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The Discursive Construction Of Learning Opportunities

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How to Ethnographically Research an Unknown Discipline of Study: The Study of a 24/7 Access Architecture Design Studio

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BACKGROUND

Researchers entering new learning environments or disciplines, ones outside their own disciplines, are often required to follow the roots and routes of observed processes to gain an emic (insider) understanding of the work of local actors, artifacts, and language-in-use. Through exploration of everyday patterns of participants, ethnographers begin to uncover what actors are required to know, understand, and construct to engage socially, professionally, and academically (Heath, 1982). For this poster, I present subset of analyses used in gaining an emic understanding of critique practices and processes in a 24/7 access third year undergraduate architecture studio at public regional university site in California.

DEFINITIONS OF DESIGN STUDIO AND CRITIQUE

Design Studio

- Varnelis (2007) identified an architect's design studio as comparable to a scientist's laboratory, as both are sites where work is conducted and where students, professors/instructors, and visitors interact with each other in many forms of disciplinary and non-disciplinary work. (e.g., Broadfoot & Bennett, 2003; Dutton, 1987; Ledewitz, 1985; Salama, 1995)
- In this studio, Professor F defines Design Studio as "dynamic aspects of hybrid teaching mode nature, high level of interactivity of student to instructor and the exchange and sharing of knowledge all very important and different then other teaching models."*

Critique

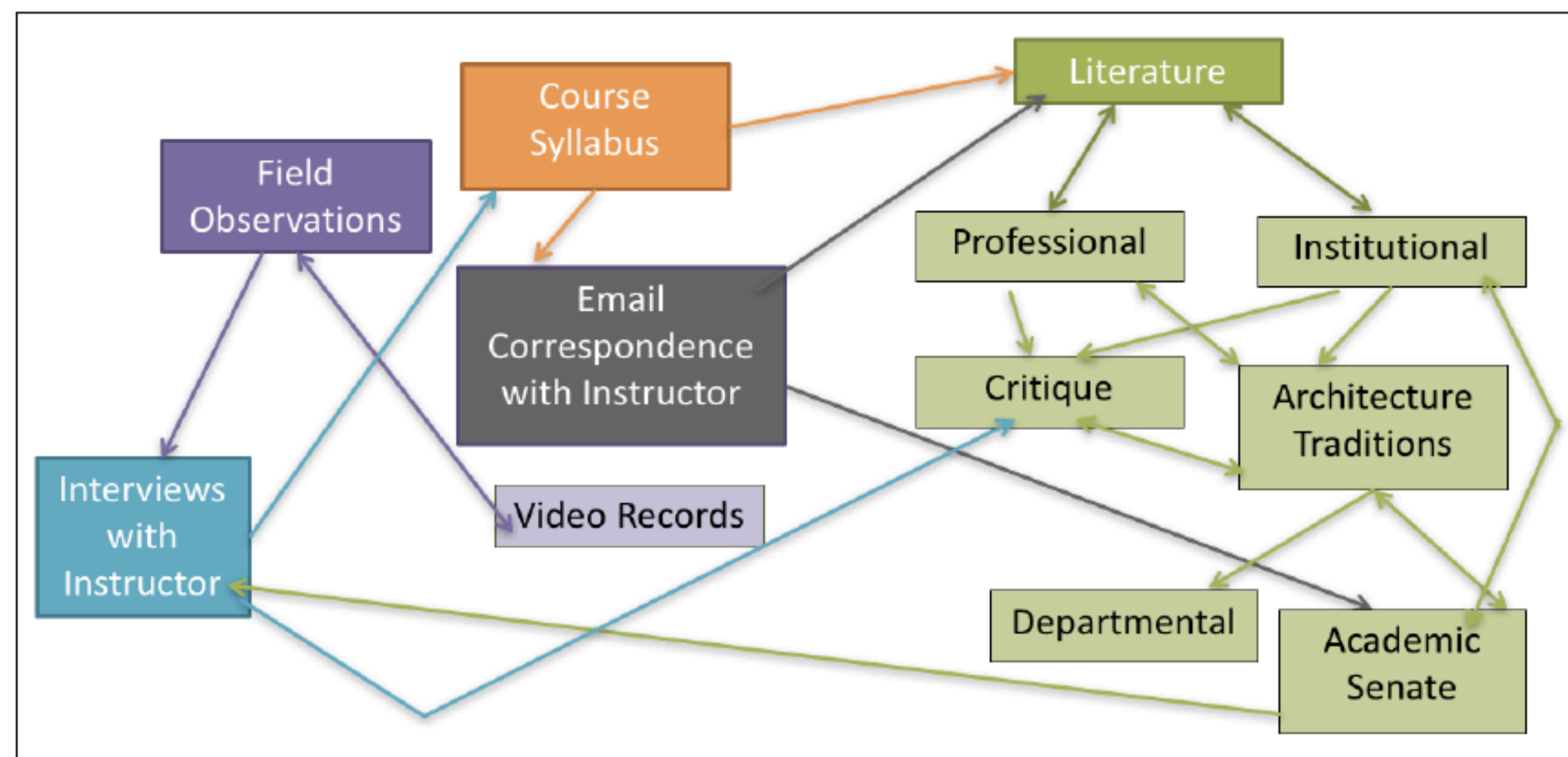
- Literature review critique illuminated the many inconsistencies in definitions. Thus, the process in determining what critique is and how it is accomplished is challenging and largely defined at the local context - institution/university, major, and instructor of record. (e.g., Anthony, 1987; Attoe, 1976; Lifchez, 1976; Melles, 2008; Salama, 1995; Salama & El-Attar, 2010; Schön, 1988; Wernik, 1985)
- In this studio, Professor F defines Critique as "the balance of instructor's dialogue verses the outside of classroom input for students' moving forward with their work."*

METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

- The present study was an interactional ethnographic perspective (Green, Dixon & Zaharlick, 2003), which framed the need to trace over time the patterns, processes, and practices of a Architecture Studio as a developing cultural group.
- As an outsider entering a new disciplinary study, I developed a multilayered approach to trace over time how and in what ways processes and practices were proposed, established and (re)formulated and related meanings, interactions, history/ies, and resources were jointly constructed before, during, and after the course.
- Discourse-in-use (Bloome & Clark, 2006) provided ways of tracing teaching and classroom (studio) interactions, including what was being proposed, recognized, acknowledged, and socially significant (Bloome & Egan Robertson, 1993) to/by actors in this particular design studio setting, the profession, the department, and the institution.

LOGIC-IN-USE

- Green, Skukauskaite, and Baker (2012) argue the logic-in-use is informed through "principled decisions about records to collect and pathways to follow" (p. 310) with the goal of understanding how everyday life is constructed.
- Specifically, this poster is guided by Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker's ***principle one: ethnography as a non-linear system:***
 - Rich points*, or unexpected encounters (norms and expectations) that are non-normal to the researcher, requires the researcher to modify her or his point of view, to trace pathways (past and future) through a series of iterative and recursive processes, and to bring together cultural processes and practices to create explanations or accounts of the phenomenon under study. Rich points are used to anchor contrastive analyses of the discourse and the (inter)actions across events and activities.



CONCLUSION

Findings and Implications from the Researcher's Perspective

- My background was not in architecture, and I was unaccustomed to the disciplinary and professional demands of this discipline, including the curricular opportunities for learning.
- My outsider status provided another lens for viewing the work of an architect and what Professor F was making present to students about being an architect through the curriculum he constructed.
- Entrance into this new site and discipline requires a multi-layered approach, including analyses of artifacts, resources, ethnographic interview-conversations, and participant observations to gain an emic (insider) understanding of the processes and practices such as critique.
- Access is negotiated via the over-time relationship built with the instructor. Establishing an initial relationship with Professor F and soliciting the instructor's interest and participation in the research process allowed for greater level of emic understanding.
- The instructor's guidance as a partner and mentor throughout this process, with his disciplinary/professional knowledge, was imperative to my ability to conduct analyses and understand the work accomplished within this architectural design studio.

Actors:

Instructor, Students, Outside Critics, Events, etc.

Components:

Each day is built upon the previous day's experiences and provides additional opportunities to view interactions taking place between different actors (people, locations, models, etc.) in the course.

Provides both disciplinary and professional critique experiences and does not artificially separate knowledge and application (Salama, 1995) and interactions between instructor and student provide instances for the construction of mutual knowledge (Yanar, 2007).

Structured for students to move beyond knowing about being an architect to learning to be an architect and develops 21st century learners for cross-disciplinary experiences and expertise, learning environments, future employment of students, and the new language of learning.

Students are exposed to the disciplinary and professional requirements through interactions with disciplinary content and experiences.

Can often contain curriculum and practices that are not prescriptive in nature, but fluid (e.g., varying by location, course, and instructor).

Findings and Implications from the Professor F

- The researcher's entrance into my classroom as an outsider, with a strong theoretical-methodological approach, allowed the researcher to provide a unique perspective
- Importance of the researcher's framing and course resources, objects, and course design elements as *actors*. *Actors* are a part of every social situation and related activities in this design studio.
- Thus, unpacking the component pieces of the design studio and making what is typically an invisible pedagogical structure and goals of learning, plus other interdisciplinary activities more visible are required in making the content accessible to the non disciplinary reader
- The importance of the instructor serving as a cultural guide and providing insights about the course of study.

th(is) analyses make transparent complex and multi-layered work in defining an architectural design studio and framing the course of study for students in creating norms and expectations, roles and relationships and rights and obligations for being a member in this course, the department, discipline, and profession.

FUTURE WORK

- More discussion about what exactly occurs during a jury or critique including: how a critique is accomplished via resources (models, presentations, etc.) and through the discourse (verbal and non-verbal) that is interactionally accomplished.
- Investigate how the processes and practices are enacted within the design studio by analyzing multiple layers of course records from course artifacts, to video records, to literature connected to other types of design studios, given there is no "one" curriculum or definition of an architectural design studio.
- What opportunities can be made available through the inter-relationships of the varying actors, through events, and across time(s).
- A study on nomenclature and related definitions in this learning environment
- Future studies on the implications for how a researcher negotiates entry into a discipline that is unfamiliar.

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Design Studio and Critique – Context of the Site



Example of the design studio as a site of work in this architectural design studio course.



Critique as a process and practice as represented through review sessions in this architectural design studio course.

Logic-In-Use - Examples of Analyses and Further Work

Record 1 – Interview-Conversations with Instructor

- The second interview-conversation with Professor F, Table 1, lines 01712-01736, Professor F referenced students' difficulties in accepting and building on critique. Professor F made visible forty-three ways that he and his colleague developed to have students participate in and accept critique.
- As an outsider, many levels were required to understand the concept of critique and how it talked into being in this course. Thus, Professor F's discourse led me to the syllabus to further my understanding of concept of critique.

Table 1. *Representation of portion of second interview-conversation with Professor F*

Line #	Professor	Researcher	Analysis
01713	(overlapping)		
01714	And a question a day it's based on the syllabus		
01715	A colleague of		
01716	Mine		Referencing his development of rules of accepting criticism
01717	And I		
01718	Many years ago we developed these 44 rules of how to accept criticism-		
01719		(overlapping)	
01720		Unhm-	
01721	(overlapping)		
01722	Learning from design criticism and then there's another		
01723	So they take one of those and		
01724	They pose a question and		
01725	They make a collage of it		
01726	And it's just one of the things that I noticed over the years		
01727	Students are not very good at		Proposing that students have difficulties in filtering critique
01728	At		
01729	What I call "filtering feedback that they get"		

Record 2 – Course Syllabus from Fall 2011

As shown in Table 2, line numbers marked individual lines of syllabus content. Line by line analysis of Professor F's discourse as inscribed in the syllabus provided a grounded account of what Professor F referenced and proposed regarding critique in this particular architecture design studio. This analysis, therefore, makes visible what Professor F told students that they needed to know and do as a part of this course.

Record 3 – Literature

Continuous references via interview-conversations made by the Professor F regarding the third-year architecture design studio course to institutional, departmental, and professional histories throughout my participant observations required the exploration of the interrelated histories (*Figures 1 and 2*) in order to contextualize the course under study.

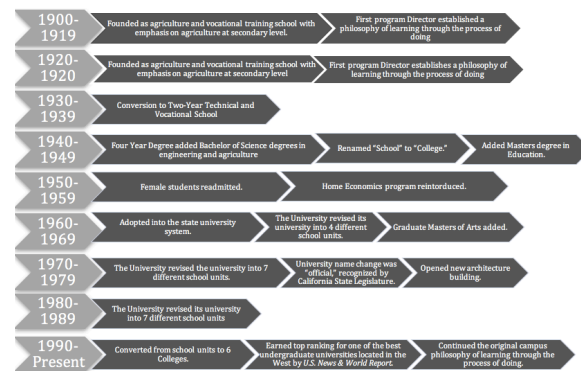


Figure 1. Summary of key institutional shifts across decades of Coastal University.

Record 4 – Email Correspondence with Instructor

Email correspondence, *Figure 3*, with Professor F led to several resources including those found on the syllabus providing information on architecture traditions of the department such as Bauhaus design school education and its related institutional model, the Teacher-Scholar model, for engaging in disciplinary knowledge.

Table 2. Representation of analysis of critique as discussed in Fall 2011's syllabus

Line #	Syllabus Content	What the Syllabus is Proposing
0005	Becoming self-critical for what needs to be done to proceed along a consistent path of project development	Suggesting critique is central to the development of project
0006	... is a significant part of learning about criticism	
0007	The desk crit is not the only source of how to get feedback for improving your work	Reiterating that desk crit is not the only form of feedback
0008	... but it seems it is the one typology that most students seem to be most familiar (or comfortable) with.	Suggesting students are most familiar with desk crit - formalizing other critique typologies will be used
0009	IMPORTANT studio activities to become immersed in for developing a critical framework for understanding how to use a range of feedback typologies to improve your design work include (but are not limited to):	Suggesting studio activities as central to the design process and learning how to apply critique
0010	• ASSIGNED Readings;	
0011	• WEEKLY Web Postings;	
0012	• WEEKLY In-Person Class Discussions;	Suggesting types of activities they will engage in throughout the course
0013	• Discussion Leading / Moderating;	
0014	• WEEKLY E-Mail Journals;	
0015	• DAILY Reactions to Algorithms;	
0016	• Project Critique of the Whole Reviews;	Identifying another form of critique
0017	• Formal Review's Active Listening/Note-taking	
0018	• Design Discovery: via thinking through your hands (e.g. - producing at least three alternative drawings, models, etc. for exploring designer's inquiry ...).	

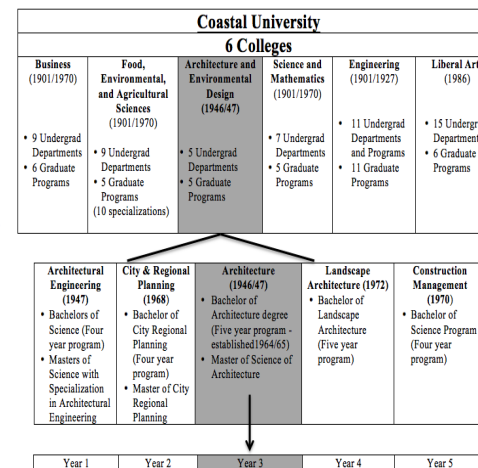


Figure 2. Representation of architecture department embedded within the larger institution site.

On May 19, 2013, at 2:20 PM, Professor F wrote:

Hi Ethny,

Not sure if this will help, but some old references at the end of a document that I wrote in collaboration with a colleague for students to deal with the design feedback (Capacity for Criticism Essay). These might lead to others regarding architectural education teaching.

Thanks.

Professor F

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Figure 3. Example email between Researcher and Professor F.