

## GRAD 7090, DESIGN THESIS 2021-22

*He who dreams not creates not*  
— Louis Sullivan

### Calendar Description:

Design Thesis is an independently driven creative work developed within a focused subject of inquiry and directed by architectural questions. It is carried out through intensive research, study, and design explorations, and culminates in a thoroughly developed architectural proposition. It is to be fully recorded in a final document.



**Design Thesis** is both an end in itself and a new beginning: it culminates a professional education, but also inaugurates new directions. It is a transformative event—a threshold, opening new ways to think, make and engage architecture, others and the world. Carrying out self-directed design research and bringing this work to creative fruition are imperative skills for any architect. Design Thesis is an opportunity for students to challenge themselves by pursuing architectural interests in ambitious and self-critical ways, while working in the mutually supportive context of peers attempting the same. Design Thesis entails considerable intellectual risk, but can also be serious fun! It should be the most exhilarating time of an architect's education and a fulfilling experience that one reflects on fondly and meaningfully for the rest of one's life.

Design thesis commences with a Design Research Studio. This first term is about finding topics of fascination and concern, articulating questions and attempting responses. The first term culminates with significant attempts at architectural design and design strategies, together with presentations of ongoing creative research in the form of diverse models and drawings, and potentially full-scale installations, supplementary videos and digital projections.

During the Winter Design Thesis term, students fully manifest a substantive architectural design project and produce a Design Thesis book. The book compiles a full year's worth of search and research, including documentation of processes, iterations, and a final design, plus sufficient text to describe the thesis inquiry, providing contextual framing, interpretive annotations and critical reflections.

An important preliminary step of Design Thesis is preparing a proposal that establishes the general topic and particular strategies to guide the work. A thesis topic should have at least two facets: subjects that fascinate you, and problems that concern you. Articulating a multi-faceted topic of interest, however, is not enough. A Design Thesis Proposal must further describe particular conditions, programs, sites and/or phenomena to be studied ("the what"); exploratory strategies and manners of working by which the topic will be investigated and the design developed ("the how"); and relevant research precedents—architectural, theoretical and cultural contexts—to which the work will meaningfully relate ("the why"). A proposal must be clear, specific, succinct, relevant, exciting, and achievable within the given time frame.

A good proposal is detailed, yet open-ended. It does not predetermine results but rather inaugurates inquiry in particular ways, establishing the parameters that allow for creative work to unfold. The best Design Thesis work results from restless inquiry, rigorous commitment, and critical discourse with peers.

How does a thesis begin? With questions! While each student will develop their own, everyone should also grapple with the fundamentals: What is architecture? What are its various manifestations? What are the most pressing challenges facing the discipline today? What are its most persistent, trans-historical topics? What are the different ways of performing architectural work, and which ways do I seek to develop? What kind of architect do I want to become? What architectural settings have I found to be most moving? Most fascinating? Most troubling? Most confounding? Most meaningful? What ignites architectural imagination?

All Design Thesis information documents can be found on the Department's website:  
<http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/architecture/programs/architecture/designthesisproposalforms.html>

**ATTENTION: Department of Architecture General Studio and Course Information:**

For IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON RULES AND REGULATIONS governing this course, please refer to the downloadable PDFs on the Department of Architecture's Website under "current students" + "Student Reference Material": "**General Studio & Course Information**" and "**Studio & Technology Portfolio Guidelines**":

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/architecture/programs/architecture/downloads.html>

In addition to Departmental Rules and Regulations, this course is governed by the Supplemental Regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.