

pLay in the Community

Spring 2026

1. Course Basics

LA in the Community

LA 498 (CRN 48333) LA 598 (CRN 48334)

Thursdays; 6:30 PM – 9:10 PM

2. Instructor Information

Taylor Metz, PLA, ASLA

Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture

Department of Landscape Architecture

Ball State University, Muncie, IN

tdmetz@bsu.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Instructor Bio

Taylor Metz, a licensed landscape architect and Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at Ball State University, brings a strong blend of professional expertise and academic experience to his role. He holds a Master of Landscape Architecture from Ball State University and a degree in Communication Studies with an Art Studio minor from Gustavus Adolphus College.

Informed by his experience as a former elementary educator and his ongoing role as a co-founder of a PreK-12 nonprofit school, Metz's academic and research focus centers on educational landscapes, schoolyard design, design pedagogy, and landscape architecture advocacy. He is deeply committed to advancing the discipline through innovative design thinking approaches and preparing the next generation of landscape architects. His work has been recognized with an ASLA Honor Award for his master's thesis, which explored redesigning schoolyards to promote nature play and standards-based education.

As an active member of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Metz continues to contribute to the profession through research, teaching, and advocacy for creating meaningful, sustainable environments.

3. Course Information

Course Description

Emphasizing empathy and creativity, LA in the Community immerses students in community-centered landscape architectural design. The course encourages collaboration with community stakeholders to address real-world design challenges and craft empathy-driven solutions. Through professional communication and compelling graphics, the course aims to inspire community action and positive transformation by instilling a vision of a socially-, environmentally-, and culturally-sensitive future. (3 credit hours)

Prerequisites

None

Course Rationale and Objectives

Landscape architecture is a powerful tool for shaping the environments in which people live, learn, work, play, and gather. All people and communities (urban, rural, and everywhere in between) deserve thoughtful, well-considered design that responds to their needs while addressing broader environmental, social, and cultural challenges. Through intelligent and creative problem-solving, landscape architecture offers meaningful ways to engage these challenges and to envision more resilient, equitable, and inspiring places.

This course emphasizes a **community-centered design approach**, equipping students with the skills to engage meaningfully with diverse communities and to develop a nuanced understanding of their unique stories, needs, and aspirations. Through an emphasis on empathy-driven design, stakeholder collaboration, and real-world design opportunities, students develop not only as skilled designers but also as responsible professionals committed to ethical practice. These ethical dimensions include social equity, environmental sustainability, and cultural sensitivity within landscape architecture. This holistic approach prepares students to address the complexities of professional practice while fostering the ability to inspire community action and positive transformation through thoughtful, inclusive design.

Upon successful completion of this course, the learner will be able to:

- *Produce* landscape architectural work informed by community engagement and reflective of stakeholder narratives and values.
- *Document* and *integrate* stakeholder input into design proposals, demonstrating responsiveness to feedback and real-world constraints.
- *Present* design work that reflects creative problem solving and thoughtful responses to complex environmental and social challenges.
- *Demonstrate* proficiency in graphic visualization techniques across multiple media to clearly communicate design intent.
- *Create* visual materials that foster understanding, dialogue, and participation among diverse audiences.

- *Apply* principles of equity, sustainability, and cultural awareness within the design process and final outcomes.
- *Present* ideas clearly and confidently through discussions, critiques, and presentations with peers, professionals, and community stakeholders.
- *Demonstrate* the ability to support or lead community-based activities that contribute meaningfully to shared design visions.

Course Modality/Structure

This course is delivered primarily through in-person instruction, supported by online resources and materials. Class meets once per week, on **Thursdays from 6:30–9:10 p.m.**, in **AB 225 and Collaborative 02**. Scheduled class meetings consist of lectures, presentations, discussions, and in-class activities designed to meet the learning objectives of this course.

Students should be prepared to actively engage during class sessions, take notes, and listen carefully for announcements related to schedules, expectations, and course logistics.

Online Components and CANVAS Use

While the course is not fully online or hybrid, CANVAS is used extensively to support instruction. **Course content is organized into modules within CANVAS** and includes readings, videos, resources, and assignment information that reinforce and extend material presented during in-person course meeting times.

Students are expected to log into CANVAS multiple times per week and to check their official Ball State University email daily for course announcements and updates.

Course Organization and Content Progression

The semester will progress through a series of learner-led projects, each spanning either the full length of the semester or variable durations within it. Projects will be diverse in scale and scope, addressing a range of contexts and design challenges.

While specific deliverables will vary, students should expect the landscape architectural design process to be consistently employed. Graphic communication and representation will be integral at every phase of work, alongside verbal communication, including in-class discussions and community-facing presentations when applicable.

The accompanying semester schedule provides a general framework outlining the anticipated topics, concepts, assignment types, public meetings, and deadlines. This schedule is intended as a guide and may be adjusted as the semester progresses.

Time Expectations and Student Responsibility

Students should expect to engage with this course on a weekly basis, both during scheduled class meetings and outside of class. Learning activities, readings, and preparation completed outside of class are essential for full participation in lectures and discussions. As a general guideline in the

university setting, students should expect to spend approximately 2–3 hours per credit hour per week on coursework outside of class, including projects and group work.

Students are responsible for completing all required coursework by the posted due dates and for managing their time accordingly. If challenges arise that impact a student's ability to meet course expectations, they are encouraged to contact the instructor as early as possible.

4. Course Materials

There is NO assigned/required course text. Instead, various selections from numerous sources will be compiled in PDF, web, and/or video format as weekly reading/viewing. These resources will be located on CANVAS or OneDrive.

5. Course Assignments and Assessments

Assignment and assessment details, including instructions, relevant readings, due dates, and grading criteria/rubrics (if applicable) will be posted and updated on CANVAS. Please check CANVAS regularly to stay informed and on track.

Course Assignments

Any/all assignments/deliverables will be submitted per the specified requirements of your instructor. Typically, this will be a digital upload/submission via CANVAS (jpeg, pdf, doc, ppt, or as specified). However, students will likely be required to print and submit hardcopies as well.

In order for completed student work to be evaluated and receive a grade, you are expected to submit your work according to your instructor's submittal requirements and assignment deadlines. Assignment tasks, submittal instructions, requirements, and deadlines, etc. will be listed in the assignment descriptions in CANVAS and/or via BSU email.

Assignments/deliverables not turned in will automatically receive a grade of zero (0).

360-Reviews

A 360-degree review is a performance evaluation process that gathers feedback from multiple perspectives. In this course, 360-degree reviews may include input from the instructor, classmates, and (when applicable) community partners or external stakeholders. This approach provides a more comprehensive view of a student's performance than feedback from a single source.

Feedback is collected anonymously to encourage honest and constructive responses. The goal is to offer insights into individual strengths, areas for growth, and opportunities for improvement within a collaborative and professional context.

In professional practice, 360-degree reviews are commonly used to support personal and professional development, helping individuals better understand their impact on others and improve their effectiveness in team-based and community-engaged environments.

Evaluation and Grading

Your performance in the course will be evaluated in the following manner. The specific type, quantity, and value of individual assessment methods will be determined as the semester progresses.

Learner-Led Units/Projects + 360 Reviews (*Growth Mindset, Design Quality, Communication [verbal, written, graphic] Skills, Innovation, Empathy, Adaptability, Flexibility, Professionalism, Positive Attitude, Process-Driven, Rigor, Graphics, Participation, Collaboration, Energy, Commitment, Willingness to Learn, Willingness to Fail, Engagement, Heroic Behavior, Leadership, and more*)

Total = 100%

Grading Breakdown

Letter Grade	Range
A	100% - 94%
A-	<94% - 90%
B+	<90% - 87%
B	<87% - 84%
B-	<84% - 80%
C+	<80% - 77%
C	<77% - 74%
C-	<74% - 70%
D+	<70% - 67%
D	<67% - 64%
D-	<64% - 60%
F	<60% - 0%

6. Required University Statements and Policies

University Statement

We are 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.

Disability Statement

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.

Attendance

Attendance is **expected** during all scheduled class days and hours, unless otherwise stated by the instructor. Regular attendance is vital to student success and contributes to a dynamic, engaged, and participatory learning environment for the entire class.

Attendance will be taken throughout the semester. Because important course content – including discussions, vital group work, and occasional extra-credit opportunities – occurs during class time, absences will negatively impact a student's final course grade.

If unavoidable circumstances (e.g., family emergency, bereavement, or a required field trip for another course) will result in an absence or late work, students must communicate with the instructor in advance whenever possible. The expectation is clear: communicate early and proactively, rather than after an issue has occurred.

Research consistently demonstrates a strong link between class attendance and student success. See [this study](#) on the link between attendance and student success.

Course attendance policies are consistent with [University policies regarding student absences](#). Absences will be excused for the following reasons: funeral and bereavement leave; jury duty; late course addition; military service; observance of religious holidays; pregnancy leave; participation in University- or department-approved athletic activities; and University advisories.

Students may encounter other circumstances (e.g., car accidents or job interviews) that result in absences. Only the course faculty member may excuse these absences, and any adjustments are made at the discretion of the instructor. When possible and supported by appropriate documentation, faculty will consider field-specific best practices as well as student well-being when making determinations.

In general, students are expected to notify all instructors once an absence is anticipated or as soon as possible after an unexpected absence occurs (e.g., illness or injury). Students may be required to provide documentation, with confidential information redacted when appropriate, if requested.

7. Recommended Statements, Policies, and Information

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

Your instructor is a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

What happens after your instructor makes a 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.

University Grade Appeal Policy

If you believe you received a final course grade that does not reflect your performance due to fairness or a procedural issue, you have the right to file an appeal within 5 school days after final grades are posted by the Office of the Registrar. Review the [University Grade Appeal Policy and Process](#).

Student Academic Ethics Policy

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign 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. Visit the VPAA's [academic integrity website](#) (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#).

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with your instructor if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you.

Generative AI Statement

Some Generative AI Use

There may be conditions or aspects of projects where you may use generative AI applications for some work submitted in this course. You will be informed as to when, where, and how these tools are permitted to be used, along with guidance for attribution. Any use outside of this permission constitutes a violation of Ball State University's [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#).

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.

Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center.

Supplemental Instruction is available in select courses. If you have an SI leader for your course, that person will provide students with information the first week of school regarding weekly study sessions. For more information about Learning Center programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006. Follow us on Instagram: [BallStateLC](#).

The Writing Center

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing.

The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students composing essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to bsu.edu/writingcenter. Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

The 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](#).

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.

At the Ball State Counseling Center, we see students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. At your first appointment, you will work with a therapist to create a plan that will connect you with resources that best fit your needs. We assist students with getting connected to therapy at our 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 our website, can be found [here](#).

The Speaking Center

The [Speaking Center](#) is a free resource available to all members of the BSU community wanting to improve their public speaking abilities. We offer personalized coaching designed to help you become a more confident and effective speaker. Our trained coaches provide constructive feedback and support throughout the entire speech preparation process, whether you are in the early stages of brainstorming ideas and organizing your thoughts, or you need to practice your delivery and refine your message.

The Center is in the David Letterman Communication and Media Building, room 302. To schedule an appointment, please access us through your Navigate app or use this [direct link](#) to sign up for a time. Appointments are available both in person and on Zoom. Appointments are available in person, on Zoom, and in virtual reality (VR) for those interested in practicing in an immersive speaking environment.

CANVAS Accessibility

CANVAS provides a user experience that is easy, simple, and intuitive. Special attention has been paid to making CANVAS screen-readable. The Rich Content Editor encourages users to create accessible content pages (i.e. text formatting is accomplished using styles). CANVAS is designed to allow limited customization of colors and schemes to be accessible for all users. The National Federation of the Blind granted CANVAS the Gold Level Web Certification in 2010. Find more information by visiting the [CANVAS Voluntary Product Accessibility Template \(VPAT\)](#).

FERPA and Privacy

As a student, your educational records are considered confidential. Under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), your records are confidential and protected. Under most circumstances, your records will not be released without your written and signed consent. However, some directory information may be released to third parties without your prior consent unless a written request to restrict this is on file. You can learn more about student rights to privacy by reading [Ball State's FERPA and Privacy and Protection](#).

Video Conferencing Recording

In this class, software may be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions may be recorded. These recordings typically will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Students who prefer to listen only must disable their audio capability and visual camera. If you have concerns, please discuss these options with me.

Plagiarism Detection

The campus subscribes to Turnitin, a plagiarism prevention service, through CANVAS. You may need to submit written assignments to Turnitin. Student work will be used for plagiarism detection

and for no other purpose. The student may indicate in writing to the instructor that he/she refuses to participate in the plagiarism detection process, in which case the instructor can use other electronic means to verify the originality of their work.

8. Course-Specific Expectations and Policies

Course Content and Permissions Policy

- Students may **not** reproduce, distribute, share, or publicly post any course materials without prior written permission from the instructor.
- Students may not record (including photography, video, or audio) instructor lectures or any other instructional content without prior written permission from the instructor.

Course Etiquette and Professionalism Policy

- Students are responsible for reading – and responding when requested to - all course communications from the instructor, including messages sent via CANVAS and Ball State University email.
- Outside of class, CANVAS Announcements will serve as the primary and “official” method of course communication. Students are responsible for ensuring that their CANVAS notification settings are turned on.
- The best way to contact the instructor is through CANVAS or BSU email. All email correspondence should include “LA 498 or LA 598” in the subject line. Students should not expect an immediate response; messages will typically be answered within 24 hours, during standard business hours (9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday).

Course Participation Expectations

- This course is designed with weekly activities, discussion, and other forms of regular collaboration and communication.
- It is recommended that you log into your CANVAS course 3 to 4 times a week and check your official Ball State email account daily to view announcements and prepare for class.
- Complete all assignments, quizzes, tests, and any other activities by the stated due dates.

Graduate Student Expectations

In addition to participating in collective group work and learner-led, student-initiated projects, graduate students may be invited to take on expanded roles and responsibilities that reflect the professional and academic standards of graduate-level study, providing meaningful opportunities for leadership, authorship, and advanced professional development. Graduate students may be asked to:

- lead or coordinate project components; organize workflows; conduct precedent or contextual research; and design, execute, or manage elements that support the overall direction and quality of the work.
- develop supporting research components that situate the class's work within a broader disciplinary, professional, or scholarly context. This may include contributing to the preparation of materials that position student work for external dissemination or recognition, such as award submissions to organizations including ASLA, INASLA, or other relevant entities.
- create or refine graphics, templates, narratives, and documentation used to communicate project outcomes to awards juries, community partners, or the general public.

Feedback Policy

- I will respond to email from your official Ball State email address within 24 hours during week days (Monday-Friday) and within 48 hours on the weekend.
- I will read every discussion post but I will not always personally comment on posts.
- I will grade your assignments and exams no later than within 2 weeks of submission.
- Contact me directly if you have questions or concerns about your performance in class.

Late Assignment Policy

- All assigned work must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Late submissions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Due to the pace and structure of the course, students are strongly encouraged to communicate early with the instructor if they anticipate submitting work late. Many course projects involve collaboration, peer feedback, and instructor review, making timely submission essential to both individual progress and the collective learning experience.
- **Students are expected to manage their time professionally and make every effort to complete assignments by the stated deadlines.**
- Students are responsible for anticipating and managing potential technical or internet connectivity issues. Technical difficulties do not excuse late submissions. Students are strongly encouraged to submit work early and to maintain a backup plan (e.g., access to an alternate computer or location such as a library).

Assignment Submission Policy

- All assignments must be submitted using the **file type and file-naming convention** specified in the assignment description, unless otherwise indicated.
- Assignments, unless otherwise indicated, should be submitted using the assignment link in the module in CANVAS.

Grading Policy

- It is my policy that appropriate evaluation of your academic performance is an integral part of your learning experience.
- In the absence of mistakes, fraud, bad faith or incompetence, I will be the key decision-maker on the assignment of grades.

Assignment Integrity Policy

- Students are encouraged to discuss assignments and course concepts with classmates. However, all work submitted for evaluation must represent the student's own individual effort, unless the assignment is explicitly identified as a group or collaborative project.
- Academic dishonesty – including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, or any other form of cheating – will not be tolerated. If it is determined that submitted work is not the student's own, a grade of zero (0) will be assigned for that assignment.
- All incidents of academic dishonesty will be addressed in accordance with Ball State University's academic integrity policies and procedures.

Incomplete (I) Grade Policy

- No incomplete ("I") will be given as a final course grade without sufficient and compelling cause (e.g., documented illness, family crisis, etc.). In such a case, the instructor(s) must be fully informed and agree to the appropriateness and expectations of the "Incomplete."

Engagement Expectations

Rules often lead to rebellion; norms establish culture. On the first day of class, students will collaboratively establish a set of classroom norms that define the culture of the learning environment in this lecture course. These norms will operate under the guiding principle of **professionalism**.

Students are expected to engage in all aspects of the course – including class sessions, discussions, activities, and communications – in a professional, respectful, and courteous manner.

To support a respectful and engaging academic community that encourages the free exchange of ideas and civil discourse, we will follow these ground rules:

- Respect different perspectives. Share your ideas and let others share theirs.
- Challenge ideas, not people. Disagree respectfully. No personal attacks or put-downs. Focus on exploring ideas critically and constructively.
- Listen to understand. Stay curious, ask questions to understand, and give others space to speak.
- Assume good intentions. Approach discussions with curiosity and compassion.

- Keep it private. What is shared in class stays in class. Do not share others' words or work without permission.
- Be respectful. Avoid hurtful language, stereotypes, or content that may demean others. Keep feedback constructive.

9. Course Schedule

To support a learning experience that is responsive to the needs, interests, and pace of our class community, the course schedule may shift over the semester. The most current version of the schedule will always be available on CANVAS. I encourage you to check CANVAS regularly for updates and contact me if you have any questions.

10. Subject to Change Statement

This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.