



PROFESSIONAL
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PROPEL

COURSE CATALOG



What is ProPEL

The ProPEL library provides a flexible online platform for faculty and students to access digital learning materials. Faculty can select Units and individual lessons as desired and integrate them with their teaching. The goal of ProPEL is to expand teaching resources to help better equip students for the future of architectural practice.

How to Gain Access to ProPEL

To create an account with ProPEL follow the instructions below. If you already have an ACSA account through MatrixMaxx you can log in to ProPEL with your ACSA user information.

1. Email Julia McKenzie (jmckenzie@acsa-arch.org) with your current university affiliation.
2. She will add your first/last name, email, and affiliation to MatrixMaxx.
3. Once your profile is created you will receive an email with your user information. *Please confirm you received the user email.*

Once your profile is created use [this link](#) to fill in your username and password. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact ACSA's Publications Manager, Julia McKenzie.

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Introduction



This unit explores the internal workings of firms and how architecture firms navigate the marketplace for the purchase and sale of design services. Architects should also understand how design firms make money and manage that money in order to maintain a balance of a financially stable architecture firm.

Learning Objectives

1. How to tell the difference between a financially 'strong' architecture firm and a financially 'weak' firm.
2. How to manage the firm's finances to maintain a financially 'strong' architecture firm.
3. How to balance the competing imperatives of doing 'good' design and making 'good' money.

Lessons

1. Where & when the money 'goes'
2. Profit, loss, and balance sheet
3. Traditional business model
4. Key efficiency & benchmarks
5. Challenges to find happy balance

Instructor

- » Brian Kenet, MBA — Yale School of Architecture and Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation

Course Link

- » [Firm Finance, Operating Model, and Management](#)



Introduction



This unit focuses on how architects charge for their services and how the underlying financial constraints create this core value conversion. This unit also explores what is currently happening, and introduces new ways of potential change of value proposition.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the relationship between the architect's services and how architects are paid.
2. Define compensation structures for the architect and the overall design team.
3. Choose appropriate compensation techniques appropriate to the project and services.
4. Explore challenges to the value propositions of current and future compensation models.

Lessons

1. Money, Value, and Fees
2. Financial Dynamics
3. Fee Computation
4. Alternative Value Propositions
5. Performance, Process, and Results
6. Examples and Implications

Instructors

- » Phil Bernstein, FAIA — Associate Dean and Senior Lecturer, Yale School of Architecture
- » Renée Cheng, FAIA — Professor and Dean, University of Washington College of Built Environments

Course Link

- » [Value Proposition and Fees](#)



Introduction



Architectural ethics are a fundamental requirement for practicing architecture. Ethics deal with the dilemmas that practitioners often encounter during practice. This unit provides an overview of how to think about ethics with some of the values and responsibilities architects should uphold. This unit will also provide a mix of different scenarios and analyze them.

Learning Objectives

1. See how to apply AIA's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.
2. Learn how to resolve conflicts among the values of diverse people.
3. Understand how different approaches to ethics apply to real cases.

Lessons

1. Why Ethics matter and how to apply them in practice
2. Example: Traditional practices
3. Evolving practice and anticipating change
4. Equity or mismatch between firm and client values

Instructor

- » Tom Fisher — Professor of Architecture, University of Minnesota

Course Link

- » [Ethics](#)



Introduction



Negotiation is a crucial skill for architects to have in many areas of their work, whether it is on their own behalf or the profession. Architects should know why negotiation is important, what kind of negotiation styles are out there, and know how to navigate through them effectively in order to be a better architect.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify interactions that call for negotiation strategies.
2. Assess negotiation styles and tactics.
3. Prepare and practice for an actual negotiation.
4. Address the fear factors in negotiation.

Lessons

1. Why negotiate?
2. Why negotiation is hard?
3. Negotiation styles
4. When negotiations break down
5. Negotiating on your own behalf & as an ally
6. Negotiating on behalf of your firm & profession

Instructors

- » Nancy Alexander — Leadership coach, Certified Master Facilitator, Organizational development consultant, Co-author: AIA Guides for Equitable Practice
- » Mia Scharpie — Owner, Build Yourself
- » Amy Wrzesniewski — Professor of Management, Yale School of Management

Course Link

- » [Negotiation](#)



Introduction



Strategic Planning is the initial step that any potential firm owner should take toward success. Strategic and business plans serve as guides for the design of a practice. Architects should understand and be able to interpret the strategic plans of their clients and the spatial and operational implications of those plans.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the concepts of strategic planning as a tool to design a practice or enterprise.
2. Describe the components of a strategic plan, their relationships, and how they impact decision-making in a business.
3. Identify various strategic concepts and how to define supporting goals.
4. Evaluate the lifespan of a firm and the role of strategic planning in designing and operating the practice.
5. Define how a client's strategic and business plans affect the need for buildings and space, and how these plans relate to design solutions.

Lessons

1. What is strategy?
2. Employee engagement in strategy
3. Execution and implementation
4. What can go wrong?
5. What comes next?

Instructor

- » Simon Goodhead — Principal, The Coxe Group, Inc.

Course Link

- » [Strategic Planning](#)



Introduction



Architecture and risk have always walked hand in hand and avoiding risks is impossible. Considering the amount of trade costs, coordination, scheduling demands, etc., architects are always at risk of becoming liable for direct or indirect damages. Architects should understand that as they do riskier projects or projects that have higher risks, it may lead to having higher value for clients. This unit discusses how to understand, manage, compare, and contrast all aspects of risks and failures.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the relationship between risk and responsibility.
2. Compare the positive aspects of risk with the negative.
3. Describe the four essential elements of professional liability: Duty, breach, cause, and damage.
4. Understand that there are basic practices that Architects use to manage risk.
5. Contrast the industry perspectives on causes of uncertainty and risk.

Lessons

1. Expect failure, be willing to take risks
2. Duty, breach, cause, and damage
3. Architects do's and don'ts

Instructors

- » Phil Bernstein, FAIA — Associate Dean and Senior Lecturer, Yale School of Architecture
- » Renée Cheng, FAIA — Professor and Dean, University of Washington College of Built Environments

Course Link

- » [Failures: The Architect's Role in Managing Project Risk](#)



Introduction



This unit describes the differences between Lean design and Lean Production and how Lean fits and does not fit in design. Bringing Lean approaches into the design phase of architecture more frequently leads to a successful project outcome. With a Lean mindset, designers, engineers, and architecture teams can share information collaboratively and efficiently by maximizing great levels of design excellence and innovation.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the meaning of the term lean in the building industry.
2. Explain why building owners want more Architects to engage with lean practices.
3. Distinguish between lean and construction and lean in design.
4. Compare reasons for the widespread adoption of lean and construction with the low adoption of lean in design.

Lessons

1. What is lean?
2. How does lean fit or not fit with design?
3. Set based design project
4. Lean and Integrated Project Delivery

Instructors

- » Markku Allison — Vice President of Strategy and Innovation, Chandos Construction
- » Renée Cheng, FAIA — Professor and Dean, University of Washington College of Built Environments
- » Stan Chiu — Principal, HGA Architects and Engineers

Course Link

- » [Lean Practices](#)



Introduction



“Professional practice” courses taught within most architecture schools in the US have, for decades, focused primarily on *what* architects do, including the procedures, processes, and protocols necessary for maintaining and reproducing business. This overwhelming emphasis on the ‘*what*’ of practice has left little space for considering ‘*how*’ and ‘*why*’ architects do what they do, and it has eclipsed the possibility of transformation or change within the profession and within firms. This unit offers lessons about six transformative acts that have come to define changes in architectural work. The lessons are offered by a cross-section of architecture faculty and organizers who are committed to re-thinking how “professional practice” is taught inside and outside academia. At its core, this unit explores what it means to be a “professional practitioner,” how to organize for change, and why change may be needed. It responds to the ProPEL topics of “business development,” “equity and inclusion,” and “social justice.”

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the historical meaning of the terms "professional" and "practice" and recognize how transformation has been central to their definitions.
2. Evaluate why and when organizational change or transformation may be necessary within architectural practice.
3. Identify different actions and strategies that architects and activists are using at the present moment to change architectural practice, including the longstanding injustices, inequities, and challenges to which they are responding.
4. Assess which strategies or types of action may be appropriate for specific scenarios.
5. Create and implement plans for changing or improving working conditions of various scales, alone or with others.
6. Analyze how organizational and structural changes to architecture practice may contribute to a more just, equitable, and valuable profession.

Lessons

1. Practicing
2. Professing
3. Incorporating
4. Organizing
5. Cooperating
6. Unionizing

Instructors

- » Aaron Cayer — Cal Poly, Pomona
- » Gabriel Cira — Massachusetts College of Art and Design
- » Andrew Daley — International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Alphabet Workers Union (AWU)
- » Peggy Deamer — Yale University
- » Palmyra Geraki — University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and Palmyra PLLC
- » Albert Lopez — University of New Mexico
- » Rio Morales — The Architecture Lobby
- » Jacob Reidel — Harvard University Graduate School of Design
- » The Architecture Lobby, Members
- » Shota Vasakmadze — UAW 2865

Course Link

- » [Transforming Practice](#)



Introduction



Focusing primarily on the U.S. context, this unit will introduce the historic foundations of the profession of architecture, its current structure, and future challenges. The distinctions between education, professional societies, and licensing bodies (AIA / NCARB), and reference to the current “Alliance” organizations (NCARB, NAAB, ACSA, AIA, AIAS, NOMA) will also be discussed.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the changing role and definition of "professions" in relation to their social and political contexts.
2. Describe how architectural practice in the Euro-American tradition has been shaped by differing cultural and historical conditions.
3. Explain how the organization of the contemporary architecture profession in the United States is a result of ongoing changes in the political economy of construction.
4. Recall how the architectural profession is organized, structured and regulated in the U.S. and how it protects the health, safety and welfare of the public.
5. Discuss the education, experience and exams that define the path to architectural licensure in the U.S. and how they vary jurisdictionally.

Lessons

1. Professionalism
2. Who is the Architect?
3. Constructing the American Architect
4. Organization of the Architecture Profession in the United States
5. Licensure Processes in the United States

Instructors

- » Jeremy Fretts — NCARB
- » Melissa Gobrecht — NCARB
- » Shannon Himes — Division of Industrial Compliance, Ohio Department of Commerce
- » George B. Johnston — Georgia Tech

Course Link

- » [Professionalism](#)



Course Unit: **Research in a Practice Setting**

Introduction



This unit will provide a base appreciation of research methodologies specific to architecture. It will also help you understand some of the commonalities with other forms of research.

Learning Objectives

1. Distinguish between what is research and what is not research.
2. Describe differences & similarities between architectural research & research in other fields.
3. Compare and contrast research-based practice with service-based practice.

Lessons

1. Myths of Research
2. Future Context
3. Storytelling

Instructor

- » Renée Cheng, FAIA — Professor and Dean, University of Washington College of Built Environments

Course Link

- » [Research in a Practice Setting](#)

