

# Studio 303

Architecture 05-303 Greg Wynn, AIA ARCH 481 MWF 1-6 ARCH 492 F 9-12

Well it's finally here; your culminating year of undergraduate study is at hand. A whole year to work on just one project! Sounds amazing right? Well you are correct, it is amazing.

The Cal Poly fifth-year course of study is a place to assemble all of your skills and focus them on a singular proposition about Architecture. It is the year to engage your interests and passions with the skills of the scientist, philosopher, artist, and builder combined into the role of superhero Architect. It is the year to propose a greater social good through design.

This year, Studio 303 will emphasize **HOUSING, SHELTER, and HOME**. When you think about it, all of human experience shares this need and it is an amazing topic to explore. Whether it is uplifting the unhoused or converting remainder space to lofts, let's work together to research and optimize the places we live and thrive. My background and area of interest has always been housing and the need for adequate housing is an imperative.

This year will be one you will always recall fondly. I am excited for you to be in this place.

## This is not my beautiful house...David Byrne

It may seem odd but quite often students entering the 5th year program are unsure of their life direction, and many have no plans to be an architect. There is nothing wrong with that. We all chose our paths in high school, probably too young to really know what we were getting into. And therein lays the beauty of an architectural education. What you have learned couldn't be predicted.

By now you know about plans, sections, and elevations. You understand Rhino and plaster models as means to communicate your ideas, and you think in terms of spatial constructs for social change. **That's great.** But the real education is not about solving for the depth of a wide-flange beam, it is about how to think. An architectural education teaches a process for problem solving; we just use the built environment as our muse for discovery. Once mastered, the process of problem-solving can be used to generate solutions to any industry or need.

Whether you want to become an architect or not, the experience and process development you gain from this education will be useful for your entire life. Come with an open mind and a desire to gain a new set of tools.



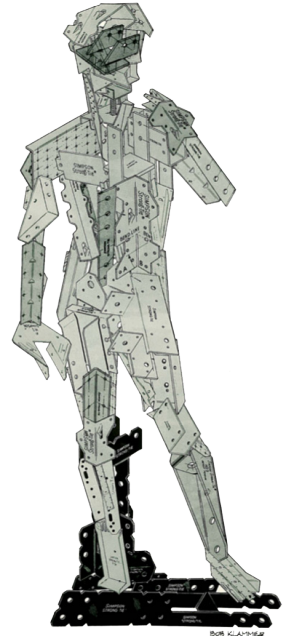
Ryan Michka-2017



# What is a thesis and why do I need one?...

An architectural thesis is a researched argument of a new idea. It is a proposal of what could be when the rule sets of reality can be temporarily switched off for purposes of exploration and evaluation. When we allow ourselves to think beyond current limitations, question the precedents and prior knowledge, and curiously ask “why”, and then we couple that mindset with the work ethic and rigor of explorative invention, great leaps forward can be attained. Your design thesis is the result of that process.

The fall thesis portion of this year asks you to work in the field of Design Research. You will begin the academic year with a set of propositions that have enough gravitas to hold your interest and energy for the year. Without the richness and depth of well-reasoned and interesting thesis, you will get bored. Our task as a class is to discuss, explore, criticize and edit each other's work. Your task is to use that feedback to strengthen and refine your research to a honed proposal / hypothesis that can be tested throughout the year with your Studio work.



Strongtie Man- Bob Klammer

“Hell, there are no rules here - we’re trying to accomplish something.” Thomas Edison

In this process of making/defining your thesis, you will:

- Gather information about your proposal through multiple sources using varying methodologies,
- Critically evaluate sources, look for bias, and weigh data relevance, then clearly present all sides,
- Read, write, compare, contrast, and document prior works,
- Look at topologic precedents, analogies, and case studies, then diagram conclusions drawn,
- Construct analog and digital models that clearly represent the data collected,
- Hypothesize, reach, stretch, and formulate a proposal, then
- Present your work to the community of designers and experts in your field of study for further refinement.

The end product of fall quarter will be a set of artifacts that represent your efforts and become the basis for a thesis book. The thesis book then, becomes a curated compendium of your Design Research and the directional heading you have aimed toward.



Cassidy Bingham - 2017

# Always ask “Why?”...

In general, your fifth-year architectural thesis and project should:

Offer a clearly written and graphically represented thesis position that critically addresses the current practices and/or future opportunities of the architectural discipline, and makes a detailed and compelling argument for a new architectural proposition that is based on the thorough research and analysis of relevant architectural theories, case studies, precedents, aesthetic assumptions, and real-world scenarios, as well as the rigorous pursuit of design research through critical studies and experiments.

Demonstrate the consequences of this thesis position and design research in the form of a thesis design project.

Demonstrate a scope and level of complexity consistent with a capstone course, as well as a range of design solution alternatives and opportunities.

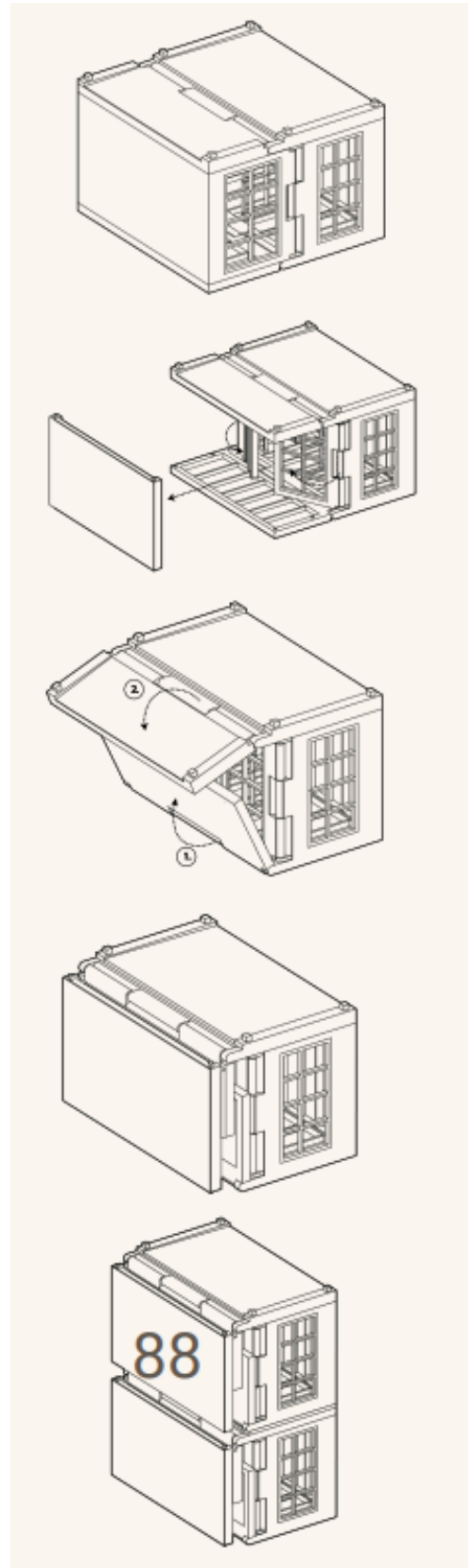
Demonstrate design skill and refinement, from concept origination through design development levels as interpreted by the studio instructors.

Consider site and contextual issues and potentials such as landscape and land use, urban form and dynamics, socio-political conditions, legal constraints, regional character, and historic or cultural value.

Consider patterns of human activity, user and client needs, and user expectations

Consider global climatic and local micro-climatic conditions, as well as structural and material necessity.

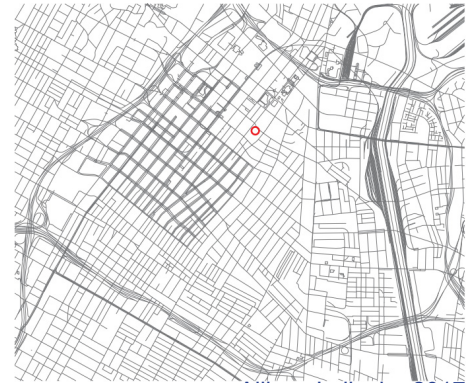
Consider mediums and modes of representation for the thesis design project that are appropriate to demonstrate and defend the thesis position being argued.





# Site....

All design projects have a site, even if that site resides only in the mind. The site provides a context for decision making and gives a basis for design response. Usually, more site context provides a more thorough understanding of the factors that influence design. Flat or sloped, wetland or desert, dry or humid, each site holds the clues that make architecture 'of that place'. I recommend you select a project site that you can visit multiple times throughout the project so you can confirm and validate your design decisions.



Allison Lollock - 2017

**“The task of the architect is to encompass everything about the site, starting from the concrete conditions and the sensory impressions created by those, to memories of the place, through empathy to vision.”** Jean Nouvel

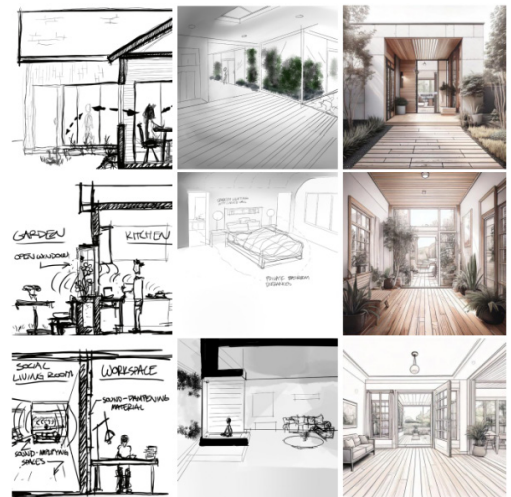
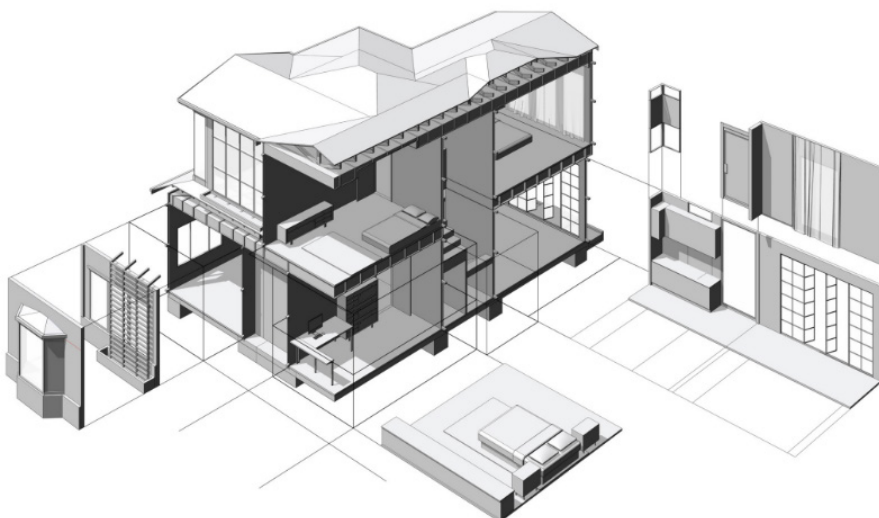
## Analog v. Digital....

Jim Bagnall, dear friend and emeritus faculty has said “I draw to understand”. Jim is well rooted in his sketchbook and fountain pen and his life is well documented through his drawings. A favorite subject of Jim’s is his cat, and I’ve seen many drawings of that silly cat. But Jim also has an iPhone because the cat keeps moving away, and his photographs from that phone are some of the best I have ever seen. Jim is straddling both worlds, and recognizes that tools change. He will never give up his fountain pen, but also never stop using the right tool for the task.



Chester - Jim Bagnall

When making choices we often divide the continuum of options to a binary question; light or dark, smooth or rough, temporal or durable, analog or digital....Perhaps it is better to just say ‘Yes’ to all, and recognize that there is a time for each option. Often the best choice is the method you are least comfortable with, and I encourage you to take that ‘road less travelled’.



Ethan Alberti-2025

## Work ethic...

University is fun, but it is also your work. You are expected to be in studio each scheduled day, usually the entire time. This is the time that we can count on each other for knowledge support, for diversity of thought, and for shared experiences. Most of you will far exceed these minimal time requirements. If you prefer to work somewhere else or have outside employment that conflicts with studio time, this studio may not be for you. That said, our studio is not a prison cell. Work in the shop or library or computer labs is all encouraged, just don't go into hiding. It never works out well.

The most successful students are diligent in their studies, focused when in studio, and maintain a work ethic toward an end goal. Collaboration and critique happens when we are all together, and that studio environment is time tested as a positive environment in school and in the practice.

**"The beauty of architecture is that it's a leap of faith, but a very laborious leap of faith."** Rem Koolhaas

## Learn something new every day...

I learn something new every day. Mostly it's because I want to do something and don't know how. Rather than repeat what I've done in the past, I look it up and try something new. Lately, I've been learning about the intricacies of homemade sourdough bread. I watch a lot of YouTube videos and have yet to make the perfect loaf. But I'll keep trying.

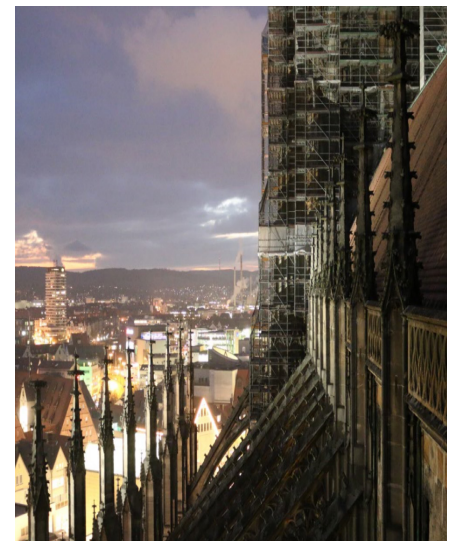
I will encourage you to learn something new each day in studio.

## Travel...

Travel is fundamental to an architectural education and is highly encouraged. By now many of you have traveled to faraway lands and are expert at getting from here to there. Others may not have had that opportunity. More than sightseeing, architectural travel is about observation and asking questions. 'What are the cultural forces, environmental factors, and history that have shaped the built environment, and what pressures are changing that environment?'

When we seek to understand through the lens of research, we catalog that understanding for later recall to resolve our own design questions. Past trips have been to Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, NYC, PDX, PHX, SEA, BOS, & MSY.

This year our plan is to travel in early Fall quarter with Ansgar Killing's Studio. Perhaps Japan, perhaps Europe...

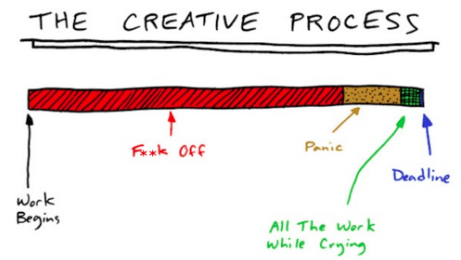


Ulm Minster - Baden-Württemberg, Germany

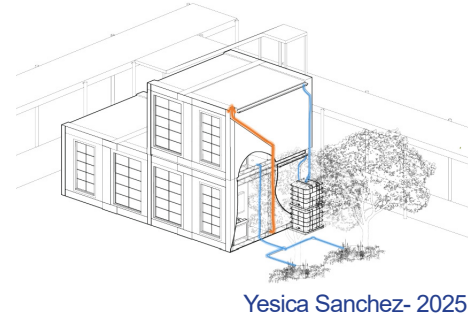


# Deliverables and Deadlines....

In school as in life, stuff needs to get done. We tend to schedule our time best given a list of tasks and an understanding of when that task needs to be completed. My role (with your help) is to guide you through a comprehensive set of achievable goals. The deliverables required will be robust, and the deadlines strict. Completed over time, the collection then becomes a documented journey of your design evolution.



**"I hate vacations. If you can build buildings, why sit on the beach?."**  
Phillip Johnson



Yesica Sanchez- 2025

# Critique and Feedback....

We need to understand that critique and feedback are essential for design growth. In addition to our regular daily meetings as a class, expect a focused review of your progress each week. Often the reviews will be done in small groups and occasionally with other faculty and outside experts that can give alternative viewpoints for consideration. Come prepared to maximize your opportunity.



Elissa Anderson, 2019

**"I believe that architecture, as anything else in life, is evolutionary. Ideas evolve; they don't come from outer space and crash into the drawing board."**  
Bjarke Ingels



Joey Salvucci, 2019

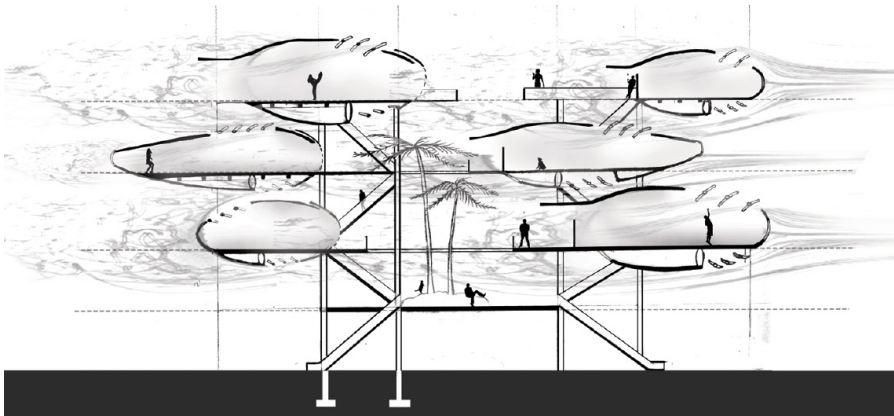
Vellum / Abstract / Va-No Va / Studio / Juried Review

Throughout the year you will be asked to present your work at prescribed stages. Each presentation is tied to your overall design research and has a two-fold purpose, to give you interim deadlines and to garner critical feedback in hopes of advancing your thesis.

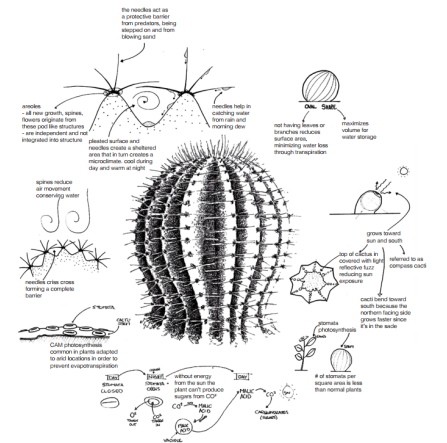
A student-run club with representatives from each studio provide logistic support. Consider volunteering on behalf of our studio.



Riley Snyder - 2017



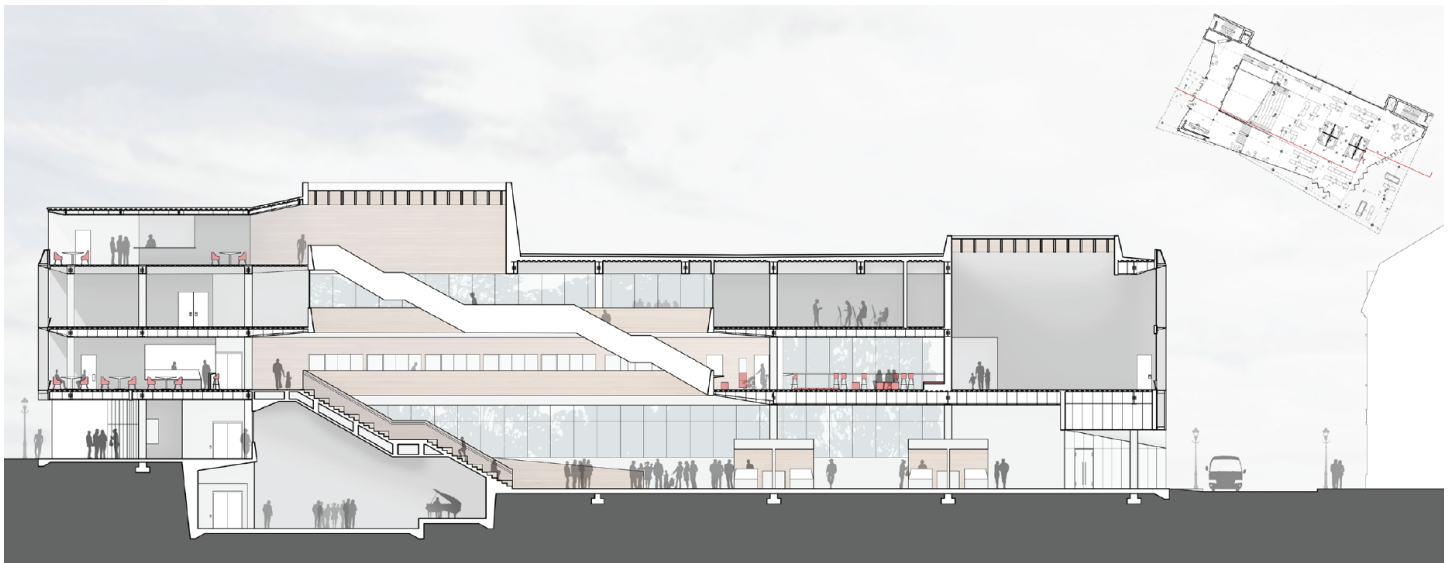
Lawrence Ho - 2017



Ali Lollock - 2017



Ryan Michka - 2017



Ryan Michka - 2017

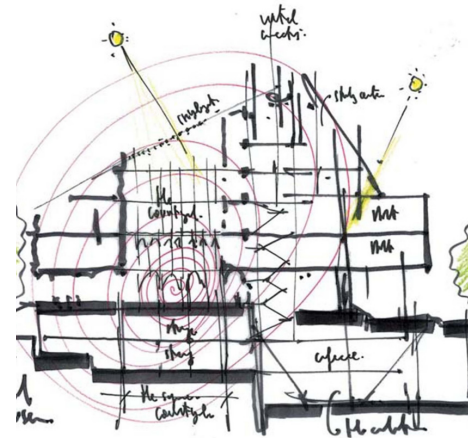


# Sustainability...

Critical to every project is its impact on the environment. At this 5th year level of research and design, decisions made will be quantifiable and verifiable. Iterative design with a focus on reducing energy and water usage will be the norm. Your recall of work in third-year will be essential to your success.

We will also practice what we preach in the studio; the methods we choose to present our work will always look at the impacts on our world. Using precious resources to make a temporary display piece is inappropriate, as is spray painting a gestural model to hide the sins of poor craft. Keep in mind that time is also a resource.

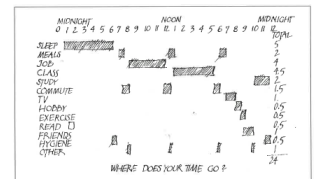
As a studio and educational paradigm, we can do more with less.



Harvard Art Museum- Renzo Piano

# Calendar...

The year will go by fast. Be careful not to get complacent. It is common to be lulled into the belief that a year-long project is plenty of time; I guarantee you will wish you had more time available. Use what you have wisely, plan for having less than you think.



## “It’s a TRAP” Admiral Akbar

Fall 2025	18 Sep	Th	Classes begin
	13 Oct	M	ABSTRACT show (tentative)
	11 Nov	T	Academic Holiday (Veterans Day)
	14 Nov-21 Nov	F-F	(International Travel?)
	24 Nov-30 Nov	M-F	Academic Holiday (Thanksgiving)
	05 Dec	F	Last day of classes
Winter 2026	05 Jan	M	Classes begin
	19 Jan	M	Academic holiday (MLK Jr.)
	20 Jan	T	Monday Schedule
	04 Feb	W	SECTION show
	16 Feb	M	Academic Holiday (Presidents Day)
	08 Mar-11 Mar	F-M	Qualifying Review
	13 Mar	F	Last day of classes
Spring 2026	30 Mar	M	Classes begin
	24 Apr	W	DETAILS show
	??	W-F	STUDIO Show
	25 May	M	Academic Holiday (Memorial Day)
	05 Jun	F	Last Day of Classes
	08Jun-10Jun	M-W	Juried Review
	13 Jun-14 Jun	S-Sn	Commencement



All schedules are tentative and we work hard to communicate dates and deadlines. For the most part, expect to be in class every scheduled day.

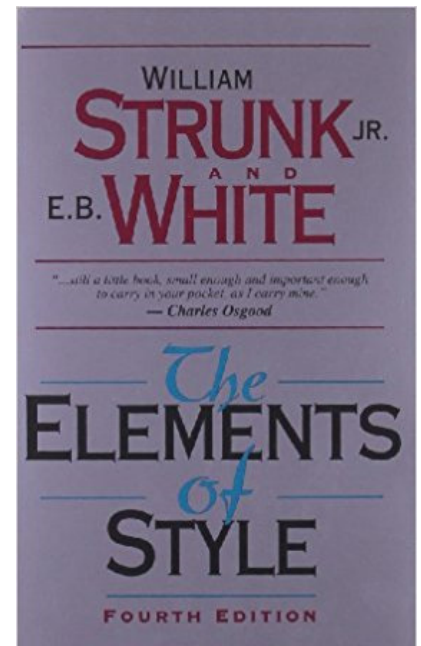
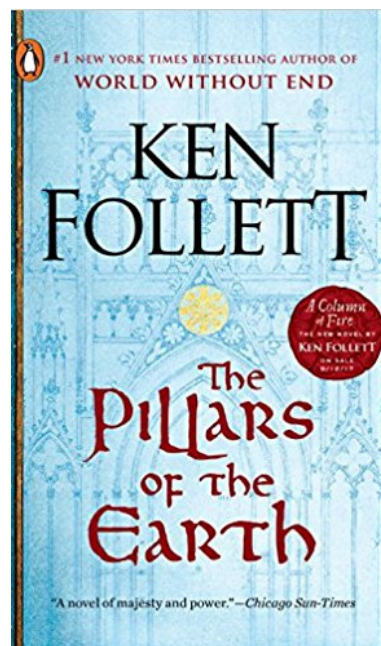
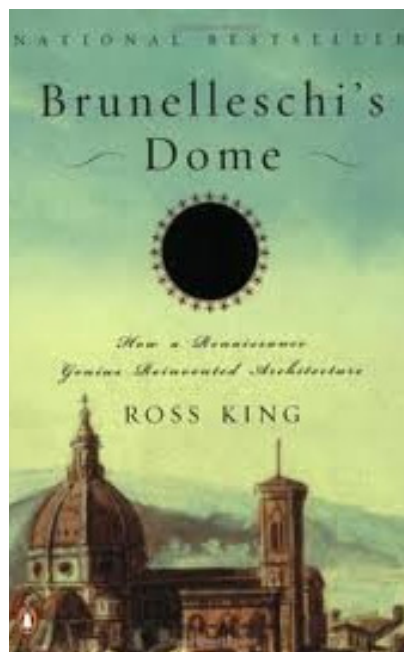
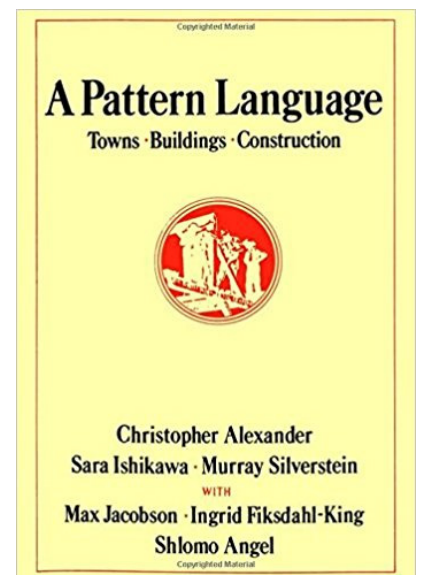
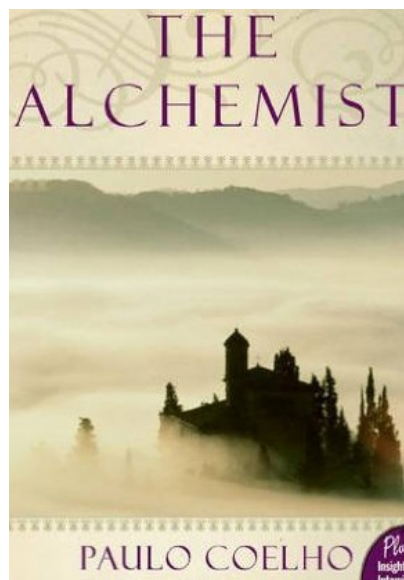
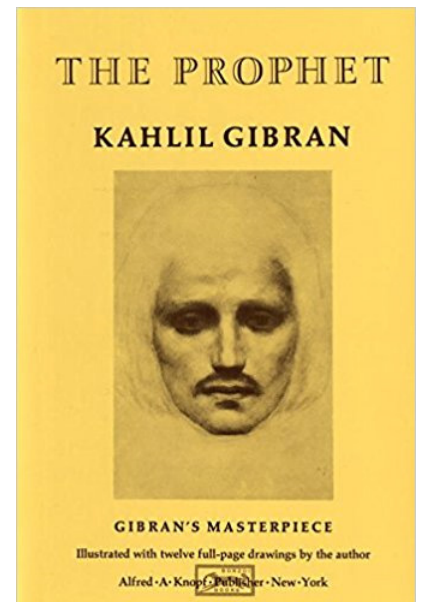


# Books...Movies...Cat videos

As a class, we will be reading books, watching movies, telling stories, and learning about each other, certainly more than you have in any other class. All I ask is that whatever you bring to the studio environment is appropriate and respectful of the group's wishes and university policies.

I've never been a strong reader but always envied those who were. Still, I read when I can and enjoy that time away from a computer. I enjoy travelogues, historical fiction with an architectural bent, books that make me think, and books that make my work better (Strunk, for example).

Here are a few of the selections I have in my library that you may want to explore. I look forward to seeing what you are reading.





# About me...

Some of you have been prior students in one of my classes. I've been teaching in the Architecture Department for 25 years and have taught almost every course required for the undergraduate degree. I enjoy a balance of teaching on campus and running a small practice in downtown SLO that focuses on housing. I am confident that teaching has made me a better architect and that currency in the profession has made me a better teacher. I love to travel and am often on a plane to see something new.

Currently licensed in California and Texas, I graduated from Cal Poly with a B.Arch, and serve on the Board of Directors for AIA California. I also chair a volunteer task force for NCARB implementing the future of architecture licensure. Ask me about it. About the only time I'm not thinking architecture is when I volunteer to the Executive Board of the Live Oak Music Festival, an annual benefit for KCBX Public Radio.

I encourage you to give me a call or send a note if you have any questions about the studio. I'm pretty easy to get a hold of.

Greg Wynn, AIA, NCARB gwynn@calpoly.edu (805) 801-3414

