

**ARC 394--01210: Vertical Studio, ARC 393--01175: VIS COM**  
***middle class sustainability ? : the Sea Ranch revisited***



**Steven Moore Fall 2006**

## 1.0 Course Description

This studio will investigate the prospect for *middle class sustainability* from a *historical perspective*.

By “middle class sustainability” I mean a set of living habits that are consistent with both contemporary middle class social values and the environmental conditions and forces found in the place where those habits are practiced. In this case we will be proposing a series of projects for Point Arena—a small town in northern California with an economy historically based on sheep ranching and timber extraction, but now facing the threat of suburban development. Sustainability as a design attitude has been most frequently applied to design for clients at either end of the economic spectrum. The rich can be receptive to sustainable design principles because they have the education and expendable income to experiment with more satisfying ways of living. The poor can be receptive to sustainable design principles because they can’t afford to waste resources. The American middle class, however, tends to be skeptical of experimentation and generally satisfied with consumption of their hard earned resources. Simply put, sustainability is a concept, or discourse, that is not very attractive to them. The disparity of class-related interest in sustainability is significant because the vast majority of the built environment is designed by or for middle class citizens.

To investigate this problem from a “historical perspective” requires that we learn something about the social and natural history of Point Arena, but also something about the Sea Ranch—a much praised development about 30 miles to the south of Point Arena designed by landscape architect Larry Halprin in collaboration with architects Charles Moore, Donlyn Lyndon, William Turnbull, and Tom Whitaker in the 1960s. The Sea Ranch received multiple design awards at the time of its construction and was awarded the AIA’s 25 Year Award in the early 1990s in recognition of its proto-sustainable design innovations and its enduring value to design culture. As successful as the Sea Ranch has been, however, the project has been heavily criticized by some environmentalists and the designers themselves. In this context the Sea Ranch offers important lessons to the studio.

As a whole, the studio is conceived as a series of four design problems, each of which will begin with a research phase to gather the data required to solve social and environmental problems. The first three problems are best understood as the historical and sustainable development of a single site. The final problem, “synthesis,” will provide you with the opportunity to reflect upon the development of your own design thinking.

**problem 1:**

enclosure

**problem 2:**

farm

**problem 3:**

urban ecology

**problem 4:**

synthesis

And just as there are four related problems to solve, the studio will focus upon four media to articulate your proposals: pencil drawing, physical modeling,

digital modeling, and written narrative. Each of the four projects must be “rendered” in each of the four media.

## 2.0 Studio schedule (as of 18 August 2006):

In general, our schedule is subject to change and will be updated as required. Monday and Wednesday studios will generally begin promptly at 1:15 with a brief discussion on matters of common interest. The balance of M/W studios will be split between research presentations, topic lectures, Vis Com instruction, and desk crits. Friday classes, with some exceptions, will be seminars devoted to readings directly or indirectly related to the design problem. Lectures by other Vertical studio faculty on the general topic of sustainable architecture will be scheduled.

day	date	reading	activity
w	30 aug		lottery
f	01 sept	<b>problem #1--enclosure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• course introduction—slide presentation on the north coast</li> <li>• select research topics</li> </ul>
m	04		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• research presentations</li> <li>• workshop on pencil drawing</li> </ul>
w	06		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wal-Mart lunch discussion, 12:00</b></li> <li>• research presentations</li> <li>• presentation on physical modeling</li> </ul>
f	08	Guy and Moore paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seminar—<i>the 3 Es</i></li> <li>• site visit, Boggy Creek Farm, 3:30</li> </ul>
m	11		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lecture: aerodynamic design</li> <li>• <i>sketchup</i> tutorial</li> </ul>
w	13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pin up review</li> <li>• <i>photoshop</i> tutorial</li> </ul>
f	15	Pollan, Chapters x, x, and x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seminar—<i>found flows and forces</i></li> </ul>
m	18		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lecture: design and narrative</li> <li>• desk crits</li> </ul>
w	20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• desk crits</li> <li>• discussion on verbal presentation techniques</li> </ul>
f	22	Frampton, Kenneth. “Critical Regionalism: Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity,” in <i>Modern Architecture: A Critical History, 2nd Ed.</i> , 313-327. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1985).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seminar—critical regionalism</li> </ul>
m	25		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>REVIEW</b></li> </ul>
w	27	<b>problem #2--farm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• problem introduction—slide presentation on farm structures</li> <li>• select research topics</li> </ul>
f	29	Lynn Miller on Louis Bromfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seminar—progressive agrarianism</li> </ul>
m	02 oct		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynn Osgood on site landscape</li> </ul>

			inventory
w	04		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>research presentations</li> </ul>
f	06	Tom Hubka, <i>Big House, Little House, Backhouse, Barn</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seminar—architecture and social change</li> </ul>
m	09		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
w	11		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pin up review</li> </ul>
f	13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moore away</li> </ul>
m	16		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
w	18		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
f	20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>REVIEW</b></li> </ul>
m	23	<b>Problem #3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problem introduction—slide presentation on the Sea Ranch</li> <li>select research topics</li> </ul>
w	25		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lecture on distributed infrastructure</li> </ul>
f	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Progressive architecture</i> 1993 Feb., v.74, n.2</li> <li>Tim Culvahouse and Lisa Findley. “Once again by the Pacific: returning to Sea Ranch,” in <i>Harvard design magazine</i> 2001 Fall, n.15, p.38-45</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seminar: Sea Ranch reconsidered</li> </ul>
m	29		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>research presentations</li> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
w	01 nov		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>research presentations</li> </ul>
f	03	Moore, <i>Alternative Routes to the Sustainable City</i> , Chapter 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seminar—urban narrative</li> </ul>
m	05		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
w	08		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pin up review</li> </ul>
f	10	tba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seminar—Almy on <i>landscape urbanism</i></li> </ul>
m	13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
w	15		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
f	17	Michael Oden, “The Question of Equity in Sustainable Development.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seminar--environmental equity</li> </ul>
m	20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
w	22		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>REVIEW</b></li> </ul>
f	24		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Thanksgiving no class</b></li> </ul>
m	27	<b>Problem #4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problem introduction</li> </ul>
w	29		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
f	01 dec	tba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seminar—research as design and design as research</li> </ul>
m	04		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pin up review</li> </ul>
w	06		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desk crits</li> </ul>
f	08		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>last class day—no seminar</li> </ul>
w	13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>FINAL REVIEW ?</b></li> </ul>

### 3.0 Vis-Com component

The studio will emphasize four modes of visual communication: pencil drawing, physical modeling, digital modeling, and written narrative. For digital modeling we will use *SketchUp*. The software is available from [www.sketchup.com](http://www.sketchup.com) for \$49 per year with the promo code EPRM49. In addition, sketchup software will be available in the SOA Computer Lab.

### 4.0 web-based resources:

National Atlas of the United States

<http://nationalatlas.gov/natlas/Natlasstart.asp>

US Geological Survey

<http://seamless.usgs.gov/>

<http://srtm.usgs.gov/data/seamlesshelp.html>

Google Earth (aerial photos)

<http://www.google.com/>

Historic American Building Survey

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs\\_haer/](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/)

### 5.0 Reserved library resources

Donlyn Lyndon. *The Sea Ranch*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004.

John Lyle. *Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development*. New York: Wiley, 1994.

James Steele. *Ecological Architecture: A Critical History*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005.

### 6.0 Performance Evaluation:

Work for the semester will be based upon the scale outlined below. However, as a studio, we will decide upon the relative significance of each of the sub-criteria. If any student wishes to review or protest a grade, such a review must be requested within one week of its issuance, after which no grade revisions shall be considered. It is up to the student to request interim evaluations from the instructor if you are concerned about your progress.

Individual projects will be weighted toward the project grade on the basis of the following criteria:

#### ***grading***

Establishing grades for projects of a creative nature is a more complex matter than grading in other academic areas. While each project contains certain quantifiable elements by which it may

be evaluated, a significant portion of each grade is derived from a broader, more subjective set of issues.

Grading for studio courses is broken into three components for each given mark:

- 1/3 *grasp* (the ideas and understanding of the project at hand, combined with an appropriate process of inquiry),
- 1/3 *process* (the consistent and rigorous development and testing of ideas) and
- 1/3 *resolution* (the demonstration of competence, completeness, and finesse through representation).

Your work will be evaluated on its rigor and evolution over the semester.

### ***grade descriptions***

#### **A : excellent work**

Project surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, verbal and visual ability, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. Project is complete on all levels.

#### **B : good work**

Project is thorough, well researched, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in effort to resolve required projects. Project is complete on all levels and demonstrates potential for excellence.

#### **C : required work**

Project meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication or rigor. Project is incomplete in one or more areas.

#### **D : poor work**

Project is incomplete. Basic skills including graphic skills, model-making skills, verbal clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required design skill and knowledge base.

#### **F : unacceptable work**

Project is unresolved. Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. Note that this grade will be assigned when you have excessive unexcused absences.

#### **X : (excused incomplete)**

Can be given only for legitimate reasons of illness or family emergency. Simply not completing work on time is not an adequate cause for assigning this evaluation. It may only be used after consultation with the Associate Deans' offices and with an agreement as to a new completion date. Studio work must be completed before the second week of the next design semester in which you are enrolling, according to School of Architecture policy.

ALL GRADES ARE SUBJECT TO DEDUCTIONS FOR ABSENCES, LATE WORK AND LATE ARRIVALS.

## **7.0 Office Hours:**

If you have any concerns about your progress in the studio, or about related issues, please come and see me at:

4.134 Goldsmith Hall; TH 1:30-3:00 PM, or by appointment.

Tel., 512.471.0184 (office), e-mail (preferred method)  
[samoore@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:samoore@mail.utexas.edu)

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641.