

URBAN BOOKS: Imag(en)ing St. Louis
Edges, Borders, and Disruptions
Fall 2012

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Levels: 200, 300, 400

Credit: 3 credits (meets twice a week for 3 hour blocks)

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goals and objectives: Since the beginning of the twentieth century, art, architecture, and urbanism together have investigated the production of images that shape the symbolic dimension of our experience of large cities. The main goal of this course is to critically embrace this tradition through the format of the artist's book.

St. Louis is the focus for our observations, because it is familiar to our everyday lives and also because it provides key situations for understanding contemporary forms of urbanity and how urban space is produced and imagined.

The course bridges the curricular structures of art and architecture by enhancing the collaboration between the practical and scholarly work developed in both schools, with additional support from Special Collections at Olin Library. It combines the reading, lecture, and discussion format of a seminar with the skill building and creative exploration of a studio.

The course is divided into three progressive phases of development: the first consists of weekly readings, discussion, and responses in the form of artist's books. The second phase focuses on the *Dérivé* with physical activities and assignments based on interacting directly with the urban environment. The third phase focuses on individual research, documentation and final book design and production.

materials: We will use the Urban Books Collection at Olin Library as a primary source and will read selections from the following texts:

Theory of the *Dérive* and Other Situationist Writings on the City, Guy Debord
The Image of the City, Kevin Lynch
The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau
The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs
Wanderlust, Rebecca Solnit
Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, Georges Perec
Walkscapes, Francesco Careri
Going, Staying: Movement, Body, Space in Contemporary Art, Volker Adolphs
The Walk Book, Janet Cardiff

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schedule:

(DISCOVERY)

week 1: class A: Introduction, Olin Libraries, Special Collections
class B: artist's book response #1

week 2: class A: reading/discussion: Lynch, Jacobs
class B: artist's book response #2

week 3: class A: reading/discussion: Certeau, Careri
class B: artist's book response #3

week 4: class A: reading/discussion: Adolphs, Solnit, Cardiff
class B: artist's book response #4

week 5: class A: reading/discussion: Debord, Perec
class B: artist's book response #5

(DOCUMENTATION)

week 6: class A: workshop: accordion binding
class B: derivé part 1: presentation and pin up

week 7: class A: workshop: drum leaf binding
class B: derivé part 2: presentation and pin up

week 8: class A: workshop: perfect binding
class B: derivé part 3: presentation and pin up

week 9: class A: workshop: digital formatting/design
class B: book production

week 10: class A: book production
class B: CRITIQUE

(PRODUCTION)

week 11: class A: Intro to final project
class B: preliminary design pin up: brainstorm

week 12: class A: proposals due, pin up and discussion
class B: production strategy and design calendars due

week 13: class A: book production and desk crits
class B: book production and desk crits

week 14: class A: book production and desk crits
class B: book production and desk crits

week 15: class A: book production and desk crits
class B: FINAL CRITIQUE

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sample assignments:

DERIVE PART 1:

1. buy a map of St. Louis
2. pick a neighborhood to explore (keeping in mind that how you start sets up the story to follow)
 - *method of chance (throw a dart, drop a coin, close your eyes and point)
 - *method of predetermined interest
 - *method of get up and go
3. go on a 2–3 hour walk
 - *practice drifting, noticing
 - *let one curiosity lead to the next
 - *be natural
4. record your experience using at least three of the following: photographs, writing, drawing, physical evidence, sound recording, video, collage, mapping

DERIVE PART 2:

1. pick a city block
 - *look back over the documentation of your derivé
 - *choose a specific block that interests you
2. document what you see
 - *photography, drawing, collecting, writing
3. document what you don't see (research)
 - *history
(MO Historical Society 225 Skinker blvd 12–5 T–F, 10–5 Sat)
 - *infrastructure

DERIVE PART 3:

1. what one, singular factor fascinated you in your research (past or present, physical or abstract)
2. expand your research documentation on this point (interview people—residents, historians, aldermen, etc, document as thoroughly as possible)
3. write a one–page “story” communicating your research point

DERIVE FINAL BOOK: turn your “story” into a book.

binding: accordion, drum leaf or perfect
spreads: 6–10
edition size: 2