**New York City College of Technology**

**Interdisciplinary Committee**

**Criteria for an Interdisciplinary Course**

1. **Interdisciplinary Studies Definition**

Interdisciplinary studies involve two or more academic disciplines or fields of study organized around synthesizing distinct perspectives, knowledge, and skills. Interdisciplinary study focuses on questions, problems, and topics too complex or too broad for a single discipline or field to encompass adequately; such studies thrive on drawing connections between seemingly exclusive domains. Usually theme-based, interdisciplinary courses intentionally address issues that require meaningful engagement of multiple academic disciplines. Pedagogical strategies focus on, but are not limited to, inquiry or problem-based learning.

Although many academic disciplines, such as African American Studies and Engineering, are inherently interdisciplinary, to be considered an interdisciplinary course at City Tech the course must be team-taught[[1]](#footnote-1) by more than one faculty member from two or more departments[[2]](#footnote-2) in the College. An interdisciplinary course, by definition, has an interdisciplinary theme as its nucleus. In its essence, such a course brings the analytic methods of two or more academic disciplines to bear on a specific problem or question. Thus, a course in Music History is not likely to be considered interdisciplinary, but a course in Music History from an economist’s perspective might very well lead to such a course. The application of different methods and concepts is the key to assessing whether a course is or is not interdisciplinary. The term interdisciplinary is occasionally used to identify individual projects or assignments, but these, though possibly commendable, fall short in the necessary scope for learning experiences that demand in-depth exposure to the methodologies of distinct intellectual disciplines, and the creative application of these methodologies to specific problems.

Studies show that interdisciplinary courses improve student learning (Elrod & Roth, 2012; Klein, 2010; Lattuca, 2001; Lattuca, Voigt, & Fath, 2004; Project Kaleidoscope, 2011). To foster interdisciplinary learning, the Interdisciplinary Committee has identified goals and outcomes that students taking interdisciplinary courses should be able to achieve.

**Learning Outcomes of Interdisciplinary Courses**

Students will be able to:

* Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems
* Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries
* Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems
* Apply integrative thinking to problem-solving in ethically and socially responsible ways
* Recognize varied perspectives
* Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty
* Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively
* Become flexible thinkers

**New York City College of Technology**

**Interdisciplinary Committee**

**Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation**

**Date \_\_\_\_\_8/22/24\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Submitted by** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Laureen Park and Phillip Anzalone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Department(s) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_Social Science and Architecture\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. **Proposal to Offer an Interdisciplinary Course**

1. Identify the course type and title:  
     
   🞎 An existing course\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
     
   🞎 A new course \_\_\_\_\_Philosophy of the Built Environment\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



🞎 A course under development \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Provide a course description \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| The course is guided by the question, ‘what role does the built environment play in how the individual relate to the natural and social world?’ Theories and concepts regarding dwelling, designing and building architecture from philosophy, sociology, architectural theory, art history, and others are explored and analyzed. They are also the basis for reflecting upon and evaluating the development of the built environment through time as a response to existential, ethical, cultural, environmental, technological and aesthetic demands. |
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1. How many credits will the course comprise? \_3\_\_ How many hours? \_\_\_45\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What prerequisite(s) would students need to complete before registering for the course? Co-requisite(s)?

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| Eng 1101 |

1. Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course. The course requires the perspectives of both Philosophy and Architecture in order to fully explore the course theme. The architecture perspective is grounded in knowledge of the history, styles, and theories that such training provides. This supports the student’s ability to gain facility with the fundamentals of architecture, as well as the goals and significance of different architectural theories. The philosophy perspective expands and deepens the more general question of the role of architecture for the individual and society by providing different lenses with which to understand its significance.
2. What is the proposed theme of the course? What complex central problem or question will it address? What disciplinary methods will be evoked and applied?
3. The course will explore the question of the role of the built environment in how the individual perceives and acts in the natural and social world. Architecture plays a key role in how people dwell in the world – providing shelter, centers of work, ritual, and the many activities that people across cultures engage in. Existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism, structuration, and other approaches support the student in analyzing and reflecting on architecture’s implications for human experience.
4. Which general learning outcomes of an interdisciplinary course does this course address?   
   Please explain how the course will fulfill the bolded mandatory learning outcome below. In addition, select and explain at least three additional outcomes.

🞎 **Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems**



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| This course is guided by a unifying problematic that is ubiquitous in modern society – how the built environment relates to our everyday lives, how it shapes our thinking about our world, and how it serves our needs. Readings which include architectural theory that adapts philosophy, and philosophy that applies its approaches to problems in architecture, support students in integrating how ideas shape the built environment and vice versa. Along with reading and writing, students reflect further on the integration between the two disciplines through verbal dialogue in class and groups, as well as a multimedia project and presentation. |

🞎 **Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries**



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| This course was developed by two professors who worked closely to identify topics and source material that would align problems within the two distinct disciplines in a strongly correlated way. The authors of the course texts tend to be interdisciplinary themselves who reach across the aisle without losing their disciplinary bounds. Edward Relph, for example, was trained as a geographer, but writes expertly about the philosophy of place and space. Karsten Harries was trained as a philosopher, but developed a course on the Philosophy of Architecture at Yale University, and became a renowned expert in the field. Observing and reflecting on the urban landscape with which students are familiar also helps to facilitate the synthesis and transference of knowledge. |

🞎 Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems



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| The course analyzes the meaning of the built environment through a number of lenses that unpack the implicit and explicit factors that are inherent to its development and role in society. The course draws out the historical, cultural, existential, and aesthetic considerations that play a part in architecture. What are the motivations and goals in the design of buildings? To what extent do they serve utilitarian needs? What role do history and culture play in their development and vice-versa? |

🞎 Apply integrative thinking to problem solving in ethically and socially responsible ways



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| The integrative thinking resulting from approaching the experience of dwelling in the world through the lenses of Architecture and Philosophy enables students to recognize the close connection of the built environment to ethical and social considerations. As a tool in the hands of a humanity which seeks protection from the elements, architecture can be transgressive against the natural world, along with other forms of technology. In the unit on environmentalism in particular, the course supports students in tackling the problem of environmental degradation by considering different solutions. The course also analyzes the underlying philosophical premises that shape the making and using of technology as it relates to architecture in society. |

🞎 Recognize varied perspectives



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| Readings, writing assignments and projects, and class and group discussions allow students to understand and recognize various perspectives with which to view the built environment and its role in society. Architecture and Philosophy are particularly well situated to demonstrate that contrasting perspectives can still belong to a single problematic given that they are quite distinct in content and method. But at the very heart of buildings, there are philosophical considerations in their conception and design. |

🞎 Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty



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| In the course, students are expected to understand the built environment and the complex factors that shape and result from it without being reductive. There are architectural phenomena that lead to uncertainty, like the eclecticism of styles prior to Modernism, or the future of Postmodernism. In terms of Philosophy, students are expected to read texts that are at times abstract and complex. With guidance and support, students will gain comfort in grappling with them. |

🞎 Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively



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| Students are given frequent opportunities to work collaboratively in informal discussions, as well as in a group project that will lead to a presentation. Smaller groups can be settings in which students are able to engage in active learning by articulating and crystallizing their ideas to peers who provide immediate feedback in the way of questions or comments. |

🞎 Become flexible thinkers



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| The course supports flexible thinking by presenting various perspectives on the topic of the built environment in a way that shows the strength and validity of each approach. One approach need not cancel or diminish another. Also, the sheer diversity of perspectives presented militate against taking an inflexible or dogmatic stance on any one particular perspective. |

🞎 Other

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**General Education Learning Goals for City Tech Students**

* **Knowledge:** Develop knowledge from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and hone the ability to deepen and continue learning.
* **Skills:** Acquire and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, creativity, analysis, and productive work.
* **Integration**: Work productively within and across disciplines.
* **Values, Ethics, and Relationships**: Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse   
  perspectives in personal, professional, civic, and cultural/global domains.

1. How does this course address the general education learning goals for City Tech students?

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| Develop knowledge of architectural history and theories and philosophical approaches in reflecting on the role of the built environment for society in history. The course addresses the transitions from the pre-modern, modern and postmodern in both architectural history and the historical developments interpreted through the lens of philosophy and sociology. The course also explores Modernism and Post-Modernism as architectural styles, as well as the following schools of thought: Existentialism, Phenomenology, (Post-)Structuralism, Structuration, and Postmodernism.  Learn and acquire skills for inquiry, ethical and aesthetic reflection, analysis, critical thinking, reading, writing, and effective communication. The intent and design of the course supports developing critical reading skills of sophisticated texts, developing general and disciplinary writing skills through regular short, informal assignments throughout the semester, as well as a culminating paper at the end of the semester. The course promotes dialogue and active inquiry through regular discussion in class as well as smaller group work, as well as a multimedia project and presentation. Assignments and projects are opportunities for applying ethical and aesthetic reflection, as well as analytical and critical thinking.  This course is co-taught by professors from Architecture and Philosophy, and is governed by a unifying problematic that is ubiquitous in modern society – how the built environment relates to our everyday lives. How does it serve our needs and how does it shape our thinking about the spaces that we inhabit and act in? Students read and write about texts that reflect on the built environment and society, and how it is that ideas, values, and concerns relate to the materiality of built places. Students reflect further on the integration between the two disciplines through verbal dialogue in class and groups, a paper, as well as a multimedia project and presentation.  This course explores philosophical and sociological concepts about values, ethics, and relationships. Phenomenological approaches in particular attempt to uncover the many dynamic elements that become concretized into a building. Social values and preferences shape an architectural style, but never so purely as buildings also have functions that have specific requirements. The agents involved in actualizing a design of the building, who in turn are shaped by social forces (as well as psychological, ideological, historical, etc. forces), also determine the built environment in innumerable ways. Structuration postulates that the built environment supports the regularity and trust in institutions that anchors the stability of social praxis. |

1. Which department would house this course[[3]](#footnote-3)? \_\_\_\_\_Social Science\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
   Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary? 🞎 No 🞎 Yes



* 1. Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments? 🞎 No 🞎 Yes   
     Explain.



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* 1. How will the course be team-taught[[4]](#footnote-4)? 🞎 Co-taught 🞎 Guest lecturers 🞎 Learning community  
       
     If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
     🞎 Shared credits 🞎 Trading credits   
     If guest lecturers, for what approximate percentage of the course? 🞎 Minimum 20%[[5]](#footnote-5) 🞎 other: \_\_%  
       
     Please attach the evaluation framework used to assess the interdisciplinarity of the course.[[6]](#footnote-6)



* 1. What strategies/resources would be implemented to facilitate students’ ability to make connections across the respective academic disciplines?

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| This course will be co-taught and the professors will share responsibility in assigning and assessing student work. The philosophy professor will assign and evaluate three low-stakes writing assignments in response to study questions to assess student comprehension of philosophical texts. The architecture professor will require three group presentations applying concepts from architectural theory.    In terms of higher stake assessments, there will be a mid-term multi-media project in which groups of students will present on a topic from the first half of the semester. Each member of the group will also write an individual five page essay in which they reflect on their chosen topic. Both professors will grade the presentations and papers, and will average the scores.    There will also be a final multi-media project. Like the midterm project, students will be expected to contribute to a group presentation, and individually, they will write a five page paper analyzing and reflecting on their chosen topic. Both professors will grade the presentations and papers, and will average the scores. |
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1. Would the course be designated as:

🞎 a College Option requirement[[7]](#footnote-7)? 🞎 an elective? 🞎 a Capstone course[[8]](#footnote-8)? 🞎 other? Explain.



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| Individual and Society |

1. See “Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation” question 9b for team-teaching options. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Exceptions are made for Departments that provide a home for multiple disciplines, such as Humanities and Social Science. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. An interdisciplinary course for the College Option requirement may be housed in a department that is not liberal arts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Attach evidence of consultation with all affected departments. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. While an interdisciplinary course must be team-taught, there is no formal percentage requirement, but this minimum is a guideline. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the case that a course is equally taught, include proposed plans for faculty classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. To qualify for the College Option, such a course must also meet the New York State definition of a liberal arts and sciences course.  
   <http://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/department-expectations-curriculum> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A course proposed as a Capstone course must be separately approved by the Capstone Experience Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)