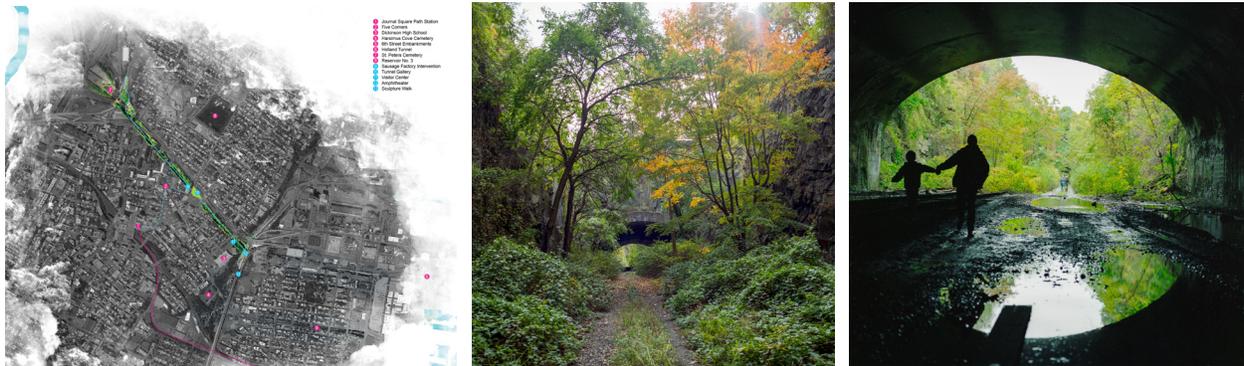


Fall 2025 Options Studio Proposal:

Reconnection: The Bergen Arches

Instructor: Vincent Marchetto, AIA

Date: 3/16/25



In the 19th and early 20th centuries, American cities were shaped by industry. Urban design centered around a manufacturing-based economy, requiring factories, rail lines, and affordable housing for workers. Today, many of these once-industrial areas have been transformed into spaces for leisure and community life. The bustling waterfronts of Hoboken and Jersey City—once filled with ships, trains, and longshoremen—are now home to parks and recreational spaces. Elevated freight lines, like New York City’s High Line, have become elevated linear parks, while large warehouses have been repurposed into loft apartments. These transformations reflect a larger trend: an ongoing effort to make our cities more livable.

In that spirit, this studio is going to look at the Bergen Arches in Jersey City and examine how this 17-acre abandoned rail cut can be repurposed for the 21st century. Students will be tasked with solving critical issues, such as public access, lighting, stormwater management, and park operations and maintenance. Students will be able to explore whether their design should blend in with nature or stand out. Unlike the High Line, this linear park is in a canyon-like rail cut, which presents its own unique challenges.

This studio will run in conversation with the Jersey City Department of Infrastructure, the NJ Bike and Walk Coalition, the Journal Square Community Association, and Sustainable JC. Students will learn about green infrastructure, egress requirements, and the design of small structures. They will also study nearby linear parks—like the 6th Street Embankment and the Essex Hudson Greenway—and consider ways to link their projects to these existing green corridors.

/imagine [prompt:] architecture and artificial intelligence

[theme:] Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) offer new ways for architects to approach design projects by enabling them to generate new ideas, optimize design solutions, and enhance the overall quality of their work. This studio will explore how various AI tools can augment the design processes, from conceptual design to ambiental simulation, by integrating cutting-edge technology such as image-to-text and text-to-image generators, machine learning (ML), and natural language processing (NLP).

Mitsuko: *Jun, why do you only take pictures of the rooms we stay in... and never what we see outside, while we travel?*

Jun: *Those other things are in my memory. The hotel rooms and the airports are the things I'll forget.*

Mitsuko: *Yeah, I guess so...*

from "Mystery Train" ("One Night in Memphis"), dir. Jim Jarmusch, 1989.

[program:] Urban hotel in Jersey City.

On a vacant site in downtown Jersey City you will design a 9-10 story hotel with some publicly accessible programmatic components. We will begin by examining precedents that are typically referred to as "boutique" or "designer" hotels, i.e., hotels that aim to avoid the banality of convention and that strive for a certain look, character, or esthetic "edge". We will then ask the following questions: What does it mean to be a tourist or a business traveler in downtown Jersey City? What would they need in an urban hotel, what would they expect, what would they desire? Is it comfort and "domesticity" or is it something else? What would make your hotel unforgettable? What is the relationship of space and memory? What do we remember about spaces where we stay, the cities that we visit?



/imagine [prompt:] architecture and artificial intelligence (first iteration)



/imagine [prompt:] a contemporary hotel in newark (third iteration)

TACTICS & STRATEGIES OF URBAN DESIGN

OPTIONS STUDIO* | ARCH 463/4 | Fall 2025 | Professor Georjeen Theodore, FAIA

STUDIO OVERVIEW

In order to address the greatest challenges our world faces today—climate change, lack of access to resources and housing, spatial segregation, etc.—responsible designers must equip themselves to work beyond the scale of the individual building and engage with larger environmental, social, and economic forces. Urban design as a discipline is uniquely positioned to confront these systemic and complex issues present in the built environment. The goal of this studio is to introduce advanced architectural undergraduates and graduate students to the methods of urban design. Studio members will work at a variety of scales and use a variety of techniques, ranging from small-scale approaches that improve local conditions to large-scale strategic visions. By the completion of the course, participants will have experience in urban analysis and visualization, stakeholder engagement, the development of public realm projects, spatial frameworks, and strategic visioning. Principles of sustainability and equity will guide the overall work. **The intent is to provide new skills and perspectives to architecture students that will enhance their ability to design comprehensively and systemically at the urban scale, and to use this ability to improve design outcomes at the scale of the building.**

The studio will build on the award-winning results of the previous MUD studios, which include a wealth of base information and highly detailed 3-d printed models (which you can see on the fifth floor of Weston Hall). **For Fall 2025, the studio will focus on the communities along New Jersey’s Route 1 Corridor, which will allow students to engage with critical questions of sustainability, water and energy conservation, public space preservation, remediation, transportation/mobility, adaptive reuse, and access to housing. Working with the instructor, students will have the opportunity to select their site along the corridor.** Experts in blue-green infrastructure (in the public realm and at the scale of the building) and resource management will visit the studio during the semester and provide technical expertise. **Therefore, students will have the opportunity to select their own site, develop their own thesis, and network with professionals in planning, urban design, and architecture throughout the semester.**

The studio offers an excellent opportunity for graduate students and ambitious undergraduate “options” level students to work with a real client and local stakeholders and to help shape the future of New Jersey.

The studio will follow the three-phase MUD/MIP studio curriculum (mapping, frameworks, and demonstration projects) that was awarded Architect Magazine’s top Studio Prize and the Sloan Award for sustainability: The first phase, “Mapping the Site” (four weeks) includes urban analysis, site assessment and stakeholder visualization. This first phase is organized around the use of an urban design “tool box,” which will introduce students to the analytical methods and drawing techniques of urban design, including public life assessments, thematic mapping, stakeholder and user-focused analysis, and digital modeling. While students develop their urban design skills, they will simultaneously increase their knowledge and understanding of the site and the central issues of the project. The first phase will also include focus group meetings with the client and stakeholder groups, and a series of themed walks with experts.

The second phase, “Public Space Frameworks” (four weeks) focuses on the development of framework plans for the public realm of the site, using the principles of sustainability, equity, and inclusion to guide the work. Using the analysis of the first phase as a base, in the second phase, the studio will create an organizational “parti” that identifies the key problems to address and explains how to solve them. Frameworks typically includes organizational diagrams, drawings that explain the framework through different lenses (mobility, use/program, blue/green investments, etc.), visualizations of the overall vision, and phasing and implementation strategies.

The third phase “Demonstration Projects” (five weeks) centers on the creation of catalytic, near-term projects. Each student will work independently or in a small group to develop a schematic design for a specific site along New Jersey’s Route 1 Corridor. Projects should jump-start the urban framework created in the second phase. Projects can range from the design of public spaces, blue-green infrastructure, transportation improvements, as well as a potential range of new uses, including housing, live-work, commercial, institutional, and recreational, and will be selected based on student interest and in consultation with the instructor. The schematic designs will be developed to include phasing, and implementation strategies.

*Ambitious, inquisitive, and eligible undergraduates are encouraged to register for this course as an “options” studio by: [one](#), applying to the Dual Degree B.Arch / MS program to take graduate courses as an undergraduate (choose Master of Urban Design in the drop-down menu) and [two](#), by registering for the course. Please reach out to theodore@njit.edu with any questions.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Georgeen Theodore, FAIA is an architect, urban designer, and Professor at New Jersey Institute of Technology's Hillier College of Architecture and Design, where she coordinates the Master of Urban Design (formerly the Master of Infrastructure Planning (MIP)) Program. She received a Bachelor of Architecture from Rice University and a Master of Architecture in Urban Design from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, where she graduated with distinction. Theodore is founding partner and principal of Interboro, a New York City-based architecture and planning research office. Since its founding in 2002, Interboro has worked with a variety of public, private, and not-for-profit clients, and has accumulated many awards for its innovative projects, including the Rice Design Alliance Spotlight Award (2013), the Museum of Modern Art PS1's Young Architects Program (2011), the Architectural League's Emerging Voices Award (2011) and Young Architects Award (2005), and the AIA New York Chapter's New Practices Award (2006). In addition to New Jersey Institute of Technology, Theodore has taught at University of Pennsylvania, the Bauhaus Kolleg in Dessau, Ohio State University, where she was awarded the 2011-12 Herbert Baumer Visiting Studio Professorship, Lawrence Technical University, where she and her partners led the 2013 Master Practitioner Studio, and University of Syracuse School of Architecture, New York City Program, where she served as the 2021 Richard Gluckman Visiting Critic.

Theodore has led several studios at NJIT whose results have been nationally and internationally recognized. Her students' work of the Spring 2013 studio "Better Borough, Resilient Regions" was published in *Waterproofing New York* (eds. Denise Hoffman Brandt and Catherine Seavitt Nordenson). In Fall 2013 and Spring 2014, students participated directly in the HUD-sponsored Rebuild by Design competition and their studio projects were exhibited at the World Financial Center. In Fall 2014, Theodore's studio participated in the Global Schindler Award competition; the studio's work was selected as one of twelve winning submissions in the international juried competition and the students travelled to Hong Kong and China to receive their award. Subsequently, the submission was awarded first prize in the 2015 student showcase at the American Planning Association's Northeast Conference. In Fall 2017, Theodore and her students partnered with the International Rescue Committee, Church World Service, and Interfaith-RISE to develop strategies for refugee resettlement and community development in New Jersey. In Spring 2018, Theodore and her students worked with the City of Athens, Greece, 100 Resilient Cities, and Rebuild by Design to create stakeholder-driven open space frameworks for Lyncabettus Hill. In Fall 2018, Theodore's studio focused on developing strategies for Mumbai's waterfront; the studio's proposal

"Hydrohoods of To-morrow" won first honorable mention in the 2019 Global Schindler Award, and students traveled to India to receive their award. In September 2019, Architect Magazine selected Theodore's studio as the winner of the Studio Prize and winner of the Annual Sloan Award, which recognizes a studio that focused on sustainability, specifically water conservation. Most recently, Theodore's students won the 2020 Student Annual Architectural Models and Artifacts competition in the "Urban" category. Most recently, Theodore and her students worked in collaboration with the City of Newark and the federal General Service Administration (GSA) to develop a public space framework and priority projects for Newark's downtown civic core.



Image Credit: Eka Pramuditha, Fall 2019 MIP Studio



Theodore (in pink) with students on a field trip
Image Credit: Kyle Reid, Fall 2020 MIP Studio