



Collaborative Practicum in Sicily

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: SCLY 3205

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Course Description

This course is an exciting way for you to develop skills and confidence by working in multidisciplinary teams on a project based in Ortigia, Siracusa, Sicily.

Each summer, the design team will begin a new project, or advance the next phase of a project from a previous team. Regardless, you will work with local community partners and professional Italian designers as mentors to help shape a design response to an unmet need or opportunity in historic Ortigia and/or the city of Siracusa.

Your mentors will lead the design team in ways that are much like professional practice. They will help divide the work into manageable parts and smaller working groups, and you will collaboratively determine ambitious, yet achievable goals given the meeting schedule for the summer practicum.

You will be working alongside other design students (apparel design, architecture, graphic design, interior design, product design, and retail merchandising) to realize at least some aspects of the design proposal at full scale—as prototypes, partial models, or bespoke objects or events. In previous summers, for example, community projects included: designing and building a gateway structure at the edge of the sea, implementing way finding strategies, and screen printing apparel and accessories—all as part of neighborhood revitalization; and generating adaptive reuse strategies for an historic structure in the center of Ortigia, which included graphic identity and branding, prototyping furniture and build-outs, and hosting a communal event to share ideas.

Importantly, your time commitment for this course is determined as a work schedule might be in a firm. You are expected to attend and work/learn at the scheduled meeting times; there is

no expectation for practicum work outside of your scheduled hours. (The work/learn meeting schedule will, in total, meet workload expectations for a 3-credit course.)

Course Objectives

- Develop an ability to contribute to a multidisciplinary team project in a fast-paced, collaborative context
- Understand how individual design interests and skills align with other design fields or academic disciplines
- Extend traditional, disciplinary-based ways of working and communicating into meaningful work in a collaboration with others
- Develop understanding of practical design processes, including, for example, pre-design work and documentation for external audiences
- Develop career skills, such as understanding workplace organization, professional responsibilities, and communicating in a cross-cultural worksite
- Interact successfully in an intercultural professional work environment

Methodology

Studio Work: The collaborative practicum begins with an initial project brief determined by local program partners in Sicily, with input from the local and international practitioners who will lead various phases of the work. The project brief is necessarily open-ended, yet will identify a particular set of circumstances and general design goals for a specific site in and around historic Ortigia. The design team is accountable to its client and the local community. The instructor works side by side with the students to realize the team project throughout the summer, culminating in a community conversation at the end of the term.

Over the seven weeks, students will work as a multidisciplinary team with various design leads — practitioners as instructors and mentors — who bring design expertise and a range of approaches to the project brief. Together, students and the design lead will develop a more specific framing of the design issues, opportunities, and goals for each phase of the project. Because of the overarching responsibility to the client and community, the design lead will be responsible for making the final determination about these specific goals and project deliverables.

Contextual Work: As students are immersed in the collaborative practicum, they will also be asked to contextualize and reflect on their work experience. This work may include self-assessments, discussion of readings, and written reflections, as well as constructing a document that summarizes individual contributions to the collaborative practicum. The College of Design faculty instructor for the co-requisite course has responsibility for determining, guiding and evaluating these components of the course, as well as for defining and evaluating participation.

Experiential Learning & Field Visits

This course is largely hands on and on site, where the project location becomes the classroom environment. Students will also contextualize their work in Ortigia by learning more broadly about Sicily through field work and day-long excursions to three other regions of Sicily: Pantalica, Valley of the Temples, and Modica/Noto.

Course Prerequisites

Completing one foundational design course is required prior to participating in SCLY 3205, and students in the Collaborative Practicum must be enrolled in the co-requisite course, DES 3151: *Design Studio in Italy: Image-Making*.

Required Reading / Materials

Required readings (for example, on the local, historical context of the site or information about the community users) or optional readings (for example, as design ideas and possibilities emerge) will be determined by the instructor for each module and shared with each student digitally.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Collaborative participation and teamwork	40%
Individual design contribution and development (as demonstrated at public presentations, x3)	25%
Regular journal/sketchbook entries	10%
Final paper	25%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

Collaborative Participation & Teamwork

This course is fundamentally grounded in professional practice working as part of a team effort. This means, e.g.: actively participating every day and communicating with your team, demonstrating your willingness to both offer possibilities as well as respond to the work of others; and contributing to the team effort in a variety of ways and as needed. Contributing to the team may mean leading a specific task or small project, or following someone else's lead, depending on the circumstances of the work at any given time. More information may be distributed in writing at the start of the course.

Individual Design Contribution & Development

While you'll be working collaboratively, your individual contribution to the shared design process/project will be assessed at the conclusion of each mentoring session, when design work is presented more broadly to local guests and/or guest reviewers. More information may be distributed in writing at the start of the course.

Reflective Journal Entries

Students will be expected to regularly reflect on the collaborative practicum experience; i.e., to briefly identify, describe, and critique something (action or event) that went well, something that did not go well, and something that surprised you. Each journal entry must include an annotated drawing of the thing/event (identifying its Who, What, When, and Where) as well as an annotated drawing critiquing the thing/event (identifying How and Why something might be of value, especially relevant or changed going forward). More information may be distributed in writing at the start of the course.

Final Paper

At the end of the practicum, students will write a final paper that synthesizes the experience and/or offers a critique of the experience through the ideas from the readings. Your main idea (thesis) will be supported using specific examples, and the paper should include annotated images and/or photographs with captions to further illustrate the supporting ideas of the paper.

Course Content

Each unit is 2–3 weeks; a detailed schedule will be issued in Sicily.

Unit 1 - Project Introduction & Initial Grounding (3 weeks)

Practicum Introduction

- Introduction to practicum goals and to one another
- Orientation to studio environment and available materials and resources
- Safety review

Project Orientation

- Introduction to known project site, program, goals
- Introduction to local partners and community leaders

Project Proposals

- Documenting and analyzing known information
- Interrogating unknown information

- Speculating on new possibilities and developing more focused project proposals

Unit 2 - Schematic Design, Design Development (3 weeks)

Design Development Activities

- Division of labor in teams with project managers
- Daily critique of design development with professional mentor (visual documentation)

Unit 3 - 1:1 Making/Building, Testing/Prototyping (2 weeks)

Construction Activities

- Manifest project ideas at 1:1 scale (determined in consultation with mentor)(graphic, apparel, landscape, furniture, products/objects, etc.)
- Daily critique of constructions with professional mentor

Presentation Activities

- Organizing choreography of presentation materials and final presentation event
- Documentation (written/visual)

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or

misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).