

What is Regional Landscape Design?

Course Description and Syllabus

1. ISU catalog description

LA 302. Regional Landscape Design

(1-15) Cr. 6. S. Prereq: 301 or permission of instructor. Cultural and natural influences on regional design. Regional patterns, theories, processes, forms, and materials as landscape design influences. Application of ecological concepts and regional design concepts, methods, tools, and data in mitigation design. Use of geographic information systems to model regional processes and communicate regional patterns. Nonmajor graduate credit.

2. Project characteristics

Regional landscape design involves landscape architects and other professionals concerned about the *juxtaposition, type, and quality* of land uses and resources. Landscape architects in public, private, and academic practice work on a variety of regional landscape design projects. Many of these projects share similarities. Here are some common characteristics:

- Biological, physical, and cultural considerations (particularly natural and cultural resources)
- Principles of landscape ecology (examples: biodiversity, sustainability, and ecological integrity)
- Frequently rural/urban fringe areas and rural countryside (ex: watersheds, state and county-owned land, and countryside)
- Relatively large study areas (regional-level study areas, ex: watersheds, corridors, counties, public lands)
- Regional studies provide context for site-level decisions (ex: wetland impacts, design of riparian buffers)
- More emphasis on two-dimensional design than three-dimensional design
- Design process emphasizes rational basis (rather than arbitrary or intuitive basis)
- Blends technical and analytical elements with values, needs, and priorities of local residents and authorities

The concepts of landscape analysis are introduced, in this curriculum, along with concepts of regional design. Landscape analysis is a systematic approach used by landscape architects to aid in making decisions about land uses and site design. In this process, designers identify relevant factors to include in their studies of the landscape, assemble data about those factors, and make decisions based on analysis and synthesis of the data. The goal of landscape analysis is to create and organize the information necessary to make the best decisions possible – including those that are comprehensive, appropriate, accurate, and efficient. At the regional scale, landscape analysis often leads to decisions focused on *opportunities* and *limitations*. For instance, which parts of a watershed are most appropriate for specific types of *development*? Which are most appropriate for *restoration/reconstruction, conservation, or preservation*? Applications of landscape analysis include the following:

- Landscape description (inventory, regional delineation) ex: watershed
- Location analysis (site selection, route selection) ex: scenic byway
- Use analysis (suitability, capability, feasibility studies) ex: urban fringe
- Impact assessment and mitigation (environment, urban development, resource use) ex: highway
- Regional design (site responses to regional conditions) ex: integrated farming systems

This semester, we'll spend much of our time using techniques for inventory and regional delineation to help us with *impact* assessment, *mitigation* design, *suitability* studies, *design* guidelines, and *conceptual* regional design. We'll focus our efforts on a highway redesign project and a watershed-scale landscape design project. Through these projects, we'll explore relationships between regions and sites, especially regional implications of site design decisions and site design implications of regional characteristics.

3. Regional design and you

This studio provides growth opportunities for you in several ways. First, your understanding and perception of regional scale landscapes will evolve throughout the semester based on your experiences. You will be seeking an understanding, throughout this quest, of how you, as a student of landscape architecture, define “regional landscape.” Second, you will gain technical knowledge and skills, particularly in landscape analysis, to design and plan at the regional-scale; these skills are also applicable at the site-scale. Much of this semester will be spent studying the same regional landscape. We begin with your perceptual studies of a specific region. We will informally re-visit the same region during the semester—applying concepts and strategies learned with other project sites. Project 6, the final studio project in LA 302, centers on analysis and design in the same region as Project 1.

4. Learning outcomes

In our BLA curriculum, LA 302 provides you with an opportunity to expand your knowledge and skills useful in regional projects. We’ll introduce you to some new regional concepts, literature, vocabulary, strategies, methods, data sources, digital tools, and other technology. We’ll also give you a chance to further develop skills that you’ve worked on in other classes and projects (design process, site analysis, communication, graphics, computer applications, working with residents and allied professionals)

The following learning outcomes for LA 302 are based on more general learning outcomes for *Critical Practice*, developed for the BLA program:

By the end of the semester, students should demonstrate the ability to do the following:

- A. Describe the significance and complexity of a **regional landscape** and how it serves as **context** for a smaller study area; that is, the relationship of a place to its natural and cultural surroundings
- B. Understand, respect, and empathize with project **clients** (or client groups) and reconcile client needs with the creative potentials of a region
- C. Analyze and describe natural and cultural **processes** in a regional study area, especially the forces shaping and transforming the region over time
- D. Discover, describe, and analyze **forms, patterns, and materials** existing in a region; evaluate their potential for use as land use determinants or design inspiration
- E. Evaluate issues of **scale** (ecological, measurement, visual, experiential, clients, users, and so on) and potential implications both on landscape planning and regional design decisions and on selection of tools and techniques
- F. Evaluate and apply **tools and techniques** that are appropriate for development and communication of regional design decisions (examples: research, interviews, literature review, inventory, interpretation, suitability analysis, GIS spatial analysis, preservation, conservation, restoration, visualization, representation, presentation, and so on)
- G. Synthesize, evaluate, and apply sources of creativity and inspiration in the **landscape planning and regional design process** (examples: precedents, innovation, collaboration, observation, interviews; rational, intuitive, and arbitrary bases for landscape planning and design decisions)
- H. Apply the abilities described above in items 1 through 7 across a range of project **complexity and scale**, including neighborhood, community, county, multi-county, watershed, and statewide levels

5. Course specifics

Instructors. Mimi Wagner's office is room 576 (294-8954, mimiw@iastate.edu). Paul Anderson's office is room 481 (294-8943, fridolph@iastate.edu). Kate Grala (TA) can be reached by email (kgrala@iastate.edu). Make an appointment or drop by our office if you need to meet between scheduled class times.

Required textbooks. You'll find readings for this course in three places:

- Karen Hanna's book, *GIS for Landscape Architects*
- The majority of our readings are available through the ISU Library's e-reserve. Use the library's homepage and search for our course number.
- A course reader packet of articles will also eventually be placed on reserve in the Design Reading Room; you need to copy these on your own

Organization. We strongly encourage you to use a three-ring (or other) binder to organize course materials, handouts, project statements, and notes.

6. Course policies

This studio course is conducted in an atmosphere much like a professional office. This means that we consider your attendance, participation, attitude, and quality of work in evaluating your progress—not just your final physical products. Just as with a job, this studio is the most important thing you have to do between 1:10 and 5:20 on MWF—schedule the other aspects of your life around our course.

Attendance. Because you are an aspiring professional, we expect you to attend every scheduled class. If you can't attend class on a particular day, talk to us in class before your absence or let us know IN ADVANCE by phone or Email. Unexcused absences will lower your project grades or course grade. In an emergency, contact us right away or contact Arleen or Jodi in the LA department office.

Scheduled class times. MWF 1:10 to 5:20. Most of the scheduled time will be in studio working on projects: reviewing project statements, discussing readings, talking with guest speakers, gathering data, visiting study areas, developing regional designs, reviewing your work progress with instructors, and presenting your work. Other activities will occur either in studio or in another space, including Design 416.

Field trips. We consider field trips an important element of this course. Some field trips will be organized for the entire class; others will be on an individual or small group basis. Many field trips will be during scheduled class time; however, expect to spend time outside of scheduled class time visiting our study areas.

Course grades. All studio work is evaluated by both instructors. Your course grade includes the total from each of our six major projects. See the course schedule for the percentage of the course grade assigned to each project. For each project, the major grading criteria and the percentage assigned to each is listed on the project statement. We prepared a rubric for some of our projects. Use the rubric as a checklist as you develop your project and prepare to hand in your project.

Because this course is a 300-level course, we have established minimum quality/effort criteria for all projects. These specific criteria differ for each project and are noted on each project statement sheet. Work falling below these criteria will not be evaluated—and will receive a zero % for that particular project. There is no "make-up" option to revise your work past the original due date. Desk reviews with your instructors serve as the communication link in assessing your performance during projects.

We use numerical scores to grade your projects and compute grade averages. Letter grade equivalents are listed below:

94 ≤ A	74 ≤ C < 77
90 ≤ A- < 94	70 ≤ C- < 74
87 ≤ B+ < 90	67 ≤ D+ < 70
84 ≤ B < 87	64 ≤ D < 67
80 ≤ B- < 84	60 ≤ D- < 64
77 ≤ C+ < 80	F < 60

Here are our expectations for each letter grade:

- A excellent work; exemplary; greatly exceeds satisfactory standards; self-starter; routinely shows initiative; often does outside research; generates thoughtful and innovative solutions; carries work to a high level of finish, going well beyond requirements and assigned elements
- B very good work; exceeds satisfactory standards; consistent progress in studio; routinely shows initiative; occasionally does outside research; generates workable solutions; carries all work to completion, going beyond requirements and assigned elements
- C acceptable work; meets satisfactory standards; occasionally shows initiative; does little outside research; completes work with routine solutions; little evidence of taking initiative or going beyond minimum requirements and assigned elements
- D marginal work; somewhat below satisfactory standards; doesn't complete all work; shows little initiative; doesn't do outside research; generates ineffective or problematic solutions; lacks consistency in meeting minimum requirements and including assigned elements
- F unacceptable work; serious deficiencies in meeting satisfactory standards; shows no initiative; doesn't do outside research; generates inappropriate solutions; shows little or no care in finished work, consistently below minimum requirements; is missing assigned elements

In addition to the quality of your work, your course grade includes other qualitative factors: class participation, attendance, attitude, and improvement. These are factors that potential employers ask about when they call us for a job reference.

Due dates. Late work is not accepted. If your work is not finished at review time or your project is not finished at presentation time, turn in what you have completed.

Course fee. The course fee of \$25 covers field trip expenses and preparation of base materials that you keep. If actual costs are less than \$25, we'll reduce the course fee during the semester.

Materials. Most of the materials and equipment you'll need are similar to what you've already used in previous studios. We'll announce any special needs at the beginning of each project.

Computers. Projects 2, 3, 4, and 5 have a significant digital component. Expect to use your laptops and the college "open" computer labs extensively for those projects. During several weeks in the middle of the semester, you'll make intensive use of GIS software as you complete a series of ArcView tutorials. We're making arrangements to install a (free) timed copy of ArcView 3.2 on your personal laptop. We'll install the software and database during the first 4 or 5 weeks of the semester. We strongly recommend that each of you use a mouse (rather than touch pad) with the GIS software.

Other policies. You are expected to follow the policies of the LA department, Design College, and the university. These include, but are not limited to, policies about studio culture, sexual harassment, academic honesty, computer use, field trips, health, safety, and security. It is your responsibility to be familiar with them, and the consequences for violation. Note the full definition of academic dishonesty—in a studio class it includes copying the design work or design concepts of other students or designers outside of the class. Students found in violation of any of these policies will be referred to the Dean's Office and the ISU Office of Academic Affairs. This also can result in a failing semester grade for this course.