary occupant, putting down few roots and investing little, knowing little, and perhaps caring little for the immediate locale beyond its ability to gratify…..The inhabitant, in contrast, ‘dwells,’ as Illich puts it, in an intimate, organic, and mutually nurturing relationship with a place. Good inhabitation is an art requiring detailed knowledge of a place, the capacity for observation, and a sense of care and rootedness.”

- David Orr, Ecological Literacy

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

- Frank Lloyd Wright

Nature doesn’t have a design problem. People do….Instead of using nature as a mere tool for human purposes, we can strive to become tools of nature who serve its agenda too…….What would it mean to become, once again, native to this place, the Earth - the home of all our relations?

- William McDonough and Michael Braungart, Cradle-to-Cradle

Responsive, Responsible

Humans and all their associated artifacts are an immutable fact in nature. However, on our current consumptive trajectory, we are on a collision course with the environment. If we accept the definition of sustainability as “the triple bottom line” (i.e., the three E’s of “economy, ecology, equity” OR the three P’s of “people, planet, profit”), at its practical root, sustainable architecture is about how we come to terms with our place in nature. (We might also overlay onto our sustainability definition Vitruvius’ maxims of “utilitas, firmitas, venustas” to remind ourselves of the timelessness and applicability of these lessons).

Faced with increasingly diminishing resources, creating appropriate architectural environments is beyond choice: it is essential. Ecological luminaries such as architect Ed Mazria have re-analyzed the statistics, revealing that architecture with all of its associated technologies and materials consume nearly 50% of the energy generated in the United States. Architects are thus strategically poised to positively intervene to effect change in our culture’s insupportable, consumptive trajectory. With this resurgent need for ecologically responsive design, designers no longer have the luxury to ignore the affects of their architectural creations on the global environment and its inhabitants. Buildings are the mediator between man and nature; the designer is the artistic intermediary charged with creating a responsive, responsible architecture.
In this context, ideas that will be considered in this thesis sequence will include:

**Architecture + The Landscape**

Place-making is essential in the creation of meaningful architecture, no matter what the scale. Scale of settlement patterns and appropriateness of setting are vital issues in any successful architectural endeavor. The specifics of any given place, its genius loci, must be understood and respected. In addition to phenomenology and place, creating symbiotic relationships with the land should be the goal of all of our built artifacts.

**Architecture + Its Inhabitants**

Even the best sustainably designed environment will not be useful unless it elicits "delight" in its users. Creating spaces that allow people to experience joy, health, comfort, and well-being is essential. Exploring material tactility, thermal delight, and inspiring luminous environments are a few of many methods to this end, moving toward a multi-sensory architecture.

**Architecture + The Environment**

Sensitive architectural solutions respect and should celebrate the environment. This includes an appreciation for the local (geographies, bioregions, seasons, microclimates, etc.) as well as a response to the global (energy sources and resources, etc.). Because buildings are energy consumptive, this is an arena in which architects have the opportunity to innovate, with the aim of achieving "carbon neutral" buildings by 2030 as posed by the Architecture 2030 Challenge. Learning from the past, learning from other cultures, and taking advantage of technological innovations, architects can design resourceful, delightful environments.
Architecture + Materiality

Materials are the basic building blocks of an architect’s language. Exploring the poetic potential of structure and materiality is the goal here. Further, it is our responsibility to understand the pivotal cradle-to-grave-to-cradle issues related to material choices, with consideration for the energy consumption involved in extraction as well as recycling. Thus, a designer manipulating any given palette of materials must balance issues of material source with appropriate and inspiring form and structure.

Architecture + Technology

The appropriate use of technology should be the aim of any project. This includes not only the technology used in the design process but also in construction, operation, and maintenance. Use of appropriate simulation tools for design as well as performance will be part of studio activities.
Architecture + the Social-Cultural-Economic-Political Context

All architecture is physically contextual (whether consciously conceived or not); it is also always political (whether consciously calculated or not). The primary goal should be to make architectural proposals that are strategic rather than reactive, appropriate to the space and time of the given situation.

The Paradigm of Architecture

The ultimate aim of this topical sequence is to understand how our creative work reflects upon, questions, and relates to the broader field of architecture. Are we advancing the discipline or simply replicating the past? Are we improving our relationship with nature, or settling for the status quo? Are we creating stimulating, responsible environments or .......? To paraphrase Corbusier, we should aim to make the bad difficult and the good easy.

Naturally, these topical issues are not discreet and they should overlap. The iterative design process will be a guiding principle. "Architecture + Nature" projects might develop in a multitude of scales and uses.
Planning in the Present for the Future
Buildings are among the more durable artifacts that a society produces with causal affects on the environment that far outlive their makers. As thoughtful, educated designers, we are the stewards not only of creating meaningful spaces for people but also for respecting the environmental setting of these places. Man's existence within the earth's fragile ecosystems (of which we are a part) calls for sensitive, responsive, appropriate design. It is our responsibility to search for a fitting co-existence, a symbiotic relationship that neither impoverishes the planet nor our human experience on it.

Schematic Schedule
What is the Thesis (and development of a dialectic). Critical position explored through a series of “peer” reviewed abstracts and presentations. Precedent research, program, and site explorations.
Design Studio Fall: Ideation  [Stannard]
Design Studio Winter: Development  [Stannard]
Design Studio Spring: Synthesis  [Crotser + Stannard]

This is potentially one of the most challenging periods of architectural innovations in history. While many of the established architects today seem intimidated by the accelerating momentum of change – fearing their stylistic commitments may be under attack – there is no reason why the environmental revolution cannot be welcomed as the threshold of a great creative era. Here is an opportunity to invent the future on terms that are sociologically and ecologically responsible.


Treat the Earth well. It was not given to you by your parents.
It was loaned to you by your children.

- Kenyan Proverb
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Sandy Stannard
Sandy studied architecture at UC Berkeley and University of Washington, including study abroad experiences in Italy and Denmark. She is a licensed architect in California and Idaho, and is a LEED Accredited Professional. Sandy has had the opportunity to work on a variety of architectural projects, both public and private, at large and small scales, including design-build projects. She has taught architecture for over ten years (University of Idaho, University of Washington, and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo), including summer studios in Rome at the Sede di Roma/Penn State. Just prior to joining the faculty at Cal Poly, she worked as a lighting specialist at the Pacific Energy Center in San Francisco. Sandy was one of the faculty advisors for Cal Poly’s Solar Decathlon project, for which our interdisciplinary faculty/student team designed and built a small 100% solar-powered residence that competed in the international Solar Decathlon competition on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. in October 2005. We received third place overall in the competition, with a first place in architectural lighting, second in architectural design, and second in buildability/livability. (One of Sandy’s thesis students from that year used this project as his thesis investigation). Sandy has been awarded one grant (and will be pursuing further funding) to begin the establishment of a “Carbon Neutral Design Studio,” a project that she intends to expand upon and explore with students in the thesis studio. Most recently, Sandy was awarded two grants to complete a design-build project with thesis students for an “outdoor classroom” project.

Chuck Crotser
Chuck studied architecture at Cal Poly, including a study abroad experience in France. Chuck is a licensed architect in California, working on a variety of institutional, commercial, and multi-family projects. He is particularly interested in historic preservation, adaptive re-use, urban design, and “smart growth” projects. He has associated interests in hand drawing and watercolor techniques, with an emphasis on merging digital and analog presentation strategies.