

# course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

GSAPP A4510 Studio I: Historic Preservation Studio

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## SYLLABUS

### *Introduction*

Studio I is the central focus of the first semester of the Historic Preservation program, and a foundational course for a three-studio sequence within the program. It is the only full-class studio in the sequence where all students gather to engage studio objectives together. It is simultaneously broad in reach and narrow in focus. Studio I both complements and benefits from other first semester coursework; it is the space for engaging overarching historical and contemporary issues of preservation, urbanism, planning, and architectural design. The goal for Studio I is to equip students with skills, techniques, and critical thinking – the means to engage practice and research – in order to engender leadership, interpretation, and advocacy – the ability to exercise judgment and propose informed solutions.

### *Course Description*

Studio I will engage students in questions of preservation and its role in the larger context of the built environments of New York City. It will encourage students to think about non-traditional partnerships to explore, existing preservation tools, and diverse potential outcomes. The studio will offer models for approaching preservation questions and explore the diverse roles of the preservationist in contemporary practice. We do this by the collective study of a neighborhood as well as through individual student study of individual historic resources.

### *Learning Objectives*

This course will help students to:

- Understand how to document the built environment, through research, site study, and graphic representations.
- Investigate the materials of construction and physical condition of the built environment;

- Analyze the context and parameters of a site (building, landscape, neighborhood) in order to define its limits and the forces at work within its physical and social territories;
- Propose short and long-term solutions, recommendations, and strategic interventions that critically engage historic buildings;
- Demonstrate the ability to identify defining characteristics and significance;
- Engage the material and historical context and existing condition of a building and neighborhood;
- Exercise judgment regarding preservation from an engaged, informed, and critical position; and
- Understand the diverse roles for the preservationist in contemporary practice;
- Understand the practical applications for skill sets taught in parallel classes.

Associated goals are:

1. Students will critically engage in studio material through all phases, including the identification of problems and exploration of solutions.
2. Students will learn how to photograph, diagram, draw and document an existing site and building conditions.
3. Conservation, restoration, historic research, planning and design work will occur based on an in depth understanding of historic and existing conditions, culminating in finely calibrated research, proposals and solutions.

Coursework will build on the parallel and complementary courses taught in the Fall semester.

### *Methodology*

During the first half of the semester, students will engage in a series of exercises and projects to develop skills and techniques for research, conservation, and preservation design. Work will include both individual and group assignments.

The second half of the semester will focus on individual buildings, using a three-step methodology as the means to engage the final building site. The three-step process consists of Investigation, Analysis and Proposition phases. This approach will yield diverse outcomes – both in format and in proposed solutions. There will be pinups and group discussions as well as one-on-one desk critiques with students and faculty to advance outcomes for each step. During Investigation, students will focus on the individual building through observation, research, and documentation. At the start of the Investigation phase, students will choose a particular area of focus – historical research, materials conservation, or preservation design – which will inform exact final deliverables for the project. During Analysis, work on historical research, building materials, and preservation design will be advanced, with emphasis on the student's selected area of focus. In addition, during Analysis, students will delve deeper into the current study area's culture and values. Discussion of impacts to the physical and social context of the site and building will be introduced, in order to test possible outcomes,

and weigh them against each other. During Proposition, students will be tasked with proposing an approach to the individual building site that is informed by an understanding of its social, material, and historical context. In all phases, but in particular during Proposition, questions of architectural integrity and significance will be explored.

Basic required deliverables will be consistent for all students; however, the format and focus of deliverables may vary slightly, based on instructor approval, as students have diverse existing skill sets and interests in aspects of historic preservation.

### *Studio Format*

Studio is many different things simultaneously. It is the physical environment within which you will create the majority of your work. It is the space within which we will meet as a large group or on an individual basis, with faculty, peers and outside critics. It is the group of individuals, of diverse background, who comprise the Studio unit – students, faculty, teaching assistants. It is the intellectual environment for research, exploration, risk-taking, and leadership. It is the core and central focus of your work within the program and for your degree.

Studio will at times demand intense, collaborative work and at other times demand individual, tremendous effort. **We challenge each student to take risks and explore territories outside of your individual discipline or familiar areas of comfort.** And we encourage you to observe and learn from your peers; other students can often be your best critics, role models, and instructors.

We expect that students will work in Studio on a regular basis, both inside and outside of class time. This is essential to the discourse and identity of the Studio. We expect students to discuss, share, and present work during the majority of classes, either in an individual desk critique, a crit (conversation and discussion) with faculty, or in a group crit with varying formats (pin-up, review or jury, presentation to others). Students must be prepared for their crits, with all necessary material (research, drawings, data, etc.) easily at hand.

Site visits and other field trips will be scheduled over the course of the semester. Other than scheduled site visits and trips, students should spend class time at work in Studio unless other arrangements are made with faculty.

### *Course Requirements*

Specific course requirements are outlined in the Project Brief and Weekly Plan, and consist of a combination of presentations and deliverables. Grading will be based on achievement of Studio learning objectives, participation, attendance, and the quality of presentations and deliverables due at the conclusion of each phase, with an emphasis on demonstrable evidence of skill advancement through the course of the

semester. Midterm assessments will be given to each student via written feedback. Grading criteria are as follows:

**Presentations (40%):** summary of critical thought progression; clearly stated approach and recommendations; clearly articulated case for proposed action, addressing integrity and significance; acknowledgement of challenges and unknowns; incorporation of faculty comments during desk crits; clarity and quality of presentation visuals; documented sources for factual or archival information; completion within time allowed; and responsiveness to critique and ability to address questions raised.

**Deliverables (40%):** succinct and well-organized work product; recommendations that consider short and long-term solutions; clarity, quality, and thoughtfulness of approach to building, site and neighborhood; clearly articulated case for proposed action, addressing integrity and significance; incorporation of faculty comments during desk crits; relevance, quality and clarity of graphics, drawing, writing, and overall deliverable format; and, citations for research, drawings and photos.

**Overall Assessment (20%):** quality and completeness of work during all phases; responsiveness to instructor comments and criticism; participation, timeliness and attendance; and growth in understanding and incorporation of new information.

Files for presentations and digital deliverable must be in PDF format unless otherwise approved in advance. In addition, at each phase-end milestone, we may request 2-3 key items from each student or group of students, submitted under separate cover (i.e. not within the body of a presentation or report).

### *Supporting Readings*

All students should carefully review the entire course Bibliography. You are encouraged to make use of these selected readings, which will provide further background for your class projects. At times faculty will direct individual students to particular readings to support the work and interests of that student. A copy of many of the books will be kept in Studio. Books may not be removed from the studio.

All students are required to read and make regular use of the following:

John Summerson's The Classical Language of Architecture

Cyril Harris's Illustrated Dictionary of Historical Architecture. (Every student should own a copy of this book. It is available for purchase at Book Culture on West 112th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue.)

ICOMOS Guide to Recording Historic Buildings