



MIT 4.222 Professional Practice

Fall 2022, F 9:00-12:00 Credits: 3-0-3 G // Room 1-135

Instructors

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Course Overview

4.222 Professional Practice gives a critical orientation towards a career in architectural practice. Through case studies, critical discussions on urgent topics, internal reflections, and role-playing exercises, the course challenges students to explore a range of legal, ethical, political, and professional questions they will face in practice.

Course Description

4.222 Professional Practice is about the making of architecture in the contemporary moment. Our focus will be on both the state of architecture practice – which is not isolated from the systemic societal faults, inequalities, inequities, and deeply-rooted, foundational discrimination and oppression that have been, and continue to be, exposed and laid bare – and on the ways by which designers are broadening the canon and developing modes of practice that are committing to positive change.

The practice of architecture differs from academe in significant ways.

Works of architecture are real, not solely abstract or theoretical. They impact the real lives of real people in real places. Real projects take time, they consume resources, they involve stakeholders, and they cost money. Buildings are subject to regulatory approval, building and energy codes, historic districts, and the varied and complex interests of a broad range of community members and stakeholders. Real projects are not always funded by the people or communities they serve. Architecture projects can involve difficult ethical decisions.

This environment requires that strong design skills be complemented by strong ethics; skills in communication and promotion; stakeholder management; time management; and financial awareness. Building a relationship of trust between a client / patron / stakeholder and a designer is critical to a project's success and to its relevance. Much of the above is developed over time, putting the less-experienced architect at a disadvantage.

Working in this environment requires the understanding that the profession / practice of architecture is as much a sculptor of our world as it is a product of it - a reflection of its context, however faulted. Works of architecture, and architects themselves, can be vehicles for reinforcing the status quo, as much as they can be a means by which desires for real change can be expressed and realized.

The course format is discursive and conversational, which allows for both critique of the profession and the positing of new models of practice. Throughout the semester, students will engage with practicing architects who are disrupting practice in one way or another; and they will investigate urgent questions facing architecture and the planet; and they will reflect on their own future practicing selves.

Course Structure

4.222 is structured around in-class discussion and conversation. Students are expected to come to class sessions prepared for robust and equitable discussion amongst students, instructors, and guests.

Canvas will be used to store course material and facilitate conversation between class sessions.

The first several weeks of the course will involve a deep dive into the world of architecture practice and will feature short lectures and extended discussions. At times this will involve discussion on required readings, research into specific topics, and investigation of outside guests and practices. Subsequent weeks will be spent on panel discussions on critical topics facing practice and visits with practicing architects.

Imagining Practice

Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to articulate their priorities and vision for their own architecture practice. In these individual exercises, students will focus on both the kind of work they want to bring into the world, and the means by which this could be realized

Panel Discussions

The practice of architecture is opaque to many. Behind the well-crafted image of an architectural project is a whole world of complexities – client/patron relationships, programming, contracts, consultants, fees, project management, etc. Systemic barriers persist. The profession can also appear monolithic, when in fact there is a very broad range of ways by which architecture can be defined and practiced. All of this can seem so foreign to an architecture student, and so different from a studio curriculum, that the professional world can seem confusing if not impenetrable.

The best way to learn about what architecture practice is like is to hear directly from practicing architects. This year, the Professional Practice course will organize and host a series of panel discussions that will feature practitioners who are, in one way or another, enabling change in the landscape of practice.

Covid-19

For the most up-to-date information on the MIT response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please refer to <https://now.mit.edu/>.

Course Method and Expectations

While the course will cover the many practical, structural, legal, and ethical questions that define professional practice, the aim is to do so through discussion, exploration of critical topics, individual reflection, and group-based exercises that allow students to actively learn through role-play.

Collaboration is indispensable to contemporary multidisciplinary environments and necessarily extends out beyond the internal workings of a given practice. The course will expose students to the opportunities and challenges that working with others poses, and to finding ways to excel as a collaborative group by identifying and harnessing individual talents.

The panel discussions and profiles featured in the course are most valuable and successful with a high level of student participation. The richer the interrogation by students, the more valuable the result. All students are expected to actively participate in the investigations and Q+A sessions, and to be present during the entire class session.

Course Objectives

- Students will learn how practice differs from academe, and in turn how to navigate the professional world they are about to enter.
- Students will learn that architecture practice is not monolithic, and that there is a broad range of ways by which architecture can be defined and practiced.
- Students will learn about the state of equity and access within the profession, and avenues for challenging systemic barriers.
- Open discussions focused on how the profession has addressed, or not addressed, critical contemporary topics will lead the students to see the practice of architecture as malleable and open to change.
- Through group-based work, students will learn both that the practice of architecture is inherently collaborative and that good professional relationships last well beyond a project.
- Students will learn the value of having skills and abilities beyond design.

Course Assignments

Students are expected to actively participate in all class sessions and online discussions. In addition to the required readings, the course has three streams of assignments.

1. **Imagining Practice.** A series of personal reflections on your future practicing self.
2. **Weekly Reflections.** Following each class session, students will be asked to upload a short reflection on the day's subject in a discussion forum on Canvas.
3. **In-class group work.** Three core class sessions will feature break-out groups with exercises on specific topics. This group work will be uploaded to the course canvas site.

Evaluation and Grading

Attendance for the full duration of class is mandatory. An excused absence is defined as one that was discussed with, and approved by, the instructor(s) at least 24 hours prior to the date of absence, or a family or medical emergency that is confirmed by your physician or a dean in Student Support Services.

All unexcused absences will result in a reduction to course grading. Each unexcused absence will result in a reduction of the student's grade by half a letter grade. More than two unexcused absences can result in the student being asked to drop the course, or their receiving a failing grade.

A student's absence from a class session, either excused or unexcused, does not exclude them from the learning objectives or other requirements of that session, be they readings or group work.

Students will be evaluated on the following criteria, which will be used to determine final course grading.

Quality of In-class and Online Participation 25%

Students are expected to engage with class content in an active and constructive way, to come prepared for active in-class discussion by reading required text and researching topics and guests.

Assignment 1: Imagining Practice 35%

Assignment 1, which has four sub-assignments, is graded as a whole.

Assignment 2: Weekly Reflections 20%

Following each class session, students will be asked to upload a short reflection on the day's subject, and engage with other students, in a discussion forum on Canvas.

Assignment 3: In-class Group Work 20%

Three core class sessions will feature break-out groups with exercises on specific topics. This group work will be uploaded to the course canvas site.

Grades are defined as follows.

- A Excellent. High level of participation and engagement with subject matter during in-class discussions. Assignments surpass expectations in terms of inventiveness, verbal and visual ability, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class.
- B Above Average. Assignments are thorough, well-researched, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Participation is high. Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.
- C Average. Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter. Assignments and participation meet the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication of rigor. Assignments are incomplete in one or more areas.
- D Poor. Assignments are incomplete and participation is marginal. Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating only partial familiarity with the subject matter. Student does not demonstrate the required scholarly skill and knowledge base.
- F Failed. Assignments are unresolved and participation is low. Minimum objectives are not met and performance is not acceptable. This grade will be assigned when student has excessive unexcused absences. This grade also signifies that the student must repeat the subject to receive credit.

Academic Integrity + Honesty

MIT's expectations and policies regarding academic integrity should be read carefully and adhered to diligently:
<http://integrity.mit.edu>

Writing and Communication Center

The MIT Writing and Communication Center offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are published scholars and writers. WCC lecturers have a combined 130 years' worth of teaching here at MIT (ranging from 1 to 26 years).

The WCC works with undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alumni, and spouses. The WCC helps everyone strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as oral presentations and slide design.

No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, and helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with non-native speaker issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. To make an appointment, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com> and register with our online scheduler. The WCC is at E18-233, 50 Ames Street.

Student Support Services and GradSupport

If you are dealing with a personal or medical issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, undergraduate students should contact a dean in Student Support Services (S3) and graduate students should contact a dean in GradSupport. These offices are here to help you. The deans will verify your situation, provide you with support, and help you work with your professor to determine next steps. In most circumstances, undergraduate students will not be excused from coursework without verification from a dean. For graduate students, no verification is needed if arrangements are made between instructor/advisor and students. Please visit the S3 and GradSupport websites for contact information and more ways that they can provide support.

Disability and Accessibility Services

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. Even if you are not planning to use accommodations, it is recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with the services and resources of the office. If you have already been approved for accommodations, please contact DAS early in the semester so that they can work with you to get your accommodation logistics in place. Please visit the DAS website for contact information.

NAAB Student Performance Criteria

PC.1 Career Paths

PC.6 Leadership and Collaboration

PC.8 Social Equity and Inclusion

SC.2 Professional Practice

SC.3 Regulatory Context

Some Source Texts

No single book or resource can completely summarize the complexities of Architecture Practice. Those that come close can quickly become obsolete as practice and technology evolve. Some key resources are listed here, and a more extensive bibliography and resource list is available on the course website.

A concise overview:

Segal, Paul. *Professional Practice: A Guide to Turning Designs into Buildings*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2006.

Lengthy and more detailed:

Pressman, Andrew. *Professional Practice 101: Business Strategies and Case Studies in Architecture*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.

Less architecture-specific, but with a good overview on business for designers:

Granet, Keith. *The Business of Design: Balancing Creativity and Profitability*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011.

Course Schedule

Wk 1	09 Sep	Introductions // Course Overview // Syllabus review THE LETTERS OF PRACTICE
Wk 2	16 Sep	THE NUMBERS OF PRACTICE <i>Guests: Emily Grandstaff-Rice, FAIA & Dr. Kendall A Nicholson, Ed.D.</i> <u>Assignment 1.0 due</u>
Wk 3	23 Sep	NO CLASS (Student Holiday)
Wk 4	30 Sep	ACTING RESPONSIBLY Ethics – Responsibility in Architectural Practice <i>Guests: Joe Herzog, AIA National Ethics Council and Ashley Rao</i> <u>Assignment 1.1 due</u>
Wk 5	07 Oct	RELATIONSHIPS <i>Contracts – Forming Clear Relationships</i> <i>Guest: Tom Mullard, Poole Professional</i>
Wk 6	14 Oct	MAKING A LIVING Fees – How to Charge for your Work
Wk 7	21 Oct	DEEP DIVE – The Missing Middle <i>Housing Challenges</i> <i>Guests: Jesse Kanson-Benanev, Abundant Housing MA, TBD</i> <u>Assignment 1.2 due</u>
Wk 8	28 Oct	DEEP DIVE – Climate & Decarbonization Decarbonization <i>Guests: Tony Hans, CMTA & Lara Pfadt, FA</i>
Wk 9	04 Nov	DEEP DIVE – Meaningful Engagement <i>Guest: Killion Mkwete, Social Impact Collective</i>
Wk 10	11 Nov	NO CLASS (Veterans Day)
Wk 11	18 Nov	ALUMNI REUNION <i>Guests: Katie Flynn / Sarah Dunbar / Olivia Huang</i>
Wk 12	25 Nov	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)
Wk 13	01 Dec 6:00pm	Special Event <u>More information soon</u>
Wk 13	02 Dec	Collective Review // Class Dismissed <u>Assignment 1.3 due</u>