

Architectural Design Workshop 4.184 - ClimateCorps@MIT Spring 2025

Instructor: Lisbeth Shepherd, Lecturer, Architecture & Entrepreneur in Residence, MITDesignX

Units: 2-0-1 or 2-0-7

Schedule: Monday 12-2 / Urban Risk Lab - N52, Grading: letter grade

Prerequisites: Participation in a prior climate corps workshop (4.182, 4.183 or 4.184) or internship (MITOS Summer cohort '24 or PKG Climate IAP '25) or by permission of the instructor. Students who wish to take the course should email lisbeths@mit.edu

Description: This workshop will offer a space for student-driven projects at the intersection of *climate, community* and *careers* as part of a series of courses and pilot projects that build on one another. Students have been exploring the idea of a “climate corps” for MIT, with partners of the MIT Civilian Climate Corps Initiative: Urban Risk Lab, SA+P, Eastie Farm Climate Corps, PowerCorpsBOS, the MIT Office of Sustainability, City of Cambridge. We see an MIT climate corps as building student capacity to respond to needs identified by people and groups addressing climate and equity issues, in the local communities of Boston and Cambridge and on campus, and to learn through working on collaborative projects and part of ongoing partnerships. Students taking this workshop will aim to complete a tangible component of their climate corps projects while deepening their understanding of themes, their skills and practical experience. In order to hit the ground running, students should email the instructor with a description of what they would like to work on whether they plan to work individually or as part of a team. Open to undergraduates and graduates, Institute-wide.

Background, goals and structure: This workshop is part of a series exploring “climate corps”—combining training, service and career development—and the application of this idea to MIT students, seeded by the D'Arbeloff fund¹. The class is designed as a “corps” - a cohort working with urgency and purpose on impact projects, with a shared framework and goals. Students will complete a concrete project on one of our ongoing climate justice and resilience areas of focus - community farms, zero waste and circularity, extreme heat, equitable workforce development, or a related topic, with the goal to create impact around an identified need. The project and final product will be agreed upon with the instructor and relevant partners, to be presented at the end of the semester in a format that relates to the identified need students are addressing (presentation, pop-up, materials for use by the partner(s)...). Projects which focus on the “MIT campus as a test-bed” will test and demonstrate ideas which are useful to community partners beyond the campus grounds.

Students will drive their projects, including developing a week to week plan for the semester. Class time will be a space for working on projects with the support of the instructor, class collaborators and fellow students. Students taking the course for 3 units will propose projects that can be completed during weekly class time, with targeted research and meetings outside of class. Students wishing to take the course for 9 units will undertake projects involving more extensive outside research, partner engagement and visits with a more ambitious final product.

Ongoing themes students have been exploring include:

- Extreme heat
- Circularity and designing out waste on campus

¹ The development of an MIT Climate Corps is called for by President Kornbluth in “The MIT Climate Project”: <https://president.mit.edu/sites/default/files/download/climate-project-web-summary.pdf> and <https://president.mit.edu/climate-project>

- Community and campus gardens and farms
- Equitable career paths
- Climate and resiliency hubs.

Towards a climate corps for MIT

Climate corps enable people to come together to take action on climate issues, while gaining skills and experience on a path to careers in rapidly growing industries. In Boston, the Eastie Farm Climate Corps in East Boston and PowerCorpsBOS are paid climate corps programs, offering local young adult residents a platform to address environmental justice issues, learning through doing while catalyzing new partnerships and possibilities. Our work with these partners led us to ask: what if there were a corps that enabled MIT students to take action together on climate and environmental justice issues on campus and in the community, for sustained periods of time - could it accelerate progress towards MIT and city climate action goals while fostering community and personal growth for members? Could building a dedicated MIT climate workforce add to the growing network of local climate corps in the Boston area?

Schedule

Each class will start with a brief weekly reflection (prompts assigned each week for the next class) and time for students to workshop ideas. The second hour will be space to work on projects. Students taking the course for 3 units will do the bulk of their work during class with one hour weekly devoted to engagement and research. Students taking the course for 9 units will develop more ambitious goals for final products with the expectation of deep engagement with the issue and partners identified. The schedule will be subject to change.

February 3- Welcome and initial project development. Review syllabus. Opening reflection. Students share their project ideas, exchange and start sketching project goals and priority partnerships.

February 10 - Project plans. Brainstorm questions for research, pertaining to the dimensions of impact: climate, community and careers. Start drafting project plans. Outreach to partners for scheduling.

February 17 Presidents Day - Class to be rescheduled based on student availability- Partner engagement. Students engage project partners to co-develop goals for research and final product, who to talk to and questions to ask.

February 24 - Partner and stakeholder engagement continued. Zoom or in-person visits as needed to finalize the project work plan with partner feedback incorporated.

March 3 - Project research & development. Plans finalized; background, scheduling interviews or meetings.

March 10 - Project research & development

March 17 - Interim partner presentations and discussion (zoom or in person, subject to availability)

March 24 - Spring break

March 31 - Project research & development

April 7 - Project work

April 14 - Prep final presentation

April 21- Prep final presentation

April 28 - Final presentation and celebration with partners

May 5 - Document and incorporate partner feedback into next steps. No assignments.

May 12 - Final reflections, class documentation and partner communications. No assignments.

Evaluation

Attendance is important. For students taking the course for 3 units, the class is structured as the primary space to advance projects and collaboration. The final grade will represent the balance of attendance, participation in discussions and reflections, engagement with fellow students and partners, progress towards the goals and plan proposed, and the quality of work produced including feedback from the partners. The grading will include individual growth.

Attendance 25%

Project proposal and plan 25%

Participation and engagement 25%

Final product 25%

Office Hours

By appointment, please email lisbeths@mit.edu

Land Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the land, and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. The lands which MIT occupies are the traditional unceded territories of the Wampanoag Nation and the Massachusett Peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of these territories, as well as the ongoing processes of colonialism and dispossession in which we and our institution are implicated. Beyond the stolen territory which we physically occupy, MIT has long profited from the sale of federal lands granted by the Morrill Act, territories stolen from 82 Tribes including the Greater and Little Osage, Chippewa, and Omaha Peoples. We honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous people connected to this land from time immemorial.

Inclusive Classroom and Reflective Practice

This course is committed to practice that supports liberation, environmental and economic justice. The aim is to foster an inclusive community in this classroom, welcoming individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with me.

Wellness

Your wellness matters to us as your instructors. If you need time, space, support, never hesitate to reach out (lisbeths@mit.edu). Personal and medical issues can make it hard to focus on academics; beyond the instructors, undergrads, if you find that something is getting in the way of your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, you should contact a dean in [Student Support Services \(S3\)](#). The deans will provide you with support and help you work with us to determine next steps. I ask that you go to S3 so I know you have had a chance to talk through your situation with someone and to connect with any resources you might need. You can reach out to a dean you have worked with in the past, join their virtual help queue (<https://sicp-s3.mit.edu/queue>), or e-mail s3-support@mit.edu. Graduate students, [GradSupport](#) provides consultation, coaching, and advocacy to graduate students on matters related to academic and life challenges. If you are dealing with an issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, you may contact GradSupport by email at gradsupport@mit.edu or via phone at (617) 253-4860.

Special Accommodations

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. If you have a disability and are not planning to use accommodations, it is still recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with their services and resources. Please visit the [DAS website](#) for contact information. If you have already been approved for accommodations, please inform me - I am ready to assist with implementation.

Academic Integrity

In this course, I will hold you to the high standard of academic integrity expected of all students at the Institute. Violating the Academic Integrity policy in any way (e.g., plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, cheating, etc.) will result in official Institute sanction. Possible sanctions include receiving a failing grade on the assignment or exam, being assigned a failing grade in the course, having a formal notation of disciplinary action placed on your MIT record, suspension from the Institute, and expulsion from the Institute for very serious cases. Please review MIT's [Academic Integrity](#) policy and related resources (e.g., working under pressure; how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote; etc.) and contact me if you have any questions about appropriate citation methods, the degree of collaboration that is permitted, or anything else related to the Academic Integrity of this course.

Carbon Footprint

This workshop will take place at MIT and at times take us to locations around the city, for which public transportation will be prioritized. We will aim to create digital and printed versions of the products, keeping printing to a minimum.

Voter Registration Statement

[MIT partners with TurboVote](#) — a non-profit website that seeks to increase voter turnout by helping its users register to vote, find polling places, and research election issues — to help students, faculty, and staff to register to vote in local, state, and national elections in the United States, by mail or in person, whether they reside in Massachusetts or another state. [It takes five minutes or less to register](#), and you can use it to request an absentee ballot and/or subscribe to reminders about registration and voting deadlines and locations in relevant elections.