

COURSE SYLLABUS

LA 202 – Parks and Open Space Design

Spring 2026 | MWF 1:00 – 4:50pm | AB 217

Instructors:

Craig Farnsworth, RLA, FASLA

AB 208, 765-285-6218

cdfarnsworth@bsu.edu

Office hours: by appointment

Jeremy Merrill, Ph.D.

AB 209, 765-722-0728

jmerrill3@bsu.edu

Office hours: MWF 10am-12pm

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

Design projects emphasizing park design, park and recreational master planning, and open-space design in rural, suburban, or urban settings. 4 credit hours.

INTRODUCTION

This studio course will focus on the conceptual design phase related to the design of parks and open space. The educational vehicle for teaching the course content is a “conversation” among the site, the program, the student designer, classmates, and the professors. At its core, conversation is about *What* you say and *How* you say it. As such, this class will ask you to learn and engage in the conventional and best practice ways of communicating designs using verbal and graphic means. This will allow you to clearly communicate your design intent in support of a responsive and, hopefully, creative design. You will adapt forms, solutions, and strategies from a cannon of precedents while exploring novel solutions to current design problems. You are asked to synthesize information you have gathered from other classes and apply personal preferences into your projects. You are encouraged to stretch yourself as you ultimately take ownership of your design experience in this course.

Conceptual Design is one of the most important phases of design. By now, you have heard that Design is not a linear process and that there is no one “right way” to design. Yet, in the professional world there is a traditional design process that we will use as a framework for this course. This will allow you to practice within this framework and better prepare you for professional practice.

Parks and Open Space can include a nebulous range of landscapes. As a landscape architect you have inherited a specific history of parks in the United States that informs the image of what a park can and should be. This idea often runs parallel to the cultural concept of the National and State Park System as well as historic precedents from other cultures and times. We will use this backdrop to explore a range of scales and contexts that fit under the umbrella of parks and open space.

COURSE RATIONALE

The beginning student in Landscape Architecture must develop an ability to apply a sound, defensible process to creatively and responsibly give form and function to spaces within/across the landscape. It is from these roots that professional ethics, practices, and maturity grow. This course will cultivate and enhance these foundational elements and engage students in problem-solving within the context of a *land/environmental ethic*. This course will also help students see and appreciate the relationship of Landscape Architecture to other disciplines and to issues common within the profession, as well as the increasingly critical role Landscape Architects play in solving environmental problems.

Specifically, this beginning-level course will address four main areas of discovery:

1. **Reading the Open Space Landscapes and their interrelated Systems**
2. **Exploring and applying historic and contemporary concepts of parks and open space systems.**
3. **Demonstrating the ability to design parks and open spaces of various scales and contexts.**
4. **Describing the role of individual parks in a local, state, or national parks and open space systems.**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate the application of the Design Process regarding form-making and place-making appropriate to the studio level.

COURSE SYLLABUS

LA 202 – Parks and Open Space Design

Spring 2026 | MWF 1:00 – 4:50pm | AB 217

2. Create plans and designs that demonstrate responses to current theory and best practices in landscape architecture.
3. Demonstrate the ability to inventory, analyze, and communicate the physical and cultural design determinants that inform the design process as they relate to a studio's theme.
4. Demonstrate global-, cultural-, and eco-literacy in design decisions.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of human and cultural, and environmental ethics in making designs.
6. Demonstrate the application and appropriate consideration of individual and societal Health, Safety, and Welfare in design work.
7. Demonstrate the ability to work effectively with others (studio partners, groups, other disciplines, or project stakeholders) in a dynamic, collaborative problem-solving environment.
8. Apply a broad range of design communication skills clearly and effectively in order to convey design ideas, intent, and solutions orally, graphically, and in writing.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of LA 202, the student will be able to:

- 1. Increase information gathering, analysis and critical thinking proficiency.**
Students will be able to identify the most appropriate resources that are pertinent to their design concern/intent and will have the ability to demonstrate their findings through pragmatic concept development processes, principles and design conclusions.
- 2. Develop systems-based approaches to design challenges through meaningful form making.**
Students will demonstrate the ability to construct, test and analyze layered responses to design challenges through the construction of detailed diagrams. Students will be able to identify the functional elements that are most germane to their design development and will develop multiple formal design iterations per project with a final edited solution composed of significant findings from previous testing.
- 3. Gain experience with project programming.**
Students will be able to articulate the role of programmatic diagramming related to spatial relationships in the landscape. Students will gain the ability to generate and test design solutions based on distinct programmatic opportunities/constraints.
- 4. Refine personal presentation and graphic communication styles/methods.**
Students will utilize and demonstrate their ability to objectively listen, analyze, and effectively respond to arguments and/or critiques regarding their communicated design intentions. Through studio pin-ups, desk critiques, and benchmark reviews, students will incorporate criticism and design responses to successfully communicate their design decisions in a final review presentation.

CONTENT AND FORMAT

Studio projects will range in scale from large-scale planning to detailed site-specific design in both collaborative and individual settings. Design process stages will include concept generation, refinement, documentation, and the exploration of form and detail.

The two sections of this course will be taught as a combined studio where both instructors interact with all students. The course will be managed using Canvas (<https://bsu.instructure.com/> – BSU username and password are required for access). Assignment statements, handouts, lectures, and other course materials will be made available there. Please check the Canvas course site regularly for announcements and new materials. The student's BSU email will be the primary method of non-classroom communication. Unless otherwise indicated by your instructors, electronic versions (PDF from high quality scans) of each assignment must be submitted to Canvas in order to be graded. Please make it a priority to immediately document your progress from beginning to end of each assignment. Students are expected to keep back-up copies of all course work in multiple locations (i.e., computer hard drive, external storage device, cloud storage) as both a fail-safe and a living archive. File sharing/exchanging *may* also happen using OneDrive, BSU's cloud storage solution that is freely available to students. Students are strongly encouraged to set up and use OneDrive regularly.

COURSE SYLLABUS

LA 202 – Parks and Open Space Design

Spring 2026 | MWF 1:00 – 4:50pm | AB 217

The course will involve a variety of activities, including but not limited to:

- 1) Lectures/seminars, discussions, and/or workshops
- 2) Readings and videos
- 3) Projects, exercises, and vignettes
- 4) CAP guest lecture series (dates to be announced)
- 5) Field trips

Studio assignments will vary in length and content in a way that promotes variety and interest. When possible and appropriate, studio assignments will reflect “real-world” contexts.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Students are responsible for reading (and responding to, when requested) all communications from the instructors. Project information and class-related announcements will be provided through Canvas. Since this class is being taught as two sections combined into one, please email both instructors and send the communication via their bsu.edu addresses; please do not use Canvas to send emails. Please do not expect an immediate response; Instructors typically respond to email within 24 hours. For questions requiring a long response or discussion, please make an appointment with the instructors to meet outside of studio hours.

ATTENDANCE AND EXPECTATIONS

Class participation is critical. You will be expected to verbally engage in each studio session, offering questions and critique when your colleagues and instructors make presentations. This topic is a new one to most in the class; the topic also is complex. Course learning outcomes should be read carefully and pursued with each project as they will comprise the framework for grading rubrics. Supplemental information will be provided through class discussions, lectures, and reading assignments as required by specific problems and student interests.

The studio environment should always reflect **professionalism**. Studio attendance is an expression of commitment and interest as well as professionalism. Students who miss a lecture or a demonstration will be responsible for the material covered in their absence. There will be no make-ups for missed lectures or demonstrations. Instructors expect regular and punctual **attendance** and project submissions; focused **participation** in all activities; **respect** for peers, instructors, and staff; and genuine **commitment** to learning and improvement.

Studio will always start at 1:00pm and end at 4:50pm MWF unless otherwise indicated by your instructors. Studio periods are extremely valuable to student success, so all students are expected to utilize that entire time to advance their work in the classroom or other approved location. Attendance will be taken daily. “Flex time” (i.e. “tardy”) is missing up to the first 20 minutes of class. A “Flex day” (i.e. “unexcused absence”) is missing more than 20 minutes (of the scheduled 3:50 time block) of class. Three “Flex times” equal one “Flex day.” Each student is allowed up to three Flex days without penalty. **The use of four Flex days will result in a final grade reduction of one-third of a letter grade (e.g., A to A-, C+ to C, etc.). Each two Flex days used thereafter will result in an additional one-third letter grade reduction.** Course attendance will be recorded in Canvas; students should refer to their Canvas attendance page if they have any questions about their current standing.

A note about “Flex days:” This is our term for “unexcused absence.” We understand that outside responsibilities or pressures may preclude you from attending class. Possible examples include everything from attending a cousin’s wedding to staying up late the night before to finish an assignment for another class. If you choose to use a Flex day or two or three, we won’t judge; that’s why they are Flex days. But use them wisely; the fourth Flex day will be penalized, even if it was for a seemingly good reason like “I didn’t feel well.” Of course, **any medical reason for missing class—supported by a note from a qualified health professional—will not count as a Flex day and will instead be considered an “excused absence.”** **University-sponsored activities, such as required field trips or athletic team obligations, will also be counted as “excused absences.” Excused absences will not impact the final course grade.** It is imperative that you communicate with us about attendance issues. In the event of an illness or personal problem resulting in a “Flex day” (unexcused absence), you should make every effort to notify us immediately, preferably before class.

COURSE SYLLABUS

LA 202 – Parks and Open Space Design

Spring 2026 | MWF 1:00 – 4:50pm | AB 217

Another note about “Flex days:” we feel strongly that class attendance is a good thing and we don’t want to set up a system whereby students get to the last week or two of class and decide to use their three Flex days just because they still have them. So, **students who have not used any Flex days during the entire semester will be eligible for Extra Credit that rounds their final grade up by up to 1%**; that doesn’t sound like much now but it could be significant at the end of the semester when you have a grade of 89.25 in the class.

Incomplete submissions of work will be evaluated on the face value of work completed unless you have made a prior arrangement with us. No incomplete (“I”) will be given as a course grade without sufficient and compelling cause (e.g., documented illness, family crisis, etc.) and [as described by the Registrar](#). In such a case, we must be fully informed and agree to the appropriateness of the “Incomplete.”

LATE WORK

Assigned work must be submitted ON TIME for full credit. Any assignment submitted after the announced/published due date and time will incur a penalty equal to 10% of the given assignment’s point value. For each day late thereafter, the assignment will incur an additional 10% penalty. Any assignment submission made after 11:59pm will be considered a day late. Any assignment submitted more than 72 hours late will be assigned a grade of zero (0). These “Late Work” policies also apply to cases where a Flex day has been used. *A project is not considered finished and ready to grade until it has been uploaded to the designated location on Canvas.*

EVALUATION

The final course grade will be based upon a cumulative evaluation of all course assignments. Assignments will be weighted according to their complexity and duration. Over the course of the semester, we estimate there will be four (4) primary projects with smaller supplemental assignments as necessary. Projects will be worth 95% of the final grade and overall student progress and participation worth 5%.

Student performance will be evaluated per (but not limited to) the following criteria (not in order of importance) throughout the semester: response to assignment requirements including verbal, written, and graphic communication, and application (depth, breadth, creativity) of design process and principles. *Student progress and participation* includes (but is not limited to) attendance, punctuality, productivity during class time, participation in course activities, regular response to instructor feedback, attitude, and professionalism.

Note: Studio courses are critical in preparing students for professional practice that emphasizes the protection of the public’s health, safety, and welfare. A grade less than C- reflects an unacceptable level of preparedness. If a student’s final LA 202 grade is below C-, the student must retake the course (per departmental Retention Standards).

GRADING SCALE

A =	94%- 100% (Excellent)	B- =	80%- 83%	D+ =	67%- 69%
A- =	90%- 93%	C+ =	77%- 79%	D =	64%- 66% (Poor)
B+ =	87%- 89%	C =	74%- 76% (Average)	D- =	60%- 63%
B =	84%- 86% (Good)	C- =	70%- 73%	F =	Below 60% (Fail)

TEXTS

Form and Fabric in Landscape Architecture (Catherine Dee) is a required textbook for this course. In addition, several texts will be available through the Architecture Library, either on physical reserve or as a reading list in Canvas. These texts will be very useful in supplementing the course activities and in completing assignments.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, involves violations of procedures which protect the integrity of the coursework completed by a student. Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the University community. Academic dishonesty by a student will not be tolerated, for it threatens the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign

COURSE SYLLABUS

LA 202 – Parks and Open Space Design

Spring 2026 | MWF 1:00 – 4:50pm | AB 217

evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity.

The student is encouraged to observe and discuss assignments with fellow students. However, all work submitted by a student for evaluation must be the result of that student's individual effort. Cheating shall not be tolerated in any academic assignment. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to complete any assignment (in part or entirely) can be beneficial, but it can also stifle your Authentic Intelligence and reduce your effectiveness in developing design skills. In addition, it can be a form of cheating; therefore, the student must obtain permission from instructors to use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT or others) for completing any assigned work. If it is appropriately determined by the instructors that the work submitted by the student is not their own (by way of plagiarism, unapproved use of AI tools, or other forms of cheating), then a grade of zero (0) will be assigned for that work. The instructors will adhere to university academic dishonesty policies and procedures. If you have any questions regarding academic integrity, please discuss them with your instructors. Academic Integrity policies: <https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/vice-provost/student-services/academic-integrity>

STUDENT LEAVES

Leaves and excuses by reason of bereavement/funerals, jury duty, and pregnancy shall comply with university policies. Arrangement for completion of assigned work shall be made with the instructors.

<https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/student-conduct/policiesandprocedures>

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

Ball State University is committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the resources on Ball State's [Freedom of Expression webpage](#), and [Ball State's Beneficence Pledge](#).

TITLE IX

Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit [bsu.edu/titleix](https://www.bsu.edu/titleix) or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at titleix@bsu.edu

As your instructors, we are mandatory reporters under the Title IX policy and required to report any information we receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

What happens after we report? The Title IX Coordinator will email the person who experienced sexual harassment (complainant) and invite them to schedule a meeting. If the complainant **chooses** to meet with the Title IX Coordinator,

- Title IX Coordinator will offer supportive measures (e.g., counseling, extensions on deadlines, course-related adjustments, changes to work or class schedules, and/or referrals to campus offices), review the policy, and discuss options to move forward.
- If a complaint is filed by the complainant or the University, an investigation will begin following University policy.

COURSE SYLLABUS

LA 202 – Parks and Open Space Design

Spring 2026 | MWF 1:00 – 4:50pm | AB 217

THE LEARNING CENTER

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit myballstate.bsu.edu and click on “Navigate” in the Academic Tools section, or just go directly to bsu.navigate.eab.com.

THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center is a community of trained Ball State students and faculty who value all types of writing. If you need help with writing, consider making an appointment to meet one-to-one with one of their enthusiastic and supportive staff. It is located in RB 291, 285-8387. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to bsu.edu/writingcenter. Online and in-person appointments are available.

THE COUNSELING CENTER

The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide. The Counseling Center sees students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. Students work with a therapist to create a plan that will connect them with resources that best fit their needs. The Center assists students with getting connected to therapy at the Center as well as connecting students to self-help resources, other on-campus resources, and community-based resources. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to the Counseling Center website, can be found [here](#).

BASIC NEEDS HUB

If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the [Basic Needs Hub](#). The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a [Basic Needs Assistance Form](#).

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

If you need technical assistance with Canvas or other IT/hardware/software issues, please contact the BSU Help Desk at 765-285-1517 or toll-free at 1-866-771-3276. You may also visit the link below, and follow the *Knowledge Base* link to find useful how-to videos and answers to many frequently asked questions. They are available for walk-in support at Tech Center, Bracken Library, room 101. (<https://bsu.service-now.com/helpdesk>)

OTHER IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- Ball State Beneficence Pledge: <https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/student-conduct/policiesandprocedures/beneficence>
- FERPA and privacy: [Ball State's FERPA and Privacy and Protection](#)
- Grade Appeal policy: <https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/vice-provost/student-services/grade-appeals>

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

If, for any reason, an emergency situation occurs during class and your instructors are unable to coordinate a response, PLEASE IMMEDIATELY ACTIVATE THE RED CALL BUTTON LOCATED ON THE WALL NEAR THE INSTRUCTOR'S DESK in the AB 217 studio (and other classrooms in which we may meet). Students should also call 9-1-1 or University Police at 765-285-1111.

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. The most current version of the syllabus will always be available on Canvas.