

Introduction to Architectural Design - Fall 2026

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Prerequisites:

You should have some background for this course. We will accept history of architecture, Form of the City, etc. In addition, we would like you to have some studio art, hand drafting, and/or work experience.

Class times:

Tuesday evenings: 7:10 p.m. - 9:10 p.m.

Friday mornings: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Office Hours: Because of the intense one-on-one nature of the instruction, we do not offer office hours. However, if you have any serious difficulties, please contact either of us by the emails listed above. Please copy Michele Borgia at borgia@vma1.com on all emails.

Location: Rockefeller Studio. You are expected to prepare class work in studio with fellow classmates and attend classes here as well.

You will be given the privilege of working in the Rockefeller Studio at an assigned desk. You will have access through your swipe card so you may set your own work schedule. You must put your work away when you leave the studio. Studio rules are posted on the website. Once you have been given your desk assignments, please see Margaret Kelly in the Art, Archeology and Cities Office for keys to the desk. A \$10 deposit will be due when you obtain your key and then returned to you at the end of the course when you return the keys.

Course Objectives:

1. To establish a basis for developing architectural design skills.
2. To offer insight into the concerns of the architect for those interested in architecture, architectural history, archeology, landscape architecture, planning, and environmental design.
3. To offer beginning-level architectural design instruction to those interested in working on a portfolio for applications for graduate school in architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, and environmental design.

Course Description:

In this class, you will be given a series of design exercises ranging in length, format and medium. The issues of human dimension, scale, proportion, function, context, structure, style, beauty, symbolism, and environmental and social responsibility will be addressed within the limits of each problem.

Most of your work will be drawn by hand, using the drafting tables provided to you. Additionally, you will be required to obtain personal drafting tools (see list below). You will also be given instruction in the use of SketchUp through a series of tutorials by Mason Lehman. There will be a drawing exercise that will be due at the end of that tutorial.

Class time will be spent primarily in group discussion and critiques of your work. Tuesday nights will be reserved for individual critiques. You should plan to work at your desk from the beginning of class until your critique is over. There will be many times that we will need to address the entire group at the beginning of the evening so please arrive promptly. Students should prepare a critique signup sheet for each instructor at the beginning of class where applicable. You will work one-on-one with one of your instructors for approximately fifteen minutes. The following week you will work with the other instructor. These critiques are extremely important, and it is mandatory that you attend.

On the days that projects are due; there will be a final presentation. Outside critics will be invited to discuss your work. This is to ensure that a diversity of opinion and approach are presented to you.

In the Friday classes we will work as a group covering specific topics that support the studio work. These activities could include walking tours, lectures, group discussions and outside speakers.

Through drawing, discussion, and criticism, a common architectural vocabulary will be established. The particular issues raised by each design problem will be investigated. Readings will augment the class as appropriate. We will suggest sources for you to investigate if they relate to something you are working on. Additionally, we may be able to provide in-class demonstrations on rendering techniques.

Sketch Book:

While learning basic design in the classroom, you will be encouraged to increase your awareness of your surroundings. Gaining an understanding of what is wonderful about the built environment and what qualities help to give meaning and emphasis to appropriate and successful design will be an underlying emphasis on the course. The rich architecture of Philadelphia and its suburbs will serve as the primary source for examples. Please keep a sketchbook. This will be part of your final grade.

Readings:

You will be assigned 5 readings over the course of the semester. Each of these is short but conveys ideas that are important to consider. The reading will be assigned on Tuesday, and your response is due back on Thursday by 6:00 pm. Please send these to Michele at borgia@vma1.com.

For the response: please succinctly compose the ideas that the readings generate for you. Do not summarize the text but enter into a dialogue with it. No more than 250 words. Please send all responses in PDF format with your name on it. Late assignments will have a point deducted.

Grades:

Your grade will be determined by the grades you receive for each project, as well as in-class participation. We will be looking for a well-worked through design solution, quality of presentation, responsiveness to critiques and interaction with other students in class. Your sketch book and your reading responses will be evaluated as part of your grade.

Text:

Required: Architectural Drawing Course: Tools and Techniques for 2D and 3D Representation
Mo Zell; Barron's Press, 2008

Recommended: Architectural Graphics 2nd Edition, by Francis D.K. Ching.
Van Nostrum Reinholdt; Florence, Kentucky

You will be referred to other text sources as they relate to specific issues in your personal design orientation.

Supplies:

You will be given an assigned desk with a lamp, drawing board cover, chair, and parallel slide. You'll be responsible for the care of these items. You may lock your drawing equipment in the desk drawer. There is a flat file drawer in which to store your work in each desk.

Items to purchase:

- Lead holder(s)
- Lead - F, H, HB, 2H depends on how you like to draw
- Lead pointer - Berol Turquoise makes an inexpensive one
- Trace paper - a roll of 12" in white or yellow
- Vellum - Clearprint 1000H at least 24" wide; available in sheets or you can share a roll with your classmates. All final drawings should be presented on this.
- Drafting tape - 1" wide
- Triangle - adjustable and a large 30-60-90
- Architect's scale
- Compass - for drafting leads
- Colored pencils - Prismacolors are a good option
- Push pins
- Scumex
- Drafting brush - small
- Optional items - circle template and French curve

Stores in Center City Philadelphia may be less expensive and have more selection. Blick has two locations.

Blick Art Materials
1330 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 545-3214

Blick Art Materials (formally Plaza Arts)
3200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 823-6893

Students who think they may need accommodations in this course due to the impact of a learning, physical, or psychological disability are encouraged to meet with me privately early in the semester to discuss their concerns. Students must contact Joanna Timmerman, Director of Access Services, 610-526-7516 or jtimmerman@brynmawr.edu, as soon as possible, to verify their eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Early contact will help to avoid unnecessary inconvenience and delays.