

STORY/theme.

a social equalizer

*fifth year thesis proposal
submission 2.1 _sept 11
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advisors: Hal Hayes; Spike Wolff; Dick Block*

Subject and Background.

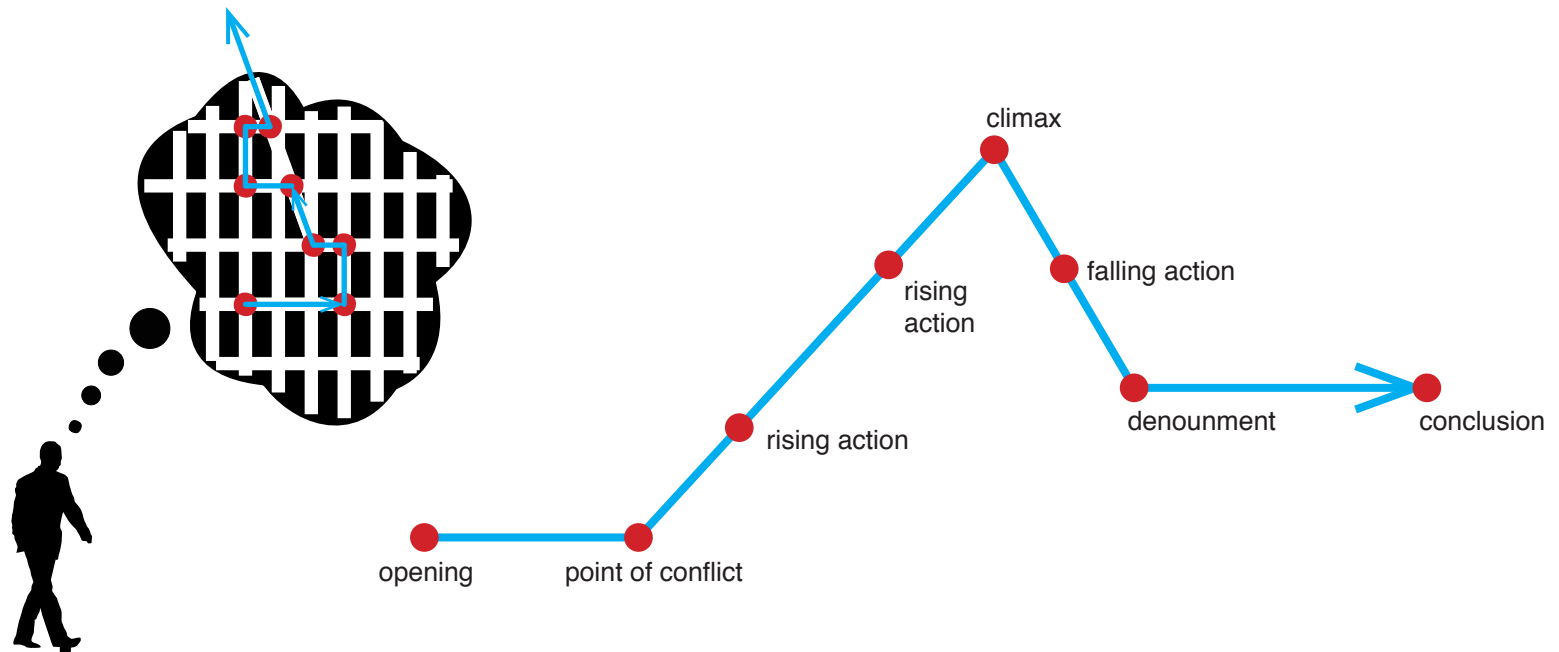
People seek out comfortable environments. We crave spaces that feel familiar to us, and places that we can be ourselves in. Sometimes those spaces allow us to be with our friends and family and provide us with an environment to relax and take a break from the stresses of daily life. But not all spaces are created equal in their abilities to make us feel comfortable. We retreat to spaces specifically designed for leisure to create a sense of escapism for us to be with our loved ones and have a good time. One industry has capitalized on this human desire.



The theme park industry is a multi-billion dollar business in the selling of themed, immersive environments that take the user to a particular time or place. Story (which I am defining as a particular time and place featuring some sort of characters) has been one of the main drivers in design and development of theme park leisure spaces, and these artificial narratives are created to transport the user to an alternate reality; a physical and built reality, but artificial nonetheless. The industry has taken storytelling concepts from the film industry to create holistic environments that go beyond just an image by creating a place you can touch, taste, and smell. There is a long history of theme parks being created to promote and sell a company's branding or films, but what was born out of the business was unique experiences that people engaged in a way different from the everyday.

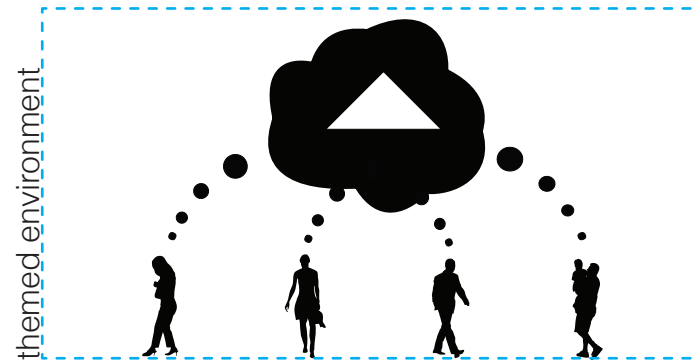
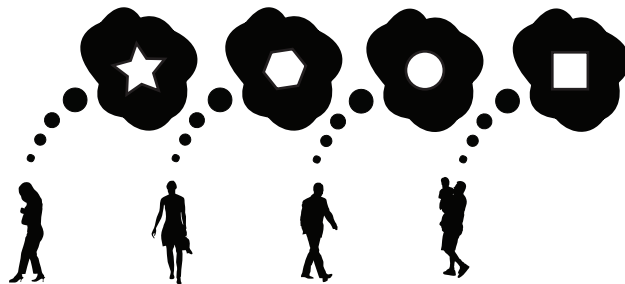
Research Statement.

The question I took away from my personal interest in theme parks is, why are people so drawn to these types of narrative spaces? People choose to spend their leisure time and money on these types of experiences. Is there an added level of relaxation and solace in the feeling of escapism? I am theorizing that humans naturally create narratives and stories (ie memories) in all spaces, but it usually takes time and experience to create these narratives. Take for example, a stranger visiting a new city. He might be intimidated and uncomfortable at first with no memories to spatially guide him, while a person who has lived in that same city their whole lives has created memories and stories in so many places that guide his or her experience. We become comfortable and familiar with a place because we can recall memories and stories associated with a space. It becomes our own.



Research Statement. (continued)

When a story is prescribed to a space does that make a first time user more comfortable because there is a shared experience with others? People retreat to these built and constructed narrative environments because of the social allowances it provides to a group of people. The experiences of these individuals in a group might all be varied but the transportive environment creates a new reality. These people can connect over their displacement and share the story of the space together no matter past experiences. How might social interactions between groups of people become different now that there is a common narrative? Can a designer craft moments that move like stories or films do? Do users feel a more active sense of participation in a space?



Taking the theories of narrative design and theme park design, story and theme injected into a space allows for heightened social interactions because of the narrative that is provided and shared amongst a group of people.

Project Methods.

Over the course of the year I hope to look at the history, design theory, and building techniques of theme parks and entertainment spaces. I hope to also take a look at storytelling techniques from film and theater to see how some of those narrative concepts could be applied to spatial planning and designing. One of the key design and research methods I am proposing is direct interdisciplinary work. I am hoping to test the way other people think about leisure and narrative experiences to affect my designs and process.

The thesis project would draw inspiration from the given studio design project for Hal Hayes (*Sustainable Design Studio, Fall '13*). The project would be the repurposing of the TWA Terminal building into a welcome center for New York City. With a given project and set parameters similar to the studio project, this phase of project would be called **CONCEPT DESIGN** and is shown in the schedule in blue. The level of detail of the project would stay at a conceptual level with more emphasis put on site analysis, and pre-design.

Extensive library research would initially aid in the conceptual design of the project. This is shown on the timeline in yellow as **DESIGN RESEARCH**. Topics that would be addressed include: theme park design, group and social psychology, history of New York City, Worlds Fairs/Expo history research.

Where I drift apart slightly from the studio is during the second half of the semester in their design development phase. This point in the project would be where I start to collaborate with others to use my initial conceptual design to test different interdisciplinary approaches to developing that design past the conceptual stage. I am calling this the **DESIGN TESTING** phase. It would almost be taking my project in different directions on a weekly basis with consultants from different disciplines to guide the process. *Week one* would be development through the lens of a computer programmer/human computer interaction specialist; *week two* would be through set design; *week three* would be through a business/marketing perspective, and *week four* would be through a psychology perspective.

Project Methods. (continued)

I am also **TEACHING** a 3 unit StuCo (student college) class on themed entertainment.* Lessons and discussions with a class (current enrollment is at 22 students) that includes students in majors from all five colleges at CMU (CFA, CIT, SCS, DC, and TSB) will help gain other perspectives on entertainment design and themed experiences. The structure of the class is to initially cover some basic theme park design theory first, but then present mini design problems in class for groups to work on and approach with their own major-specific ways of problem solving. Subsequent weeks of class after going over basic theory will be devoted to a different leisure space typology each week (week 6: zoos, aquariums, and animal parks, week 9: hotels, week 10: interactive exhibits and museums). More specific design problems will be set forth for those as well. The discussions and small design problem results will be used as data to aid in the second half of the semester in the testing/experimentation phase.



Site visits as well as interviews with industry professionals would be used as qualitative research. Initial observations would be made in non-narrative driven leisure spaces including parks, shopping spaces, theaters, etc. These would take place in New York, Pittsburgh, and Florida. Participation in an industry trade show in November would be a way to not only get feedback about my thesis from professionals, but also allow me to do some observational research at existing narrative spaces in New York, Pittsburgh, and Florida.** I would try to record group behavior and compare interactions between themed and non themed spaces.

**Course 98-206; Experiencing Entertainment; Fall '13 (Th 6:30-7:20); Course Syllabus and Assignment Sheet are attached in Appendix A; Course for the Spring Semester still Pending Approval*

***IAAPA Attractions Expo 2013; November 18-22, 2013; Orlando, FL. Interviews would be set up with architecture firms present, as well as other design firms. Education sessions would be attended with field visits integrated into those education sessions. Student networking opportunities would be present as well to discuss collaborative interdisciplinary work. Proposed site visits include: Universal Studios Florida, Walt Disney World, and various shopping centers. Full Proposed Itinerary listed in Appendix B*

Project Methods. (continued)



The first two thirds of the semester's design work will also go into a submission for a national design competition sponsored by Walt Disney Imagineering. The project is done in cross-disciplinary teams of up to 4. The submission of this competition is November 15th, so I would basically be taking the opportunity to start wrapping up my design process around then to submit and use the rest of the time to synthesize and document research after the submission deadline. This again would be where I branched away from the regular studio curriculum. While the competition entry might not be directly related to the site, the result of the group work will highly influence my overall thesis project.

The prompt for the competition this year goes right a long with my proposed thesis project:

There are many wonderful urban environments around the world where millions of people live, work and play every day. Select a large and densely populated urban area, and design an experience that temporarily or permanently transforms the city for the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors. The experience must take advantage of existing infrastructure, and may be above, below or anywhere in between existing development.

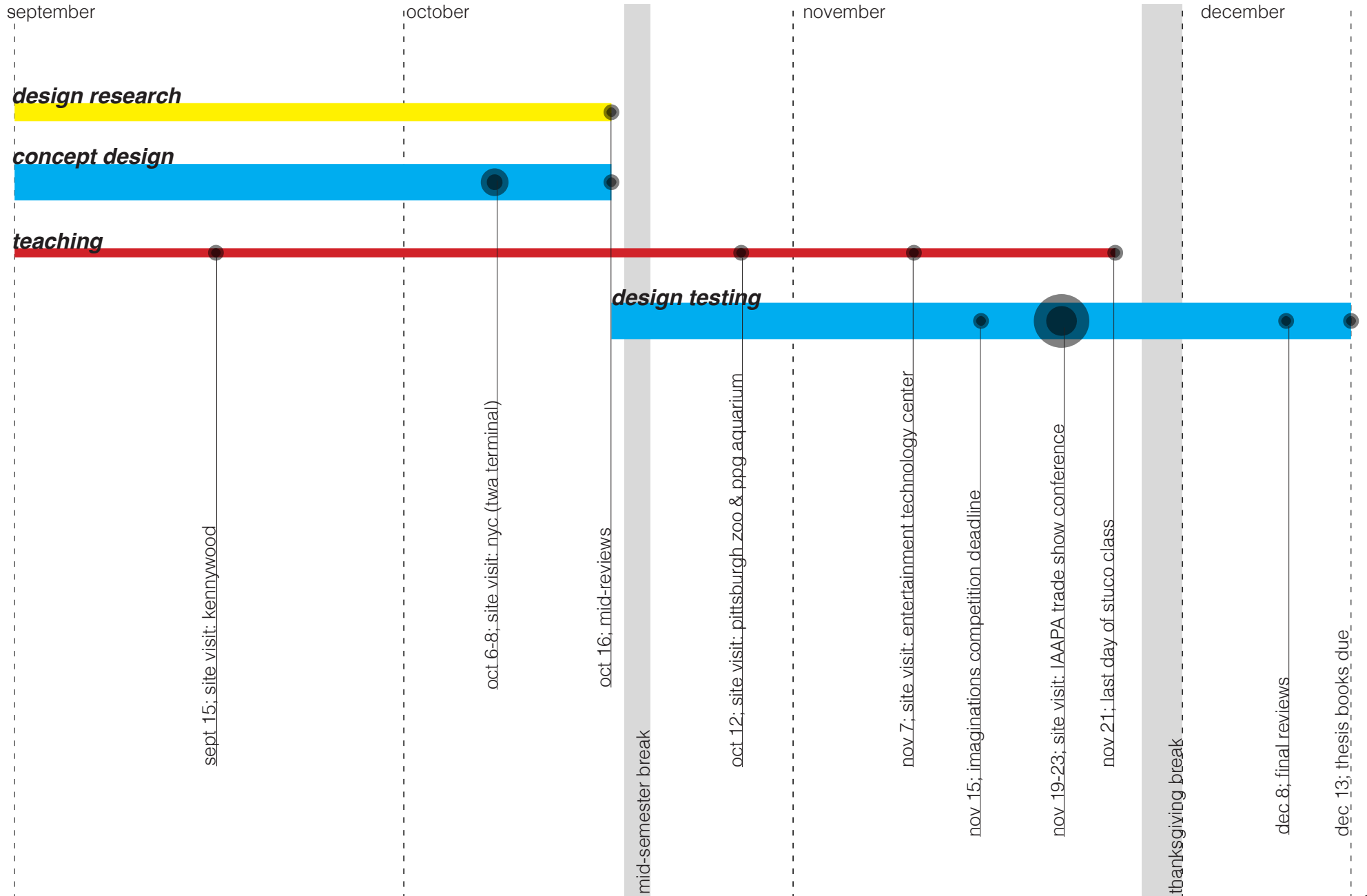
Project Methods. (continued)

The spring semester would be a continuation with the same program and site as in the fall (welcome center for NYC at JFK airport). Synthesizing the 4 week design testing phase, I would then go into an intensive **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT** phase with a more traditional trajectory to the regular studio projects. The final solution would ideal integrate the experiences taken from semester one.

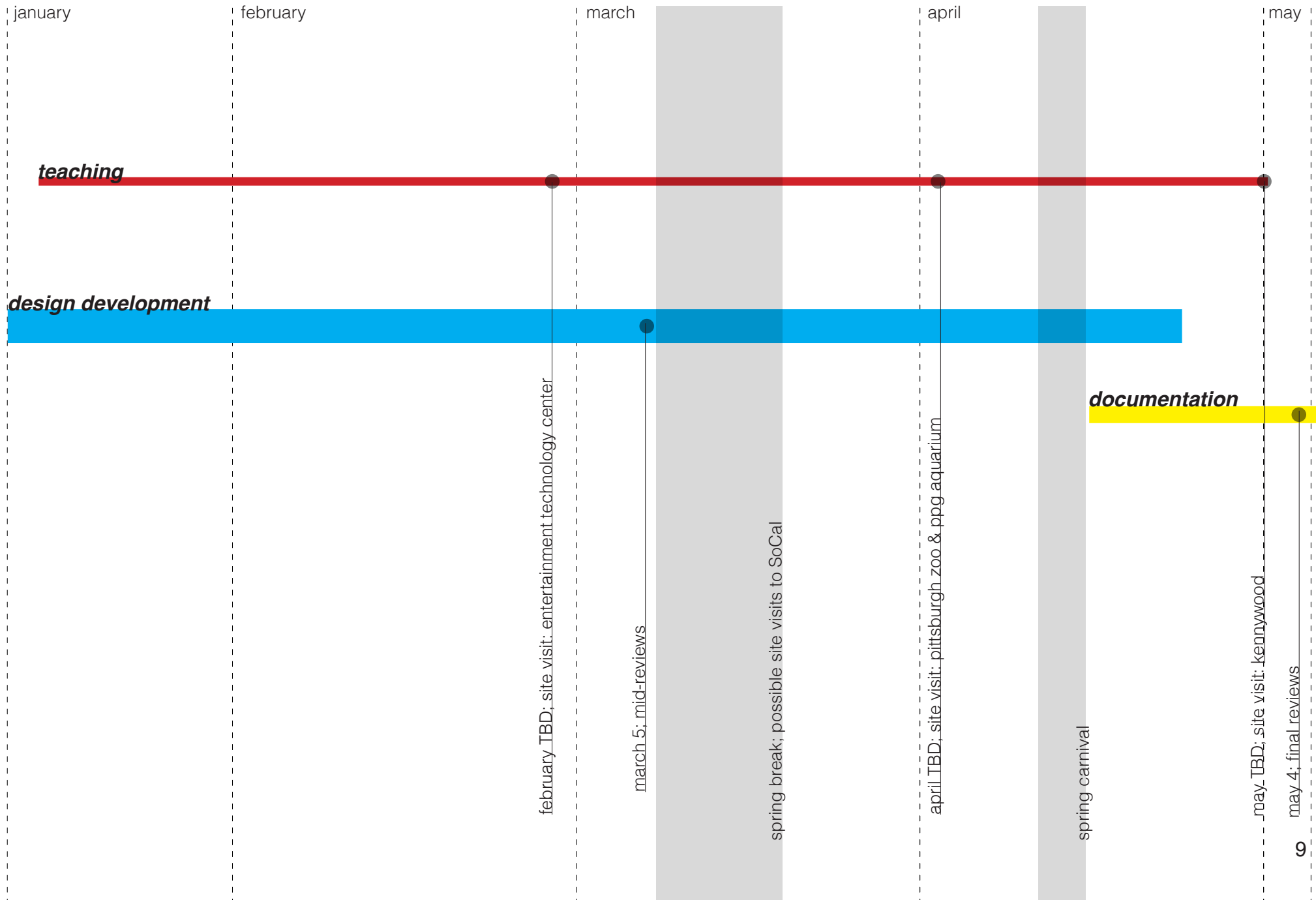
The StuCo course, Experiencing Entertainment, would also be taught again to a new set of students. This would have less of an impact on the final design process, but still might inform my work as it progress with the design throughout the semester. The **TEACHING** component would still be present.

Finally, the two weeks after carnival leading up to final reviews would be devoted to **DOCUMENTATION** and preparing for the final review. It will be essential to not only have a compilation of my research ready to be presented, but also finalized designs and drawings at presentation quality. The designing would still spill over into the documentation process, but would need to be wrapped up soon after Spring Carnival.

Schedule (fall semester).



Schedule (spring semester).



Annotated Bibliography.

Gottdiener, Mark. The Theming of America: Dreams, Visions and Commercial Spaces. Boulder, Colo. [u.a.: Westview, 1997.

This book describes the variety of themed environments present in society and in our past history. It attempts to explain themed environments popularity and increasing presence. Gottdiener also goes into the driving of theme by the capitalist economy. One of the most important sections in the book also goes over an examination of the themed aspects of existing projects. The book is mostly focused on why theme itself is growing in popularity and existence.

“IAAPA - The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.” IAAPA - The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 July 2013.

This is the website for the industry conference and exposition that takes place every year in Orlando. I hope to be able to participate in the conference as part the yearlong project.

Iannacci, Anthony. Gensler Entertainment: The Art of Placemaking. New York, NY: Edizioni, 2001.

This book was mostly used to look at possible precedents. The book from Gensler talks about simple design approaches for entertainment spaces. There are also examples of different typologies for entertainment spaces including movie theaters and movie studios.

“ImagiNations: Dream Design Diversifyl Disney Careers I Disney.com.” ImagiNations: Dream Design Diversifyl Disney Careers I Disney.com. Walt Disney Imagineering, n.d. Web. 22 July 2013.

This website has all the information regarding competition information for the project that I would like to participate in as a culmination of studio.

Lonsway, Brian. Making Leisure Work: Architecture and the Experience Economy. New York: Routledge, 2009.

In what was one of the most influential books in my research, Lonsway talks about the “Experience Economy.” He cites many theory-based writings to discuss history and history of theory that influence spatial design in a commercialized setting. He also has a section of the book all about his research at existing sites and how he recorded information and data. He tried to make a larger point about how our work spaces and leisure spaces have almost become interchangeable because of our transformation of leisure into an economy.

Mills, Edward D. Design for Holidays and Tourism. Cambridge, Great Britain: Butterworths, 1983.

In a broader sense this book takes a look at tourism in general. I think the idea of tourism is very related to my studies because it was tourism that escalated the popularity of themed environments. I think the look at how an architect might approach an occupant who is known to be temporary or visiting is interesting to read about and very relatable to my topic. This might also be the only book in the listing that has design related writings. A lot of the other books were theory or case studies.

Mitrasinovic, Miodrag. Total Landscape, Theme Parks, Public Space. Burlington: Ashgate, 2006.

This was another book that was influential in my theories in that it takes a look at what theme parks are, how they function, and how they are designed, then asks about public spaces and what happens when theme parks move outside of what the Mitrasinovic refers to as “private public spaces.” There aren’t really any design conclusions reached by the end, but only precedents and case studies to show how themed environments might start to penetrate outside the private sector.

Schneider, Ron, and Josh Young. “Theme Park University.” Theme Park University. N.p., Mar. 2013. Web. 13 July 2013.

This website is run by two industry professionals. They write articles critically analyzing and critiquing work in the entertainment industry. While it is mostly a blog, it was good to get a sense of how industry professionals talk about and evaluate their work. It is similar to how architects talk about the built environment, but with different and slight variations.

Young, Terence, and Robert B. Riley. Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002.

This book is full of case studies and mostly was good to see a variety of more precedents.

Younger, David. "Theme Park Theory." Web log post. Theme Park Theory. N.p., 26 Sept. 2012. Web. 14 July 2013.

This website was started by a student working towards his PhD in theme park design. He blogs about his experiences working in the industry, but also posts updates on how his research is going for his doctorate. His ideas are more to build and collect theory on theme parks specifically. While he isn't looking for design solutions, he definitely is looking to summarize and write about what currently exists to create a dialogue about what is being built and designed.



xperiencing

ntertainment

syllabus

98-206 experiencing entertainment
carnegie mellon university, student college
course instructor: matthew ho
thursdays: 6:30 pm - 7:20 pm
porter hall a21

COURSE DESCRIPTION

stories are incredibly powerful. themed entertainment helps to convey these stories in a different kind of way. in this course we will discuss a variety of types of entertainment, their history, their design and specific examples. some of the topics will range from integrating social media into rides to gamification to innovation culture. we will also be going through examples of new ideas in this industry.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT WORK

this is a pass/fail course, and is worth 3 units. most time will be spent in class with occasional work required outside of class time to complete the midterm and final projects. the course is not designed to put a strain on other classwork, but more as an opportunity to learn something new.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

there are two assignments throughout the semester; the midterm and final. both assignments must be turned in in order to pass the course

ATTENDANCE

it is university policy that a maximum of 3 absences are allowed over the course of the semester. any more absences will result in a failure of the course. please talk to me if there are any other extenuating circumstances.

SITE VISITS/FIELD RESEARCH

there are three planned/tentative site visits over the course of the semester. two will be free but the third comes with a small cost of 12 dollars a person. if this creates a problem for anyone, please talk to me about it so we can make arrangements. all the field trips for the course are optional, but do take the place of class time in the weeks they are scheduled. if you choose not to attend any of the field trips, an alternate assignment will be given and must be turned in one week after the missed field trip.

week 1
(august 29) course intro/syllabus

week 2
(september 5) story and theme

week 3
(september 12) ***no class!***
kennywood trip planned for SAT, SEPT 14th (8am-11am)

week 4
(september 19) social storytelling, gamification, and transmedia
design problem #1

week 5
(september 26) new integrated technologies
design problem #2

week 6
(october 3) zoos, aquariums, and animal parks
bring money for zoo/aquarium trip if attending
design problem #3

week 7
(october 10) ***MIDSEMESTER PROJECT/UPDATE DUE***
presentations during class; fill out midsemester evaluations

week 8
(october 17) ***no class!***
zoo and aquarium trip over the previous weekend *October 12*

week 9
(october 24) hotels
design problem #4

week 10
(october 31) interactive exhibits and museums
design problem #5

week 11
(november 7) ***trip to visit and tour the ETC *tour might go past scheduled class time****

week 12
(november 14) disney/universal
design problem #6

week 13
(november 21) ***STUCCO SHOWCASE***
final projects will be due and presented at the showcase

week 14
(november 28) THANKSGIVING.

week 15
(december 5) ***no class!***
please fill out course evaluations



xperiencing

ntertainment

Project Statement

98-206 experiencing entertainment
carnegie mellon university, student college
course instructor: matthew ho
thursdays: 6:30 pm - 7:20 pm
porter hall a21

DESCRIPTION

Over the course of the semester, you will be learning about story/theme, and how those two ideas can inspire amazing experiences and environments. The themed entertainment industry is an extremely interdisciplinary field of work, and requires specialized skills and talent from experts from almost every discipline.

Over the course of the semester, you will use what you have learned to in the class to develop your own original themed entertainment experience! This could range from a new ride or restaurant, to the newest interactive marketing campaign for a product, to a new app that is programmed to lead a user through a story, to a script, to a storyboard...BE CREATIVE!

GRADING

The singular project is to be worked on over the course of the whole semester, but there are two checkpoints at which the project will be evaluated (each holding an equal weight on the final grade) and factored into the pass/fail grade given for the class. The first checkpoint is at midsemester (week 7; October 10th), and the final turn in/presentation date is at the StuCo Showcase (week 13; November 21st). Failure to present anything at either of the checkpoints will result in a failure of the course.

GROUPS

This project can either be worked on individually or in a group (max 4 people per group). If working in a group, each group member should contribute his or her own part that relates to his/her major or expertise. We each have different methods of problem solving, so let those differences create an innovative solution!

DELIVERABLES

There should be one physical deliverable per student. This means if you are working in a group, there should be the same number of physical products as there are group members. They could all be related or put together, but each person must have something that they worked on.

DUE DATES

Project/Group Intent Form: Week 4; September 19th
Midsemester Presentation: Week 7; October 10th
Final Presentation @ StuCo Showcase: Week 13; November 21st

Project /Group Intent Form

98-206 experiencing entertainment
carnegie mellon university, student college
course instructor: matthew ho
thursdays: 6:30 pm - 7:20 pm
porter hall a21

PROJECT DESCRIPTION *(keep it short. give a general sense of what it might be. can be changed as the semester progresses)*

GROUPS MEMBER(S) *(list first and last name as well as each person's major)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

POSSIBLE DELIVERABLES *(if there are multiple group members, there should be a deliverable for each person)*

Proposed IAAPA Itinerary

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16

*Travel from Pittsburgh to Orlando
site visit to Universal Studios*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17

site visit to Islands of Adventure

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18

*IAAPA Conference: 6:15 AM - 10:10 AM Disney at Dawn Tour
behind the scenes tour of EPCOT park with industry professionals
site visit to epcot*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

IAAPA Conference: trade show floor; proposed companies to meet with/interview (list may change/grow in the future):

Jack Rouse Associates; *showwriting and design*

Studio 41b; *set design and architecture*

Theming and Animatronics Industries S.A.; *interior/exterior set design and robotics*

LF Creative Group; *art and technology studio*

Reynolds Advanced Materials; *materials specialists*

Brown Entertainment; *theatrical designers*

Gary Goddard Entertainment; *theme park designer*

International Special Attractions; *theatrical designers*

The Nassal Company; *set design and architecture*

Architectural Design Consultants, Inc.; *water park/resort design*

BRC Imagination Arts; *themed entertainment design*

Bruce D. Robinson Design Group; *themed entertainment design*

Dreampark International; *themed entertainment design/build*

Forrec Ltd.; *themed entertainment design*

IDEATTACK, INC.; *themed entertainment design*

IAAPA Conference: 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM Young Professionals Education Program and Networking Reception

Proposed IAAPA Itinerary

(continued)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20

*IAAPA Conference: trade show floor; proposed companies to meet with/interview, same as TUES.
site visit to the Magic Kingdom*

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21

*IAAPA Conference: trade show floor; proposed companies to meet with/interview, same as TUES.
IAAPA Conference: 3pm - 5pm Career Slam
IAAPA Conference: 7:30pm - 10:30pm Closing Ceremonies*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Travel from Orlando to Pittsburgh