

MFA COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

DESIGN ECOLOGIES, SYSTEMS THINKING AND CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Portland as learning laboratory. Photo by Matthew Miller '11

PHILOSOPHICAL DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE

This 60-credit, two-year program at the Pacific Northwest College of Art draws on the city of Portland and the Pacific Northwest as a learning lab for graduate students seeking expanded design practices to meaningfully address the emerging challenges of the 21st century.

This MFA is intended for students from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds, including art, design, engineering, science, psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, journalism and others. The program has been developed specifically for students who seek to develop a creative practice that addresses 'wicked problems' such as resource depletion, emerging technologies, climate change and global demographic shifts.

Students learn by doing, taking on real world design briefs that require immersion in field research, facilitation of design processes, hands-on making and in depth study of design thinking, history and theory, and extensive critical dialogue.

Upon successful completion of this degree, graduates will be prepared to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, careers in design, policy making and consulting, artistic practices, and other occupations that embrace collaborative creative problem solving, in addition to opportunities in higher education.



Dignity Village



Design/Build Iteration



Balloon mapping Northwest Portland

CURRICULUM OUTLINE

	Year One	Year Two
Fall Semester	Studio Labs 3-6 credits	Studio Labs 3-6 credits
	Graduate Seminar 3 credits	Graduate Seminar 3 credits
	Elective 0-3 credits	Elective 0-3 credits
	Collaborative Studies 3 credits	Collaborative Studies: Internship 0-3 credits
	Critical Studies: History and Theory 3 credits	Critical Studies: History and Theory 3 credits
	Practicum 3 credits	Practicum 3 credits
Spring Semester	Studio Labs 3-6 credits	Studio Labs 3-6 credits
	Graduate Seminar 3 credits	Graduate Seminar 3 credits
	Elective 0-3 credits	Elective 0-3 credits
	Collaborative Studies 3 credits	Collaborative Studies: Internship 0-3 credits
	Critical Studies: History and Theory 3 credits	Critical Studies: History and Theory 3 credits
	Practicum 3-6 credits	Practicum 3-6 credits

2011-2012 COURSES + LABS

- + **Problems and Stakeholders; Urban/Rural Design; Collaboration and Facilitation**, Peter Schoonmaker, Program Chair
- + **Systems Thinking**, Howard Silverman, Ecotrust
- + **Design Ecologies**, Kathryn Langstaff, Autopoiesis
- + **Interactive Design**, Mayank Sharma, Intel
- + **Sanitation, Hygiene, and Integrated Technologies**, Molly Danielsson and Mathew Lippincott, Cloacina Project
- + **Oregon Sustainability Center**, Nick Barham and Jamie Ostrov, Wieden + Kennedy
- + **Web Design Interaction**, Scott Sakamoto, Ronin Studios
- + **Green Infrastructure Design**, Mike Houck, Urban Green Spaces Institute
- + **Institutional Design**, Don Harker, Sustainable Northwest
- + **Food Systems Design**, Bonnie Bruce, Celilo Gardens
- + **Portland Home(less)**, Tom Webb, The Bear Deluxe Magazine
- + **Brainstorming and Facilitation; Business Planning for Creatives**, Aric Wood, Dachis Group
- + **Sousveillance**, Dawn Nafus, Intel
- + **Design Bootcamp**, Paul Platosh, Puddletown Press
- + **Game Design**, Wayne Bund

AREAS OF STUDY

Studio Labs (30 credits)

The MFA in Collaborative Design program emphasizes an approach to design rooted in expanding the number of human and non-human stakeholders that are considered in the design process, and using iterative stakeholder engagement to drive design decisions.

Students take 6-9 studio lab credits each semester, selecting from a range of design briefs, projects and workshops proposed and led by faculty mentors. Team-based projects may take the form of short workshops introducing new skills, media and technologies and longer studios that afford an iterative engagement with a particular community or set of concerns.

Under the guidance of project mentors, students will shape and undertake a program of project-based, hands-on studio work, academic/field research and one-on-one and collective critique and discussion of their work.

Recent design briefs include: “Complex Problem Solving”, “Interactive Design”, “Brainstorming and Facilitation”, “Design Ecologies”, “Game Design”, “Food Systems Design”, and “Business Planning for Creatives”.

Graduate Seminar (12 credits)

Graduate Seminars provide students with some of the skill sets unique to collaborative design, and allow students to share progress and challenges across multiple projects and concerns through class critique sessions.

In Seminar students engage in thorough, critical analysis of their work and their process, benefiting from in-depth exposure to the wide variety of disciplines represented in the program, and interacting with institutions in Portland. This course includes organized studio and design firm visits, one-on-one dialogue with prominent visiting artists and instructors, and participation in Portland’s many formal and informal knowledge networks.

Students will identify, attend and participate in regional events such as unconferences, policy meetings and workshops that are relevant to their research, documenting and discussing these engagements with their peers. Emphasis will be placed on investigating and cultivating the synergistic relationship between the creative process, stakeholder engagement and institutional experimentation. Critiques will also address the social and environmental implications of students’ work, and their ability to establish and maintain connections between people, places and practices.

Critical Studies (12 credits)

In Critical Studies students are introduced to historical and contemporary design ideas, themes and projects through critical engagement of texts, exhibitions, in-class discussion and papers.

Electives/Internships (6 Credits)

Elective courses allow students to hone techniques in making, expand upon their projects in Studio Practice or Practicum, further pursue courses in history, theory, and criticism, or benefit from internship opportunities. Students can choose from existing upper-level studio and academic courses at PNCA.

Internships. Students in Collaborative Design will have the opportunity to apply for specially designed partnerships with our regional partners during their time at PNCA. These professional experiences compliment the community-based and experimental approaches to collaborative design in the studio labs.

Study Abroad

PNCA's Career Advising Programs (CAPS) and our Global Studies Programs provide off-campus, experiential learning through internships, and study abroad opportunities. MFA students may complete three credits of this type of learning during a summer or winter term; approval from the mentor and Chair of Collaborative Design will be required.

Visiting Artists

The PNCA Visiting Artist Program is based in experiential learning, knowledge transfer and exchange. Artists, scholars, entrepreneurs and critics from around the globe are invited to PNCA to engage with the students and community, fostering an exchange of ideas and practices that can take the form of: lectures, conversations, panel discussions, investigations, interruptions and disruptions. The forms of exchange may sometimes be surprising but are always inspired by present-day concerns. This is an essential part of the MFA curriculum and all MFAs engage in studio discussions and critiques with visiting artists.

First Year Review

At the end of their first year, students will mount an exhibition to be reviewed by mentors, the MFA Director and a faculty panel. Transition to the second year-the thesis year-will depend upon the success of this review and the students' overall first year performance.

Capstone Project

The Thesis provides students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills towards a tangible outcome. Working in self-selected small groups students will pursue rigorous methods of applied research to identify a specific issue to address, become familiar with strategies to engage communities, and develop an understanding of the practical issues of sustainability, social action and technological change. Interacting with issues, stakeholders and communities of concern students will learn effective techniques to realize ideas and test theories.

MFA Capstone Project Proposal

Early in their second year, in the form of a Project Proposal, students are asked to articulate their ideas, explain the driving force(s) behind their work and explain what questions or problems they want their final project to address. In this proposal the Director and mentors of the program are looking for students to contextualize their work and relate it to contemporary design issues and thinking, past movements and influential artists/designers/scholars. The proposal is developed through a process of review and input and marks the beginning of the thesis process.

Final Review

By the end of the second year, students will have created both a well-developed body of studio work and a written thesis or capstone paper that documents the evolution and progress to the final project and expands on the levels of intention and influence behind this work. For their final review, students will mount a professional level exhibition and orally defend their studio and written work to a committee similar in structure as the first year review (see First Year Review above). Based on input from the committee, the Director will approve or deny the awarding of the degree.