



Columbia University GSAPP / Historic Preservation Studio II / Spring 2018
Faculty Advisers: Belmont Freeman and Bryony Roberts

Taught in two parallel sections, this studio engages the site of the Old Essex County Jail in Newark, New Jersey. Built in 1837, with major wings added in 1890 and 1895, the original stone and brick buildings were designed by the Philadelphia architect John Haviland, who earned fame for his numerous public buildings including notable prisons. While considered a model facility at its inception, by the middle of the 20th century the Essex County Jail was notorious for overcrowding and unsafe conditions, and was decommissioned after a new county jail opened in 1971. The buildings were used as offices and storage for a period, and completely abandoned in the early 1990s. After a fire in 2001 and years of water penetration through open roofs, the complex is in a state of extreme deterioration.

Although the jail was listed on the New Jersey State and National Registers of Historic Places in 1991, it is under the simultaneous threats of demolition and collapse. Once in a neglected industrial zone, today the jail site lies within the University Heights Science Park, a district designated for educational and research development. The City of Newark owns the property and has sought to clear the land for UHSP development, but the State Historic Preservation Office has blocked demolition, insisting that first the historic jail must be documented and options for preservation be investigated and meaningfully considered. The New Jersey Institute of Technology, slated to assume control of the site, acknowledges the need to consider the historical significance of the jail complex in any development plan and welcomes Columbia GSAPP's proposal to conduct this HP studio. NJIT recognizes that the product of the studio may be instrumental in satisfying the SHPO's requirements.



The studio enters into a complex political climate -- local, state and national preservation groups hope that at least a part of the jail complex can be saved, though some professionals feel that the buildings are in such an advanced state of decay that conservation is impractical. At the same time, there are undoubtedly many Newark residents who have such negative feelings for the jail - a miserable place of incarceration in its latter years - that they would be happy for it to disappear.

Responding to these real-world challenges, this studio will focus on the documentation and interpretation of the old Essex County Jail, the formulation of strategies for the preservation and/or memorialization of the building complex, and proposals for the productive repurposing of the site. To inform our design interventions, the class will first research the history of the site, physical condition of the buildings and landscape, and the present social, political and economic context. This is a design studio, the final products of which will be individual design proposals by each student.

The two sections of the studio will work together during the research phase, and then the sections will divide and address two different aspects of the site's future --

1) Belmont Freeman's studio will focus on Architecture Design, developing options for new programming and buildings on the site. Students will develop detailed building proposals for new construction.

2) Bryony Roberts' studio will focus on Interpretive Design, developing proposals for editing and transforming the historical structure to communicate architectural and social history. These design proposals can include a range of design practices, including: selective demolition, preservation, new construction, and/or unorthodox interventions such as installations, new media, performance, and virtual models.

The two studios will work together closely, throughout the research phase and afterwards with joint pin-ups, reviews, and discussions. The studio work will be shared with stakeholders involved with the Old Essex County Jail, offering tangible contribution to the documentation and planning of this historic site.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course includes two distinct phases: Analysis and Projection. For the Analysis phase, the two studio sections led by Belmont Freeman and Bryony Roberts work together and conduct research in small groups. In the Projection phase, the two studio sections work independently and students develop individual projects.

ANALYSIS

In the Analysis phase, students gather and represent information about the Old Essex County Jail and its surrounding urban context. Students begin with Building Research on the architectural and social history of the jail, and then develop a complete Site Survey after multiple visits to the site. Moving out in scale, students develop Urban Context Research by gathering data on surrounding infrastructural, demographic, and architectural conditions, and by meeting with community groups from the surrounding area.

PROJECTION

Before the Midreview, the two studio sections divide and students begin to develop individual design proposals for the site. Students develop schematic designs for the midreview and develop these designs more fully in the second half of the semester, concluding with representation through drawings, models, and perspectives.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course trains students in a range of analytical, strategic, and design skills. Students refine their abilities to research the architectural and social history of a site, identifying and representing the key elements of significance. Students continue to develop their skills of documenting existing conditions through measured drawings, photogrammetry, and notated drawings of material conditions, architectural elements, and additions over time. Students develop tools for researching and representing surrounding urban context, by mapping infrastructure, zoning, use, and demographics. Students also gain skills in community engagement through meetings with local community groups that are involved in the surrounding area. In terms of design, students gain experience in projecting possible outcomes for a difficult site, learning how design can navigate challenging material and social constraints.

EXPECTATIONS

STUDIO CULTURE

Students are expected to spend a large portion of their time in the studio working and to be active participants in the collaborative studio environment. Sharing knowledge, techniques, and ideas with your fellow students is incredibly important to your own creative development and to your success in this studio. Students are expected to keep the studio space orderly and clean, and to keep clear a large table and wall space for group meetings and pinups.

Students are expected to be independent and to take initiative to find the resources and supplies that they need to complete their work. Since this course involves site visits outside of the school, students are expected to be professional and respectful when working with local communities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The teaching will take place during twice-weekly studio meetings in the form of desk crits, pin-ups and reviews. Students are expected to be active participants in group conversations, to attend all studio meetings, pin-ups, and reviews and to keep up with a rigorous level of production.

EVALUATION

The final grade in the course will be given on the basis of:

Attendance and design production for twice-weekly studio meetings: 30%

Assignments and Midreview presentation: 30%

Final review presentation: 40%

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be present and working during all studio meetings, which occur twice a week. Students are also expected to be present during all reviews. Absences from studio meetings and reviews will affect the final grade and multiple unexcused absences will result in course failure.

DESIGN PRODUCTION FOR STUDIO MEETINGS

Students are expected to be self-motivated and ambitious in their development of their design proposals. During each twice-weekly studio meeting, students will discuss their work with the instructors. Students are expected to revise and improve their work for each session in response to earlier feedback from their instructors.

MIDREVIEW AND FINAL REVIEW

Work presented for both the midreview and the final review will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

Students should demonstrate proactive engagement with the material and self-motivated intellectual pursuits that enhance their own design ambitions. Students are expected to clearly articulate their ambitions and the intellectual underpinnings of their work in pinups and desk crits.

TECHNIQUE

Students are expected to execute all assignments with care and precision. Assignments will be evaluated not only on the basis of the ideas, but also to a large degree on the quality of the execution. Students are responsible for planning sufficient time for developing appropriate and thorough representation.

DEADLINES

Students must complete assignments by the given deadline. Deadlines and required deliverables are not negotiable. No printing is allowed after the deadline. Deadlines can only be extended in cases of illness or family emergencies, and requests for extensions must be submitted before the deadline in writing, accompanied by a medical certificate when necessary. Keep your active files backed up - loss of data is not an excuse for an incomplete project.

SCHEDULE

ANALYSIS

Introduction – Thursday, January 18

Studio presentations and selections

- begin reading existing studies of the site, available in Dropbox:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1gasi7av54tk6it/AACQs0qgE_Dc1q3V2zw6eJo8a?dl=0

Building Research – Thursday, January 18 – Thursday, February 1

- Architectural history: Architect, Construction, Phases, Style
- Typological history: types of 19th century prison architecture
- Social history: History of prison, inmates, approaches to incarceration

- **Field trip:** Thursday, January 25 (during studio) – walking tour of Newark with Tony Schuman, Acting Dean of NJIT Architecture, and Zemin Zhang of the Newark Landmarks Preservation Committee

- **Due date:** Thursday, February 1

Site Survey – Friday, February 2 – Monday, February 12

- **Field trip:** Friday, February 2 – site survey with Will Reynolds, documentation through photogrammetry, drawing, photography

- Measured drawings of site
- Photographic documentation
- Photogrammetry and 3D scanning to produce model

- Notated drawings of conditions
- Notated drawings of materials
- Notated drawings of architectural features
- Notated drawings of additions over time
- Challenge: How to document ruination? Weathering?

- **Due date:** Monday, February 12

Urban Context – Monday, February 12 – Monday, February 26

- Mapping infrastructure
- Mapping zoning
- Mapping uses around the site
- Mapping architectural styles and dates of construction
- Mapping demographics: age, income, ethnicity, owner-occupied

- **Field Trip:** February 16 - Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia

- **Due date:** February 26 – Group Discussion – What can be done?



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This studio section focuses on the topic of Interpretive Design -- how to design an interpretation of the Old Essex County Jail site that will make the architectural and social history of the site tangible for contemporary users.

As the site transitions into ownership by NJIT, much of the land will likely be converted into other functions such as housing, parking, or university facilities. This studio section addresses the future of the National Register-listed structure and how it can be partially preserved or represented on the site alongside other future uses.

This section focuses on the intersection of architectural and social history, acknowledging that the significance of the site is due as much to its architecture as to its long and difficult social history. The project of interpretation takes on the challenge of how to represent the difficult history of incarceration and its relationship to contemporary issues of policing and social inequality in Newark.

In terms of design, the studio encourages experimental approaches to interpretation, looking to examples from art practice, architectural design, and exhibition design for inspiration. Students are encouraged to develop proposals that incorporate unconventional methods of representing architectural and social histories, including virtual models, installations, video, performance, and other ephemeral practices.

INTERPRETIVE DESIGN STUDIO

PROJECTION

Interpretation – February 26 – March 8

- Studying case studies of interpretation
- Each student analyzes a case study of one of the following approaches:
 - ruination, reconstruction, abstraction, exhibition, performance
- March 1 – 2pm – Guest lecture by Jae Shin and Damon Rich of Hector
- **Field Trip:** March 2 – 1:30-5pm - Newark, meeting with community groups
- **Due date:** March 8

Schematic proposal – March 9 - 22

- Select portion of structure to preserve
- Written statement on interpretive narrative
- Schematic design proposal for design of intervention
- **Due date:** Midreview - March 22

Design Development - March 23 – April 5

- Design development of intervention
- **Due date:** April 5

Final Project - April 6 – May 4

- Final deliverables:
 - Plans, sections, elevations
 - Perspective views of intervention
 - One unconventional representational medium: video, projection, full-scale construction, performance, etc.
- **Due date:** Final Review - May 4