UURB 3031 – City Studio

Workflow for Learning Modules Project

Metrokits: Tools for Urban Pedagogy

Workflow for Learning Modules Project

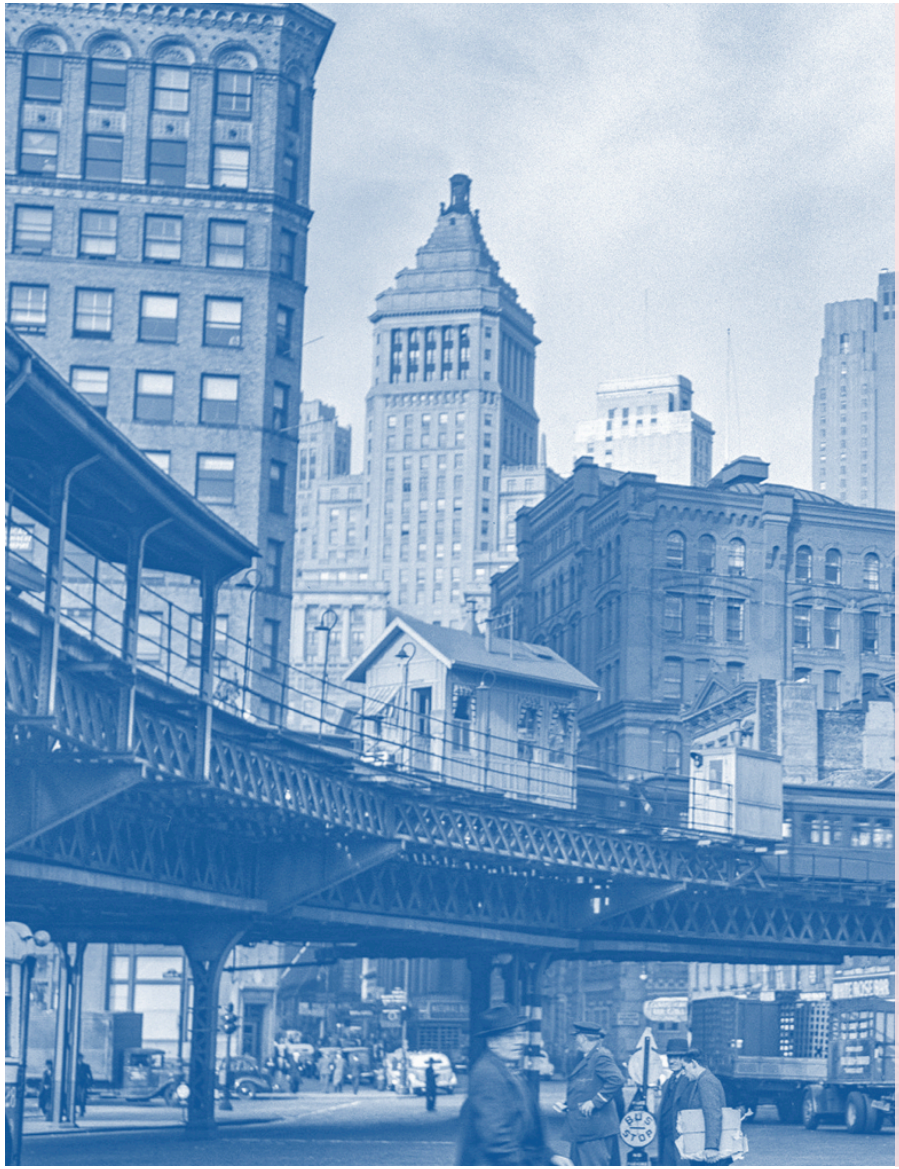
The City Studio is dedicated to the advancement of 'urban pedagogy,' where we approach cities as sites for collaborative learning, creative engagement, and social transformation. The goal is to build new knowledge, understanding, and awareness of cities and urban experience through the making of artifacts.

In the first assignment, we studied a range of tactics that people deployed to adapt their environments to life in the complex urbanity of the megacity. We gathered information about a neighborhood in Mexico City by virtually walking through it using Google Street View. We not only learned a lot about the neighborhood, we honed our capacities for engaging in systematic research, paying close attention to detail, and producing visual artifacts to tell stories. We also gained experience creating materials for use by other people in the future! These skills will serve us well going forward.

The artifacts that you produce for this next assignment will take the form of free, publicly accessible *learning modules* that can be downloaded and used by school groups, non-profit organizations, activists, tourists, local communities, and the general public. Learning modules will provide users with ways of critically and creatively engaging the urban world around them through observation, discovery, documentation, making, and reflection.

The purpose of the modules is to aid groups and communities in practices of urban mindfulness, discovery, encounter, conversation, exchange, action, and critique. Think of it as a process of unleashing people's curiosity and creativity, and turning that into 'ways of knowing' the city. The ultimate goal of our projects is to help us and others see the everyday urban world in new and exciting ways.

A learning module is a kit that anyone can use in order to advance their knowledge and understanding of a topic. Students may produce modules across a range of media, including booklets, 'zines, walking tours, school lessons and curricula, exploration kits, adbusting and other public service campaigns. The content of learning modules will also range, covering topics such as public space, housing, transportation, food systems, racial justice, immigrant rights, informal economies, nature, sustainability, and more. Learning modules targeted for elementary schools might contribute to New York state curriculum standards for STEM or social studies education. Those taking the form of tours may follow New York City guidelines for tour leadership. In all cases, the materials and activities that we produce must be freely available in downloadable formats, and should conform to the highest ethical standards.



In this first stage, students engage in a period of contemplation, searching, sifting, and modeling. Most of this work will be done together during studio time. The purpose is to gather in a range of ideas and to distill and present them in a coherent way. The main tasks in this stage include:

1. Generate fields of inquiry. Fields of inquiry are broad areas of research and practice that cross disciplinary lines and that underpin specific topics. These include things like public space, redevelopment, investment, gentrification, infrastructure, community, technology, adaptation, urban ecology, and human senses.

2. Form working groups or teams. Teams should form around fields of inquiry in order to develop topics. It is crucial for the success of the projects that each person work with their team in the spirit of diligence, camaraderie, equity, trust, and mutual support.

3. Develop a statement of purpose. The statement can be modified over the course of the semester, and a final version will appear with the project when it is completed.

Deliverable

Statement of Purpose. Each team will produce a document that includes a team name and a 100-150 word description of shared interests and commitments, followed by a 75-100 word biography for each member. A revised version of this document will be included in the final product at the end of term.

STEP 2. RESEARCH

In this second stage, students will begin a process of research that will continue until the end of term. Research is a never-ending activity, and new findings generated through inquiries will frequently arise. These findings will not only inform your project, but may push it in new directions. In this sense, research is an inherently iterative process.

Research can mean many things. However, in the academic context, it goes beyond just 'looking things up' or doing Google searches. Research constitutes the systematic process of gathering, sorting, interpreting, organizing, and conveying information in order to produce new knowledge about the world. *Thus, in order to bring a high level of reliability to our work, we will make our research methods explicit and systematic*.

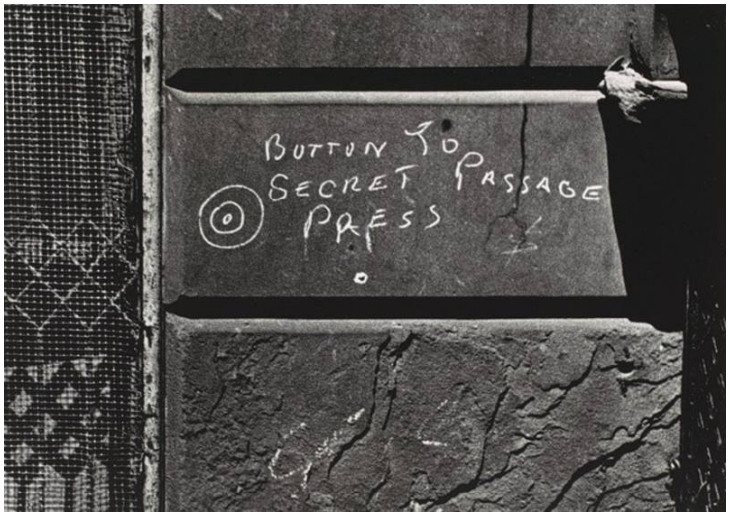
This entails qualifying your work. If you are tracking down information, explain the parameters and locations of your search, the nature of the sources that you are uncovering, and how these will be integrated into the project. If you are conducting interviews, discuss whether these are open-ended or structured, and what protocols you will use to ensure protection for your subjects. If you are undertaking fieldwork, describe the kind of fieldwork, the location, and how your findings will be systematized. If you are doing archival research, describe the archival collections that you consult, your strategy for interpreting documents and controlling data. If you are engaging in visual analysis, provide specificity about the media you examine and the approach you take to interpretation and analysis. In all cases, let your audience know how you came by your knowledge.

Deliverables

1. One preliminary bibliography, properly formatted, with at least ten sources from scholarly or trade publications. The citation / format is up to you, so long as it is systematically applied.

2. Presentations on work in progress. Each team will share one power point slide that shows an image related to the ongoing research you are conducting. Each group will have ten minutes to discuss their projects.

STEP 3. DISCERNMENT



Each team goes through a discernment period, where various ideas and findings from the first two stages are tested against several criteria, including: validity, relevance, ethical sensibility, replicability, and potential for completion. The outcome of this stage should be a proposal for a viable final product.

In this phase students must answer four basic questions.

Deliverable

One document, properly formatted, that answers the questions posed here. Each section should include a 100-150 word statement, followed by an updated bibliography with 15-20 sources, and revised statement of purpose. Images may be included.

1. What is the topic of the learning module?

The key to success in this project is a well-delineated and focused topic. For example, 'nature in the city' is *not* a topic, it is a vast field of inquiry. From that field of inquiry, we need to know what *about* urban nature your module will explore, and where and how. This question requires the team to come to a consensus around shared interests.

2. What is the audience for the learning module?

The next critical question has to do with who will use your module, and why you have targeted this audience. This will have a major impact on the form your module takes, the level and kind of activity it proposes, what ethics and standards it requires, and what the outcomes will be. Audiences can range widely, from elementary or high schoolers to tourists, elders, interfaith groups, neighborhood residents, newly arrived immigrant families, activists, artists, youth organizations, or communities of shared interest.

3. What is the form of the learning module?

While some groups might start with an artifact in mind, it is best that the form of the learning module take shape around the project rather than the other way around. Modules can take a wide range of forms, including walking tours, school lessons and curricula, exploration kits, booklets, public service campaigns, scavenger hunts, and more. The main consideration is that the form relates to the kind of audience imagined and the specific requirements of the topic. Explain the form you will use and why.

4. What are the outcomes for the learning module?

Each team will need to delineate a set of outcomes for their projects—that is, what are the skills, insights, or capacities that your learning module helps to build. For the purposes of this project, modules should broadly encompass five outcome rubrics: observation, discovery, documentation, making, and reflection. What will the specific outcomes be for your module under each of these rubrics? How would you evaluate these outcomes?

A prototype is a draft product created to model forms, test design assumptions, and validate ideas. Prototypes can be rendered in a wide variety of media, from drawings and diagrams to storyboards, role plays, performances, flowcharts, wireframes, virtual simulations, or 3-D models. Prototypic processes can also be introduced at varied stages in the development of a project in order to examine how a given part relates to the whole.

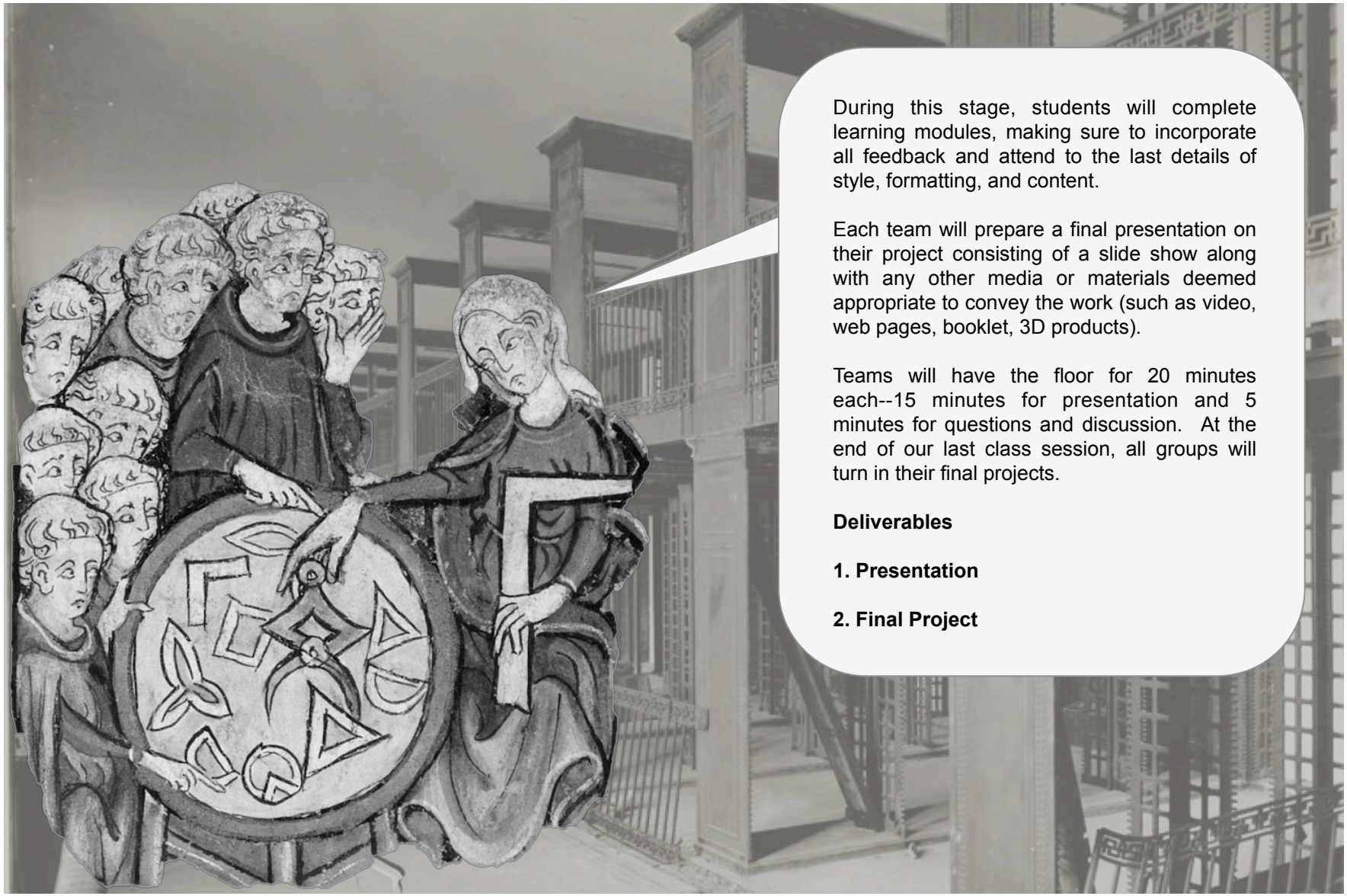
The process of prototyping is critical for creative practice in any field, as it provides information that background research alone cannot. For the creation of learning modules, no amount of research will lead to a finished product without the devotion of some effort to prototyping. This allows us to test ideas in controlled settings and to receive feedback that can be incorporated into the improvement of our projects. Such an iterative process affords us the opportunity to refine our work, weeding out weaker or invalid elements and building on those with greater promise. In this way, prototyping leads to much more durable, applicable, and user-friendly products.

Deliverables

Successive prototypes of work in progress, presented in two class sessions.

1. User prototype. For this class session, teams will produce a pin-up (24" x 32") that uses any combination of drawings, diagrams, photos, maps, or storyboards. The prototype should outline the process and experience for a user of the learning module. These may be hand-drawn, computer generated, or a combination.

2. Form prototype. For this class session, teams assemble a rough draft of their learning module as a series of 5 power-point slides. Each team will have 10 minutes to present their work in progress and receive feedback.



During this stage, students will complete learning modules, making sure to incorporate all feedback and attend to the last details of style, formatting, and content.

Each team will prepare a final presentation on their project consisting of a slide show along with any other media or materials deemed appropriate to convey the work (such as video, web pages, booklet, 3D products).

Teams will have the floor for 20 minutes each--15 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for questions and discussion. At the end of our last class session, all groups will turn in their final projects.

Deliverables

1. Presentation

2. Final Project

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Week 9 **Mar 25** **Exploration**		Ideation Team formation Team meetings	
Week 10 **Apr 1** **Research**		Work session Team meetings w/ instructor	Due: --Statements of Purpose
Week 11 **Apr 8** **Discernment**		Work session Presentations	Due: --Bibliography --Slideshow
Week 12 **Apr 15** **Prototyping**		Work session Team meetings w/ instructor	

Week 13 **Apr 22** **Prototyping**		Work session Presentations	Due: --User prototype
Week 14 **Apr 29** **Prototyping**		Work session Presentations	Due: --Form prototype
Week 15 **May 6** **Integration**		Work session Team meetings w/ instructor	
Week 16 **May 13** **Integration**		Final presentations	Due: --Presentation --Project