READING AND REPRESENTING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

A PROPOSED SYLLABUS

MODULE OVERVIEW

Originally this module was developed as a technical skills component of the first year syllabus of the Master of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) and Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) Programmes at the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa. Principally it aims to equip students with visual and graphic literacy skills and tool necessary to read the cultural landscape (within any context) and to represent spatial perceptions to inform appropriate design responses.

The module consists of four learning units:

Unit 1: What is meant by the term “Cultural Landscape”?

Unit 2: Cultural Landscapes and Legislation

Unit 3: Reading Cultural Landscapes

Unit 4: Representing Cultural Landscapes

Methodological approach

The syllabus below is premised on an interactive teaching and learning process, which combines group activities for shared analysis with prepared inputs and structured discussions on key content areas. The session plans for each module provide suggestions on ways in which the content might be approached, together with indicative learning activities to explore practically.

Generally, the approach seeks to promote new ways of learning, as well as the development of ‘communities of practice’ allowing academics and practitioners to share knowledge resources developed in different settings. As African planning educators adapt these teaching resources and develop additional materials, these resources will be uploaded to the AAPS website for common use and exchange.

In this manner, a searchable repository of completed work will constitute a growing archive of teaching and learning material.

UNIT ONE:

WHAT IS MEANT BY ‘CULTURAL LANDSCAPE’?

Goals and objectives:

* To develop shared understandings of key terms and concepts;
* To enable learners to contrast and compare different definitions;
* To ensure that meanings and connotations of key terms are contextualized, and thereby to clarify conceptual points of departure.

| Session | Objectives | Method | Resources, links and references |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Cultural Landscape  module introduction | * To introduce the participants * To review the objectives, structure and content of the module * To define key learning outcomes | * Who’s who? Activity * Course overview presentation, setting out structure of module and clarifying assessment requirements * Discussion and questions of clarity | Who’s who? – Introductory activity to profile  the skills, experiences and expectations of the course participants |
| 2. Planning | * Plan ahead – proposed objectives and deliverables | * Discuss the cultural backgrounds of participants. * Understanding of subjectivity / perception / bias / nuance / subtlety | Reference list / suggested readings /  Examples of previous work?  Visual resources? |
| 3. Cultural Landscape Theory | * Comprehensive overview and application of theory pertaining to the definition of Cultural Landscapes | * Lecture on theory of defining cultural landscapes * Discuss theory based on a series of case studies * Students to present on a cultural landscape of their choice | Class notes, websites and case studies (documents)  Drawings, photographs, maps, descriptions,  memory |
| 4. Excercise | * Practical exposure to cultural landscapes | * City anthropometric walkabout with drawing / photograph assignment | Journal (blank),  aerial photographs,  topo-cadastral (and other) maps,  sketching, textures |

UNIT TWO:

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND LEGISLATION

Goals and objectives:

* To ensure learners have an understanding of the current legal framework (local, provincial, national, international) and are able to critique the practicalities / policing / implementation / support / values enshrined within the legislation;
* To develop a vocabulary of legal terminology and practice;
* To understand the application of the law in relation to cultural landscape intervention.

| Session | Objectives | Method | Resources, links and references |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Cultural Landscape legislation: **International Context** | * To understand the international legislative and organizational context which underscores national legislation | * Lecture on International Organizations, Councils and Conventions defining and managing Cultural Landscapes internationally * Practical: exposure to website links and relevant documentation * Exercise: compile database of all relevant Conventions, Charters, Declarations and other relevant material | Lecture notes  Website links to UNESCO, ICOMOS, NPS, IUCN, CLF, IFLA |
| 2. Cultural Landscape legislation: **National Context** | * To introduce the legal system, and its application (aims, instruments, shortcomings) | * Present and research overview of national legal systems * Review case law, explain / interpret situations * Highlight pertinent sections of specific pieces of legislation, particular cases and outcomes of legal process, application, appeals, * Protections, assessments | Develop structural diagram to understand the various hierarchies of law systems, participants and role players  Various acts / conventions / codes etc |
|  | * Understand how to operate within the legal framework | * Hypothetical (or real) cases – current trends / dangers / interpretations of the law, practical frustrations with processes? | Example resources for South Africa: National Heritage Resources Act; NEMA; Association of Professional Heritage Practitioners; SAHRA; Heritage Western Cape; City of Cape Town (Environment / Heritage)  Conservation architects, Urban and Architectural Conservation resources |
|  | * Understand how the legal framework affects cultural heritage planning and practice | * Test theories - typical heritage assessment process? * Debate loopholes / complexities within the law across spheres of government and across national borders? | Case law, sample documents, |

UNIT THREE:

READING OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Goals and objectives:

* To ensure that participants develop an understanding of observation (the act of acquiring visual information and spatial data) as an approach to research where knowledge is accessed through ‘reading’ and / or recording of data.

| Session | Objectives | Method | Resources, links and references |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Introduction: Reading the landscape | * Learn to observe * What to observe * How to observe * Why to observe * Learn to understand / interpret what is observed | * Lecture on the axioms of reading the landscape and introduction to the basic methodology to be explored in subsequent sessions. * Activity – discuss elements / aspects to look for * Collecting available data (published / printed) * Generating new data (fieldwork) | Class notes |
| 2. Archival & Desktop Research | * To provide a critical mass of information for an historically based understanding of the landscape | * Electronic searches, maps, reading accounts, earlier studies, existing information * Remote sensing * Collage / painting, drawing, poetry & other literature | Municipal and university archives, newspapers, drawings, maps, photographs, government surveys, existing heritage surveys, secondary (published) sources, local museums |
| 3. Fieldwork | * Understand Anthropological qualitative fieldwork methods as they relate to reading the landscape | * Lecture on qualitative fieldwork methods including systematic observation, participant observation, structured interviewing, unstructured interviewing or focus group discussions * Exposure to ethics in research | Lecture notes  Institutional ethics codes |
| 4. Documentation | * Skills in compiling data and documenting existing conditions | * Methods for gathering, layering, overlays * Drawing, sketching, photographing, recording, collecting, interviewing, surveying * Learning to use inventories and documenting the existing conditions of the landscape | Various inventory sheets from different organizations and countries |

UNIT FOUR:

REPRESENTING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Goals and objectives:

* To ensure that collected data can be interpreted and represented graphically / verbally / textually / spatially to convey meaning and to be understood by others – data becomes information conveyed through representation.

| Session | Objectives | Method | Resources, links and references |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Introduction: Representation | * Develop drawing / graphic skills * Develop confidence and skill in hand-drawing | * Produce drawings / maps / descriptions * Students present to each other and critique each other’s work | Practical exercises  Drawing examples, graphic materials and stationery |
| 2. Mapping (Map-landscapes) | * Understand representation and mapping as the critical link between reading and understanding the landscape and being able to use this information as a design tool. | * Lecture on mapping as analogue representation of ground conditions and abstraction of these conditions (codification, selection or projection) * Mapping the formal physical geography (tangible, character-defining features of landscape) * Mapping cognitive, mental, experiential information * Mapping the intangible values and meanings of cultural landscape * Mapping historical and temporal information | Class notes and examples  Translate information generated in previous exercises into informative maps |
| 3. Participatory Mapping | * Understand maps as eidetic tools | * Interviewing stakeholders, focus groups, surveys * Participatory design – case studies and examples | Class notes and relevant case studies  Practical exercise in participatory mapping |

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See the foundational *Reading and Representing the Cultural Landscape – A Toolkit.*