



Drawing of human brain cells, by Santiago Ramon Y Cajal (1852-1934), a neuroanatomist who trained as an artist and photographer prior to studying medicine and becoming a Nobel prize winner for Physiology or Medicine.

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

Course responsible:

Lisa Diedrich, Prof. of Landscape Architecture/Director, SLU Urban Futures

Andrea Kahn, Prof. of site thinking in research and design, SLU

Examiner:

Lisa Diedrich, SLU

Higher education credits: 4 ECTS

Subject area: Landscape Planning/ Landscape Architecture

Language: English

Prerequisites: Registered PhD students in disciplines concerned with urban landscape (design, planning, environmental science, landscape architecture, urban history, ecology, architecture, etc.)

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

"I want to suggest that most, perhaps all, practices of knowledge production and technics can be analyzed in terms of elemental ways of working and knowing or, to abbreviate, in terms of working knowledges." John Pickstone ¹

"Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place." John Dewey²

Introduction

Critical thinking "channels change" (Dave Hickey). It does so by offering a means of reflecting on the dynamic interplay of societal forces, professional activities, academic education and research structuring how we view, and make, our urbanizing world. Criticality does not belong to any one discipline. Rather, it helps us observe how disciplines operate differently – and to take a position on what we learn from these observations about disciplinary constraints and affordances. Each traditional subject area defines and deploys its own „working knowledges“; this course aims to mobilize the power of critical thinking to enrich and help evolve those epistemological norms and inherited practices towards new forms of knowledge production.

The 'Criticality beyond disciplinarity' course offers participants the chance to engage with theoretical texts exploring notions of disciplinarity and working knowledge; analyze sample critical publications; and undertake an exercise in critical writing. Presented from a landscape architectural perspective, it welcomes researchers from multiple disciplines, in order to rehearse inter and transdisciplinary work modes. It is open to participants who wish to sharpen understanding of their own research aims within broader disciplinary contexts, and to strengthen their capacity, as researchers, to contribute to the evolution of inter- and transdisciplinary practices.

Course structure

The core of the course is an intensive 2-day seminar in Oslo (with four ½ day-sessions scheduled over 3 days, 18-20 September, 2019) taking advantage of the 2019 ECLAS and IFLA conferences. The course will utilize conference events as 'course materials' for critical analyses and review during seminar discussion and work sessions. Prior to attending the core seminar, students undertake three types of preparatory work. *Note: Applicants must confirm availability to travel to Oslo and will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation costs.*

Coursework

Preparatory coursework (independent)

The preparatory work allows participants to familiarize themselves with a shared body of literature, and each other's research topics.

¹ John V. Pickstone, *Working Knowledges Before and After circa 1800: Practices and Disciplines in the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine, Isis, Vol. 98, No. 3 (September 2007)*

² John Dewey, *Experience and Nature (New York, Dover, 1958) p.222*

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

Prior to the group meeting in Oslo, participants will:

- closely read 4 required theory literature texts; prepare 4-sentence *rhetorical précis* for each (following guidelines provided); circulate *précis* via mail to all participants
- closely read 3 required critical writing texts
- prepare a 3-sentence *critical précis* of the critical position they want to develop with the paper (follow guidelines provided) and a 1-paragraph synopsis of their final paper topic

estimated time: 30h

Seminar coursework

The core seminar includes 4 half-day work-sessions. During the first 2 sessions, participants engage with sample critical writing publications and selected theoretical texts addressing framing concepts (“working knowledge”, “discipline” “disciplinization”, “inter-” and “transdisciplinarity”). Sample critical publications will be presented and discussed concentrating on how (and why) they are produced. Discussions of theoretical literature will be guided by participants’ *rhetorical précis*. The final day will have 2 work-sessions focused on developing the participants’ own work, using the *critical précis* as a tool to sharpen critical positions, nuance critical vocabularies, and strengthen critical writing skills. Discussions of student work will be driven by constructive inputs from fellow PhD students, Lisa Diedrich and Andrea Kahn. The seminar includes a lecture by Lisa Diedrich (Director SLU Urban Futures platform, and editor of Landscape Architecture Europe/LAE) on critical and a-critical writing and publications within the context of landscape architecture as academic discipline and professional practice; a lecture by Andrea Kahn (design theorist, SLU professor and founder of designCONTENT, a strategic consultancy for designers) addressing disciplinary “habits of mind” as they shape working knowledges and critical thinking in research; and a presentation of critical research work by Vera Vicenzotti (Senior researcher and lecturer, SLU/Uluna and author of critical papers on landscape theory).

estimated time: 20h

Post-seminar coursework

4 weeks devoted to final critical paper. Papers will be evaluated by Lisa Diedrich and Andrea Kahn.

estimated time: 50h

Working Timeline

15 February 2019

Preliminary course information available, circulated through networks

15 May 2019

Application deadline

15 June 2019

Distribute updated course information, literature list, course schedule, and participant list

until September 2019 (hours allocated at participant discretion)

Preparatory work period for course reading and preparatory course assignments.

10 September, 2019

Four (4) *rhetorical précis* & 1-paragraph final paper synopsis due (circulate to participants)

18-20 September (2 contact days over 3, coordinating with IFLA schedule)

Core PhD seminar, four (4) ½-day work sessions at Oslo School of Architecture and Design/AHO

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

Core-seminar: Overview of 4 work-sessions, all located at AHO, Maridalsveien 29, 0175 Oslo

½ DAY Session 1 Wednesday 18 September – AHO Group Room 1-6

8:45-9:30 Introduction to Course

Session 1: Critical FRAMES/Critical RESEARCH - with participation by Vera Vicenzotti, senior lecturer, SLU Landscape/Ultuna

9.30 Talk – “Critical FRAMES”
Lisa Diedrich: Critical and a-critical writing– comparing professional and critical landscape architecture publications. Copies of LAE and IFLA catalogues provided to participants on-site, for study and to initiate discussion.

10.10 Break

10.20 Talk – “Critical RESEARCH”
Vera Vicenzotti: Critical research writing examined -- *Why take a critical position? What needs to be added to the discourse? How is a critical position formulated?* -- referencing critical writing from two publications: de Block, G. & Vicenzotti, V. (2018) The effects of affect. A plea for distance between the human and non-human, (JOLA, 13:2) and de Block, G. & Vicenzotti, V. (2018) The nature of post-human landscape design (Landscape Architecture Europe 5)

11.00 Break

11.15 Group Discussion – How is a critical position articulated? Group discussion literature (see list below)

12:45 Summary of day/overview of session 2

13.00 Lunch Break

½ DAY Session 2 Thursday 19 September – AHO Group Room 1-6

Session 2: Theoretical FRAMES/ Constructing knowledge(s) – overview, lecture by Andrea Kahn, close reading and discussion of literature

8:45 Introduction to day’s work

9:10 Talk: “Habits-of-mind”, Andrea Kahn: Working knowledge and habits-of-mind for inter- and transdisciplinarity, referencing required theory literature (see list below)

9.50 Break

10.10 Discussion of required theory articles – initiated by reading all participants’ *Rhetorical Précis* (circulate in advance, aloud in-session to start discussion)

11.30 Break

11.45 Discussion of required theory articles – continued

12:30 Summary of session & overview of Sessions 3/4

13.00 End of work day

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

Full Day Sessions 3 & 4 Friday 20 September AHO- Group Room 1-6

Session 3 WORKING knowledge: Formulating critical positions [TAKE 1]

8.30-12.30 Critical research practices and knowledge production.

Preparation in advance: Participants read their peers' 1-paragraph final paper synopsis (proposed topic, and relevance to PhD work); draft their own *critical précis*

Seminar work session: Participants verbally present a brief pre-prepared critical position statement, in the form of a *critical précis* of their proposed paper, for constructive critical inputs and discussion from peers and course professors. Focus on position and argument development - *Why* choose to write on that subject? *What* do you want your reader to 'take-away'? *How* are you contributing to current discourse in your field? Discussion will focus on strengths and weaknesses of outlines, conceptual clarity of *critical précis* and direction/suggestions for iterative rewriting of the *Critical Précis* (for follow up discussion during Session 4)

12.30-12.45 Summary of Sessions 3 findings/overview of Session 3

12:45 – 14.45 2-hour work break for revising Critical Précis (required for Session 4)

Session 4 WORKING knowledge/Refining critical positions [TAKE 2] Group Room 1-6

14.45 - 16.45 PhDs' present revised *Critical Précis* for second round of peer driven constructive critical inputs. How did your position statement and/or argument evolve in response to preliminary critical inputs? Further discussion of evolving critical positions, directions/suggestions for writing of Final Paper

17.00-17.30 Summary / wrap up / next steps

November 2019

Final paper submittal

Course description

"Criticality beyond disciplinarity" aims to strengthen awareness of the range of working knowledges available to a researcher in the landscape field. Setting a landscape focus guarantees a shared arena for our work, making it easier to recognize how varied working knowledges (including but not limited to design) generate understanding and contribute to the evolution of landscape-relevant discourse and practice. The course is suitable for researchers from all disciplines concerned with the constructed urban landscape (design, planning, environmental science, landscape architecture, urban history, heritage, ecology, architecture, etc.).

Why take a landscape perspective?

The landscape field offers a model for thinking, and working, across knowledge areas because of its essential heterogeneous quality, encompassing as it does concerns associated with the humanities, the creative arts, the natural and the social sciences. At base, landscape is a 'composite' discipline, cross-fertilizing spatial, scientific, cultural, historical and regulatory

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

perspectives. Landscape researchers and professionals consider natural conditions and processes on equal footing with man-made elements and human practices. People who work in the field recognize that landscapes cannot be treated as “things” existing in isolation, but must be considered as dynamic constructs, complex systems and networks of simultaneous, multidirectional environmental, ecological and social exchanges. Landscape, as an area of study, and landscapes, as experienced material constructs, do not lend themselves to narrowly siloed research or confined sectoral actions.

Why criticality beyond disciplinarity?

To foster the inter and transdisciplinary knowledge generation demanded by society’s most pressing, sustainability challenges, current academic practices concerning the study and production of our constructed environment have to change. In this course, we forward criticality as tool to channel such change.

Deployed within the academy, criticality allows researchers and educators to observe and take positions on how academic disciplines “work” (on preferred or established methods) and how such disciplinary methods inform knowledge outcomes. Encouraging thinking about how thinking, learning and knowledge production happen, the course invites the meta-cognitive and meta-disciplinary stance associated with synthetic, integrative research (Boix Mansilla, 2010). Inviting participants from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, the core seminar provides a space to rehearse how knowledge is actively constructed when individuals with differing views and backgrounds work together (Klein, 2008).

Every discipline operates within, and associates with, its own normative set of practices, beliefs, and values; what matters to one discipline (what it deems worth examining, ‘critical’ – in the sense of crucial - to address) does not necessarily have the same importance to another. In multi-disciplinarity work situations different disciplinary values come into contact, but with little substantive impact; individuals (be they academic or professional) continue to work from their own discipline-specific perspective even as they share expertise. Interdisciplinary collaboration occurs when researchers from different disciplines work jointly to focus on a common problem; layering a variety of working knowledges increases the likelihood that integration of perspectives may result. Transdisciplinarity has at its core the creative and synthetic integration of multiple perspectives, knowledge production practices and disciplinary expertise (Sill). Prioritizing mixed methodologies to establish new practice domains, transdisciplinary practices dissolve boundaries and found new social and cognitive spaces.

Course content

The course has 3 aims: provide participants a framework for understanding the relation between disciplinarity and working knowledges; expose them to various models of critical research writing; and offer tools to enrich the constructive criticism toolbox and sharpen critical thinking and writing skills.

The 2-day core seminar includes close reading and in-depth discussion of 4-5 short pieces of relevant theory literature, using the *rhetorical précis* tool to improve critical reading skills; discussion of sample publications in Landscape architecture, to increase familiarity with critical writing formats; and presentation, discussion and iteration of participant’s critical position statements and final paper synopses (drafted by all PhD participants) using the *critical précis* tool.

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

Learning outcomes

The course offers students these learning outcomes: how to develop an understanding of the concept of “working knowledges” through reading and group discussion of theoretical literature; how to critically reflect on their own working knowledges and assess how such knowledges shape the critical positions they adopt in their work; how to engage in guided peer feedback to constructively comment upon and refine research aims; how to articulate, elaborate and integrate critical thinking in their PhD related research practice; how to use rhetorical and critical précis tools to support quality research.

Results and requirements

Course participants are expected to

- read all compulsory course literature
- write rhetorical précis (follow instructions provided and circulate prior to core seminar) and rehearse use as a critical reading tool
- develop critical précis (follow instructions provided) and rehearse use as a critical writing tool
- prepare a 1-paragraph synopsis of proposed paper topic with relevance to PhD work
- attend a 2-day seminar and actively contribute to discussions
- give constructive critical feedback on a pre-final draft of one (1) participant’s final paper
- hand in an elaborated paper at the end of the course

(for details on seminar assignments & *précis* guidelines see “2019 Criticality Assignments” PDF)

Critical reading/critical writing- why use rhetorical précis and critical précis tools?

Disciplinary training shapes how we interpret, and formulate, our discursive positions as researchers. Different research fields prioritize different issues and frame research questions differently; therefore, what ‘catches our eye’, sparks our interest, motivates us to engage in developing counter arguments and responses depends on our learned frames of reference.

To bring forward the formative relation of disciplinarity to working knowledge, the course adopts two “shared tools” to structure the critical reading process and in-seminar group discussions: the *rhetorical précis* and the *critical précis*. These tools will help us highlight the impact of disciplinarity on research and working knowledge and recognize how that relation shapes understanding. Adopting these shared tools sets up the precondition for rich group discussion; when participants work in a common format, the range of interpretative, disciplinary and critical positions becomes more immediately apparent. All students are expected to strictly adhere to these formats. [Instructions on how to write a “rhetorical précis” and a “critical précis” are provided as appendices to this course description].

Participants will utilize the rhetorical précis method to critically synthesize required theoretical reading. This tool for recording and understanding the essential elements of a text follows a tightly structured 4-sentence format (see *Rhetorical Précis Guidelines*). It focuses reader attention on the relation between *what* a piece of writing says (its content), and *how* that message gets conveyed (its form). In a concise paragraph, précis-writers present the author and genre of a text, explain its discursive context, recap the major assertion or thesis, mode of argumentation, stated and/or apparent purpose, and define the relationship between author and audience. More analytical and less neutral than a simple summary, rhetorical précis-writing builds analytic and critical reading skills by exposing value frameworks at work in the development of arguments by paper authors and their readers/interpreters.

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

The critical précis tool provides a similarly strict writing format for participants to articulate their own critical positions, in the form of a brief statement synopsising the arguments they wish to develop in their final paper. The 3-sentence critical précis (see *Critical Précis Guidelines*) is adapted from a model for articulating research questions and goals developed by, and borrowed from, Booth, Colomb and Williams, in *The Craft of Research*.

Final paper writing

During the seminar, participants will present a 1-paragraph synopsis of their proposed final paper topic and its relevance to their PhD work, and two (2) iterations of a critical précis, for discussion and inputs. Following the seminar, participants develop a paper, not to exceed 3000 words. Prior to the final paper, participants will comment on the pre-final paper draft prepared by one (1) of their peers. Parings for this constructive critical input exchange will be set up at the core seminar.

Final paper requirements

Each participant will submit a word.doc text file, following submission guidelines provided during the core seminar. (November 2019 TBD)

Course evaluation

Participants complete a course evaluation questionnaire after the seminar.

Application Requirements

Submit a 1-page abstract of their PhD and a paragraph with their motivation for participating in this course to Profs. Lisa Diedrich (lisa.diedrich@slu.se) and Andrea Kahn (andrea.kahn@slu.se).

LITERATURE LIST

I. REQUIRED THEORY LITERATURE (4 max)

Knorr-Cetina K. (1981) The Scientist as a Practical Reasoner: Introduction to a Constructivist and Contextual Theory of Knowledge (Ch.1), *The Manufacture of Knowledge*, 1-27

Nowotny, H. (2005) The Increase of Complexity and its Reduction: Emergent Interfaces between the Natural Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences *Theory, Culture & Society* , Vol. 22(5): 15–31

Pickstone, J.V. (2007) Working Knowledges Before and After circa 1800: Practices and Disciplines in the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine *Isis*, Vol. 98, No. 3, 489-516

Thrift, N. (2016). The University of Life. *New Literary History* 47(2), 399-417.

II. REQUIRED CRITICAL PUBLICATION TEXTS

Czerniak, J (2018) Thinking it, Doing it: Landscape criticism's range and agency (Editorial), *JOLA* 3-2018, 5-7

de Block, G. & Vicenzotti, V. (2018) The effects of affect. A plea for distance between the human and non-human, *JOLA*, 2-2018, 46-55

de Block, G. & Vicenzotti, V. (2018) The nature of post-human landscape design, *Landscape Architecture Europe* 5

+ COPIES OF the LAE 5 book and IFLA exhibition catalogue will be provided on-site

CRITICALITY BEYOND DISCIPLINARITY: Working knowledge(s) in, of and for design

RECOMMENDED/RELATED LITERATURE (not required for course)

Augsburg T. (2014) Becoming Transdisciplinary: The Emergence of the Transdisciplinary Individual, *World Futures*, 70:3-4, 233-247

Boix Mansilla, V. (2010). Learning to synthesize: The development of interdisciplinary understanding. In Edited by: R. Frodeman, J. T. Klein, & C. Mitcham (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook on interdisciplinarity* (pp. 288–306). New York: Oxford University Press. (AK: Possible FOR RECOMMENDED READING)

Klein, J. T. (2008). Education. In Edited by: G.Hirsch Hadorn, H. Hoffman-Riem, S. Biber-Klemm, W. Grossenbacher-Mansuy, D. Joye, C. Pohl, et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of transdisciplinary research* (pp.399–410). Dordrecht, Switzerland: Springer.

Knorr-Cetina K. (1981) *The Manufacture of Knowledge: An essay on the constructivist and contextualist nature of science* (Pergamon Press)

Müller D., Tjallingii S. & Canters K.J. (2005) A transdisciplinary learning approach to foster convergence of design, science and deliberation in Urban and Regional Planning. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, Vol 22,193-208.

Nowotny, H. (2000) Transgressive Competence: The Narrative of Expertise, *European Journal of Social Theory* 3:1, 5-21

Sill D. J. (1996) Integrative thinking, synthesis, and creativity in interdisciplinary studies. *The Journal of General Education*, Vol. 50, No. 4, Best of JGE: Featuring Articles from 1984–2000 (2001)

Stokols, D (2014) Training the Next Generation of Transdisciplinary Professionals, in O'Rourke, M.O., Crowley, S., Eigenbrode, S.D., & Wulfhorst, J.D. (Eds), *Enhancing communication & collaboration in interdisciplinary research*. Sage Publications

Stokols, D (2011), Transdisciplinary Action Research in Landscape Architecture and Planning Prospects and Challenges *Landscape Journal* 30:1–11

Thering, S, with Chanse, V. Toward a New Paradigm for the Planning and Design Professions *Landscape Journal* 30:1–11

Weber, S. (1982) The Limits of Professionalism, *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1/2 pp. 59-79

White, H. (1982) The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 113-137