



*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.)

***For application requirements and deadline, see page 8***

## **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<sup>1</sup>*

*“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 Dewey<sup>2</sup>*

### **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, an intensive 2-day seminar (scheduled over 3 days in mid-September, 2019) takes advantage of the ECLAS and IFLA conferences to be held in OSLO, 16-20 Sept, 2019. During the seminar in Oslo, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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)

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

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Prior to the group meeting in Oslo, students will:

- closely read 4-5 required theory literature texts; prepare 4-sentence *rhetorical précis* for each (following guidelines provided); and share *précis* via mail with all participating students
- closely read sample critical publications (be prepared to identify editorial position, assess format as it supports argumentation/content in class)
- draft and share a 1-paragraph synopsis of their final paper topic (identify the text, design work, or completed project under critical consideration and its relevance to their PhD work)
- prepare a 3-sentence *critical précis* of the critical position they intend to develop in their final paper (following *critical précis* guidelines provided)

*estimated time: 40h*

### *Seminar coursework*

The seminar includes 4 work-sessions. During the first 2 sessions, course members engage with selected theoretical texts addressing framing concepts such as “working knowledge”, “discipline” “disciplinization”, “inter-” and “transdisciplinarity”, and select sample critical publications from landscape design theory and practice. Seminar discussions of theoretical literature will be guided by participants’ *rhetorical précis*; sample critical publications will be presented and analyzed to gain insight on how (and why) they are produced. The last 2 work-sessions focus on developing the participants’ own paper proposals, 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 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; a lecture by Lisa Diedrich (Director SLU Urban Futures platform, and editor of LAE) on critical and a-critical writing and publications within the context of landscape architecture as academic discipline and professional practice; and a presentation of critical research work by Vera Vicenzotti (researcher and author of critical papers on landscape theory).

### *Post-seminar coursework*

4 weeks devoted to finalizing the critical paper. Final papers will be evaluated by Lisa Diedrich and Andrea Kahn.

*estimated time: 60h*

### **Working Time Table (TBC)**

**15 February 2019**

Preliminary course information available, circulated through networks

**15 April 2019**

Application deadline (responses will be mailed out by 30 April)

**15 June 2019**

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

*until September 2019 (hours allocated at participant discretion)*

Preparatory work period for course reading and drafting of course assignments.

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## **Working Time Table (cont.)**

*10 September, 2019*

Four (4) *rhetorical précis* & 1-paragraph final paper synopsis (topic and relation to thesis work)  
due/circulated to all course participants

*18-20 September (2 contact days over 3: exact times TBC, following publication of ECLAS schedule)*  
Core PhD seminar, structured around four (4) work sessions:

### *½ Day 1 / Introduction & Session 1*      *(Exact time & Location: AHO, rooms TBD)*

13.00-13.45      Introduction to Course

#### *Session 1: Theoretical FRAMES*

14.00      Talk: "Habits-of-mind"  
Andrea Kahn: Working knowledge and habits-of-mind for inter- and transdisciplinarity,  
referencing required theory literature (see preliminary literature list below).

14.45      Break

15.00      Discussion of required theory texts – initiated by participants' *Rhetorical Précis*  
(circulated in advance, read aloud in-session by all participants to start discussion)

17.00      Summary of session & overview of Day 2 program

17.30      End of work day

### *Day 2 / Sessions 2& 3*

*(Location: AHO, rooms TBD)*

*Session 2: Critical FRAMES/Critical RESEARCH - lectures and discussions on sample critical publication  
with participation by Vera Vicenzotti, senior lecturer, SLU Landscape/Ultuna*

9.00      Talk – “Critical FRAMES”  
Lisa Diedrich: Critical and a-critical writing on landscape – comparing professional and critical publications

9.45      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)

10.30      Break

10.45      Group Discussion – How is a critical position articulated? Group discussion of sample critical publications

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12.30              Lunch Break

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

14.00-17.00      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, day 3)

17.00-17.30      Summary of Day 2 findings/ overview of ½ Day 3 program

### ½ Day 3 / Session 4 & Wrap-up

*(Location: AHO, rooms TBD)*

*Session 4: WORKING knowledge/Refining critical positions [TAKE 2]*

9.30 - 13.00      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 strengths and weaknesses of preliminary positions, directions/suggestions for writing of Final Paper

Lunch break

14.00-15.00      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 suited for researchers from all disciplines concerned with the constructed urban landscape (design, planning, environmental science, landscape architecture, urban history, heritage, ecology, architecture, etc.).

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### *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 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, criticality is forwarded 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 their 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.

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The 2-day core seminar includes close reading and in-depth discussion of 4-5 pieces of relevant theory literature, using the *rhetorical précis* tool to improve critical reading skills; analyses of a limited number of sample critical publications, to increase familiarity with critical writing formats; and presentation, discussion and iteration of participant's own final paper outlines and critical position statements – “*critical précis*” - drafted by all PhD participants, and circulated in advance.

### *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” following instructions provided, and use them as a critical reading tool and circulate prior to core seminar
- develop “critical précis” following instructions provided and use them as a critical writing tool
- draft and circulate a synopsis of their final paper topic, detailing relevance to your 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

### *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 their interpretative and critical positions becomes more immediately apparent.

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. 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,

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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.

The “critical précis” tool provides a similarly strict writing format for participants to articulate their own critical position statements, by synopsizing the arguments they wish to develop in their final paper. The 3-sentence critical précis 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*. [Clear instructions on how to write a “rhetorical précis” and a “critical précis” will be provided in advance, and all students are expected to strictly adhere to these formats.]

### *Analyzing sample critical publications*

One seminar work session is devoted to analysis and discussion of sample critical publications (essays, peer reviewed papers, book reviews, etc.). Participants will read samples in advance, paying attention to how they are structured, how this structure relates to author/editorial critical intent, and the clarity and line of argumentation. The analyses should consider:

- the reasoning behind selecting specific subject matter (what discussion/debate does the author want to enter into? what contribution to the field do they want to make?)
- the means of developing a critical position/argument (how do they substantiate their points?)
- the proposed readership/audience (who do they hope to inform/influence?)

All course participants will verbally share their understanding of the sample publications to initiate the work-session discussion.

### *Final paper writing*

During the seminar, participants will present a 1-paragraph summary of their final paper topic and its relevance to their PhD work, as well as two (2) iterations of a *critical precis*, for discussion and inputs. Following the core seminar, participants develop a final paper, not to exceed 3000 words.

2 weeks in advance of the final paper deadline, every participant will comment on the pre-final draft of a paper prepared by one (1) of their peers. Parings for this exchange of constructive critical inputs will be set up during 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**

Applicants should 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](mailto:lisa.diedrich@slu.se)) and Andrea Kahn ([andrea.kahn@slu.se](mailto:andrea.kahn@slu.se)).

### **Application letters due 15 April 2019**

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## **LITERATURE LIST (in progress, required readings will be confirmed late spring 2019)**

### **I. REQUIRED THEORY LITERATURE (5 texts maximum)**

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* Vol. 47, Nos. 2 & 3, Spring & Summer 2016 pp. 399-417

+ 1-2 more TBD

### **II. REQUIRED CRITICAL PUBLICATION SAMPLES**

de Block, G. & Vicenzotti, V. (2018) The effects of affect. A plea for distance between the human and non-human, *JOLA*, 13:2, 46-55,

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

Sijmons D., (2014) Waking up in the Anthropocene, *Urban by Nature*

+ Selected book and conference reviews

### **RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND READING**

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. (1991), The Scientist as a Practical Reasoner: Introduction to a Constructivist and Contextual Theory of Knowledge, Ch.1, from *The Manufacture of Knowledge*

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.

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### ***RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND READING cont.***

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 Transdisciplinarians, 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

Thrift, N. (1996) Flies and Germs: A Geography of Knowledge, in *Spatial Formations*

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