LARCH 5620: Parks: Inception, Evolution, and Cultural Revelation

Instructor name: Deborah Georg
Year and term: AU 14
Meeting time: T 2:00-4:30 W 10:30-12:30
Meeting location: KN 294

COURSE INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION
Globally, Parks have an enduring history and evolution, from forbidden reserves to places of joy, sanctuary, and solace. We embed the concept of the “park” in our cultural psyche, a multi-faceted concept with diverse and dynamic manifestations. This course seeks to explore the development, cultural contributions and evolution of “park.” Scope and Size have all evolved from a sacred grove to Theme Park Playgrounds to entire ecosystems, reefs and landmarks throughout the world.

We will explore the concepts and the evolving iterations of “PARK” as it has developed through various cultures and landscapes...from forested animal preserves to jungle ball courts and Olympian stadia and grounds. As part of the investigation, we look at how societal symbols come into play, reflecting and expressing the spiritual and philosophic values of each culture and place as it shapes the meaning of “PARK”. These works tell of a way of life and the values of the times, made visible by the landscapes created for private and public purposes.

Since it is impossible to interpret culture without understanding language, the language we will use is a language of the landscape particularly as applied to Parks: form, pattern, space and scale. The forms used, patterns repeated and expression of space in domestic, governmental and spiritual implications reveal much about a culture and much about how we use the landscape to inform, “better” and nurture ourselves and others. Scale of place connects us to size of the place, in space and time, as well as in importance to spirituality and culture.

GOALS
Though the topic is focused, we will not be able to examine all facets in a “semester” framework. The study will be divided into three general categories to organize the investigation:
- CONCEPTS of PARK, From Royal Preserve to Sacred Groves and Spirit Lands.
- HISTORIC ITERATIONS of PARK, from the public and private to special use lands adapted to “park” functions.
- EVOLUTIONS of PARK and purpose, from Preservation to Entertainment, closing the Circle …

FORMAT
The course uses required readings posted on Carmen, lectures, videos, website references, quizzes, final exam and outside class work to guide the student’s exploration of the subject matter. The lectures are loosely tied to required readings and will typically be illustrated by slides, website images and other audio and visual media. The readings and references cited for each lecture should be completed prior to the recitation to enable class discussion of underlying connections and significance. Recitation sessions will further increase the student’s comprehension of the significant points, support student research activities and develop student’s ability to critically examine and analyze the components of Park formation. The course uses Carmen and email to distribute course information, study questions, assignments and course modifications.