



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Livable Cities: Design & Culture in Australia

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: XXXX nnnn

Number of Credits: n

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: n

Instructor: Chango Cummings

Course Description

In *Livable Cities: Design & Culture in Australia*, students will explore the concept of livability through a deep dive into Melbourne's urban and cultural landscapes, as well as the Indigenous practices that have sustained this land for millennia. With Melbourne consistently ranked as one of the most livable cities in the world, the course will challenge students to question what truly makes a city livable. Through fieldwork, site analysis, and immersive learning experiences at Framlingham Farm with Elder Uncle Lenny, a renowned Indigenous activist and leader, students will develop their own definitions of livability. They will explore how urban design and architecture can inform regenerative practices rooted in the land and its original custodians. Using their sketchbooks as their canvas, students will document their observations and reflections, culminating in a final thesis that addresses the central question: *"What makes a city livable, and how can we as architects build more regenerative and livable spaces?"*

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.

Assessment Details

Assignment 1: Memory Building

Objective:

Students will explore how memory, culture, and land intersect to create livable environments, focusing on Melbourne's urban spaces and the Indigenous knowledge of the Framlingham community. This assignment introduces students to conceptual frameworks rooted in sustainability and resilience, drawn from the lived experiences of the land's original inhabitants.

Deliverables:

- **2 Hand Models:** Create two physical models that represent the intersection of memory, culture, and place in Melbourne. These models should reflect the long-standing relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land, as well as how contemporary urban spaces carry traces of this connection.
- **2 Photo Montages:** Develop two photo montages layering images of pre-colonial landscapes with contemporary Melbourne, illustrating the ongoing relationship between land and community. Focus on sites where Indigenous culture and urban development coexist or conflict.
- **1 Drawing:** Produce a drawing that captures the essence of memory and connection to the land in a specific Melbourne site. This could be an abstract representation of how public spaces have evolved, inspired by Indigenous practices that have sustained the land over time.
- **Independent Research:** Conduct research on Indigenous sustainability practices and how these have historically contributed to livability. Present a one-page summary that connects this knowledge to the design of contemporary urban spaces.

Explorative Method:

Your sketchbook will be a critical tool in documenting your experiences, especially during our time at Framlingham Farm. Reflect on how the knowledge shared by Uncle Lenny and the landscape itself informs your understanding of Melbourne's livability and the importance of memory in design.

Assignment 2: Site Analysis Drawings & Presentation

Objective:

Students will conduct in-depth site analysis in Melbourne, examining urban spaces through the lens of livability and sustainability, while incorporating the Indigenous knowledge gained at Framlingham. This assignment emphasizes the importance of place, environmental stewardship, and cultural relevance in urban design.

Deliverables:

- **2 Section Drawings:** Create two section drawings that analyze spatial relationships in a key Melbourne site. Highlight how the site's design supports sustainability, community interaction, and ecological balance, drawing on lessons from Framlingham.
- **1 Psychographic Map:** Develop a map that reflects the social and cultural dynamics of a Melbourne site. This should capture how the site's design affects behavior and interactions, and how Indigenous knowledge can deepen the site's livability.
- **1 Site Photomontage:** Create a photomontage that showcases the coexistence of urban development and natural landscapes. Use this montage to emphasize the need for regenerative practices that sustain both people and the land.
- **Site Model:** Construct a physical model that communicates the spatial qualities of the site, focusing on how it reflects livability and sustainability. Consider how this space can be informed by the land stewardship practices shared by Uncle Lenny.
- **Precedent Research/Proposal:** Research case studies in Melbourne where urban design has incorporated Indigenous knowledge or sustainability practices. Propose a design intervention based on these precedents, exploring how cities can learn from Indigenous communities to improve livability.

Explorative Method:

Continue to use your sketchbook to document observations in Melbourne, with reflections from your time at Framlingham informing your site analysis. Pay close attention to how Indigenous culture and sustainability practices can shape the future of livable urban spaces.

Assignment 3: Design Intervention/Build Draft/Plan

Objective:

Students will propose a design intervention that addresses challenges and opportunities related to livability in Melbourne, with inspiration drawn from Indigenous practices and sustainability principles. The intervention should consider both urban and natural elements, fostering harmony between the two.

Deliverables:

- **Project Proposal Share:** Present a detailed proposal outlining your design intervention. Explain how your design enhances livability by drawing on Indigenous knowledge and sustainable design practices, particularly those learned from Framlingham and Melbourne's own history.
- **Drawings:** Develop detailed drawings of your proposed intervention, showing how the design contributes to the long-term livability and sustainability of the chosen site. Your drawings should communicate how the design interacts with both the urban environment and the natural landscape.
- **Study Model:** Build a study model of your intervention, emphasizing its spatial qualities and the ways it promotes a regenerative relationship between city and land.

Explorative Method:

As you develop your design intervention, reflect on your experiences in Melbourne and Framlingham. Your sketchbook should document the evolution of your ideas, with particular focus on how Indigenous principles of land stewardship and community well-being have influenced your approach.

Final Portfolio

Objective:

The final portfolio will compile all work from the course, providing a comprehensive reflection of the student's journey through the lens of Melbourne's livability, Indigenous knowledge, and regenerative design principles.

December 29, 2024–January 18, 2025

- **Assignment 1-3:** A complete collection of all assignments, including hand models, drawings, montages, and site analysis materials.
- **Documentation:** Visual documentation of all assignments, including photographs, sketches, and models from your time in Melbourne and Framlingham.
- **Research:** Include a summary of your research on Indigenous knowledge and its relevance to urban design, sustainability, and livability.
- **Thesis Paragraph:** Write a thesis paragraph that encapsulates your understanding of livability, rooted in your fieldwork and explorative learning. Articulate how Indigenous knowledge and regenerative design can inform the future of urban development in Melbourne and beyond.

Explorative Method:

Your sketchbook should serve as a living document that captures your reflections on livability, from Melbourne's vibrant urban environments to the deep, sustainable wisdom of Framlingham Farm. Use your experiences and research to ground your final thesis in both contemporary and ancestral knowledge.

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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](#).