IML 404 Tactical Media:
Harnessing Technology to Reclaim Street Life

Spring 2014
Section 37426

Tuesdays, 1:00 - 3:50 pm
Location: SCI L104

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Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Connected media technologies are transforming our relationship with the city. Embedded sensors, smartphone apps and ubiquitous screens are changing how we experience public space and interact with one another. It is important to examine how technology structures our connection to our neighbors and neighborhoods, to explore how we can reclaim technology to shape our civic interactions.

“Tactical Media” invites students to construct innovative technologies for city streets. This studio course offers a mix of theory and practice: we will re-examine the place of technology in the city and imagine how obsolete urban technologies such as payphones and newspaper boxes can be re-invented to transform civic space. By contrast with top-down, big-data, ‘intelligent city’ efforts, we will take a bottom-up approach and start from the real Los Angeles neighborhood of Leimert Park. During the semester, students will work in teams to craft interventions that blend urban design and tactical media. The teams will include students from a range of disciplines such as Cinematic Arts, Communication, Engineering, Architecture, Art, and more. They will have an opportunity to install life-size prototypes in Leimert Park and compete for city funding to see them implemented.

This first half of the class will focus on introducing students to a number of key concepts, projects, technologies, and guest speakers in order to inspire their creative skills and critical thinking. Participants will also become familiar with the Leimert Park neighborhood, including its rich history and the current issues it faces. The first half of the class will culminate with student concept presentations on innovative or grand designs for the neighborhood.

The second half of the class will be spent on the final group projects, that will build upon course concepts and produce deliverable prototypes for the end of the semester. During this time there will be additional lectures and tech workshops, but we will largely focus on prototyping and completing the group prototypes, accompanied by photo and video documentation.

Throughout the course, students will be expected to participate fully and be open to interdisciplinary collaborations. Especially during the first half of the course, there will be weekly
assignments that include readings, blog posts, and optional outside class field trips.

ASSIGNMENTS
(grading weight in parentheses)

- Weekly readings and explorations, available on-line or distributed in class. These should be studied in advance of class, and students are expected to participate actively in class sessions. (participation: 20%)
- Weekly research assignments during the first part of the class, individual or in group, building toward your prototype.
- Participants will be asked to keep a design notebook, with at least weekly entries, in the form of a blog or some alternative approved by the instructors. During the first part of the class, these will likely be reports on your research assignments; as the course progresses, they will become more directly related to your specific design (design notebook: 20%)
- There will be occasional field trips and opportunities to engage with the Leimert Park community. Each is optional but it is highly recommended that you do participate at least in a couple of them.
- The culminating assignment for the course will be either
  - an installed ‘pop-up’ prototype for your design, to be experienced live by community members
  - a virtual prototype/portfolio describing your concept
  In either case, your final product will be presented during a critique session in front of outside judges at the end of semester -- exact schedule TBD. (final prototype: 60%)

POLICIES

Fair Use

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. The IML seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. In keeping with section 107 of the Copyright Act we recognize four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

Citation Guidelines
All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. The style we use is APA 5th edition and you may refer to these guidelines: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Emergency Plan

In the event that classes cannot convene at the university, all IML courses will continue via distance education. Specifically, the IML portal and course wikis will be deployed to enable faculty-student interaction (asynchronously and also via virtual office hours), complete syllabi, course readings and assignments, software tutorials, project assets, parameters and upload instructions, peer review processes and open source alternatives to professional-level software used in the IML curriculum. Further details are available on the course wiki.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to
the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

**SCHEDULE**

You will find below a detailed schedule for the first few classes of the semester. The latter part of the semester is more tentative and will be adjusted based on the progress of the students’ group projects and available guest speakers.

Regular events in Leimert Park:
- daily events at The World Stage: [https://sites.google.com/site/theworldstage/events](https://sites.google.com/site/theworldstage/events)
- Leimert Park Art Walk: last Sunday of the month, afternoon
- Banana’s @ KAOS: 3rd Tuesday of the month, late evening (9:30pm+)

One-time events are noted in grey throughout the class schedule.

14-Jan  Class introduction

21-Jan  Get to know Leimert Park - site visit
- Watch: some of the videos at: [http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Leimert+Park](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Leimert+Park)
- Come prepared to talk about what you found of interest.
- Notebook assignment: Select one or two elements of Leimert Park history or culture which you believe could become a significant part of your design. Write a brief description in your design notebook.

Tuesday 21-Jan evening: Banana’s @KAOS

Saturday 28-Jan, 8:30am-3:00pm: Leimert Park 20|20 Vision Planning Charrette ([http://www.leimertparkvillage.org/](http://www.leimertparkvillage.org/))

Sunday 29-Jan afternoon: Leimert Park Art Walk

28-Jan  Urban design: Thinking through a micro-intervention
- Guest Speaker: Valerie Watson, LADOT Pedestrian Programs Division
- Read: Tactical Urbanism 2: short-term action, long-term change
Watch: Tactical Urbanism / Pop-up MANGo - http://youtu.be/2EQo7iW0NEU
Notebook assignment: Pick one tactical urbanism idea you think could work for Leimert Park. Explain how you would implement it.

4-Feb  Tech: get to know payphones, newsboxes, soldering, Raspberry Pi
Guest: Andrew Schrock, Annenberg PhD Student.
Lecture/activity:
- Present about payphone hacking (~30 mins)
  - Outline trials and tribulations of constructing payphone interface. Detail connection points, interface, and Raspberry pi’s I/O.
- Solder header for raspberry pi (Adafruit’s “cobbler”)
- Deconstruct newspaper box or payphone to add a sensor and wire it up to the raspberry pi to relate to a particular goal.
- Present idea to the rest of the group
Browse through:
- How to solder: http://www.instructables.com/id/Soldering/
- 47 Raspberry Pi Projects to Inspire Your Next Build http://makezine.com/2013/04/14/47-raspberry-pi-projects-to-inspire-your-next-bui ld/
- DIY Urban Design (2013) (in folder)
Notebook assignment: Select one technology found in urban settings (payphone, newsbox, bus stop, lamp post, bike rack, etc.). Explore how it could be creatively mis-used in the context of Leimert Park.

11-Feb  Rapid Prototyping: Brainstorming a first design
This class session will be a rapid prototyping exercise during which you will come up with a first version of your concept. By now, you know enough about Leimert Park, Tactical Urbanism, and Urban Technologies to come up with awesome ideas.
Read: Ralph Koster, “How to Prototype a Game in 7-days”, http://www.raphkoster.com/2005/11/01/how-to-prototype-a-game-in-under-7-days/
Notebook assignment: Imagine a potential user of the technology you described in last week’s assignment. Describe this user as precisely as you can: what is their age, gender, family background, activity, etc. Describe what might be their motivation in using your technology, why they would use it rather than any of the available alternatives, what they would get out of using it, why they might come back and use it again. Be as specific and convincing as possible.
18-Feb  Community World Building/Imagined Futures
  ● Guest: Alex McDowell (or Holly Willis)
  ● Watch: Alex McDowell, World Building, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TH_C5Wgs_1A
  ● Notebook assignment: After reading Mary Flanagan, come up with one experimental urban game design. Write up and post images to explain your concept. Think about how such a game might enhance your group project.

25-Feb  Rapid Prototyping II: Testing designs/finalizing group presentations
This session is set aside for working in groups on your designs. Specific readings or activities might be added as needed.

4-Mar  Midterm Group Concept presentations
Group presentations and class critique. The goal is to identify issues and work remaining to be done, so we can collectively plan the second part of the course.

11-Mar  Spring Break – No Class

18-Mar  Urban Design II: The Politics of Art and Space
  ● Watch: Guggeheim’s 100 urban trends: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnLC63ntL_3VRNnYtiVbz2CpNxWv5xCgs
  ● Notebook Assignment: After reading Kwon’s article, find a public art work and critique it. How does the art integrate or intervene into its site and its social context? What story does the artwork tell?

25-Mar  Leimert Park II: Site Visit
  ● Read: Additional KCET Articles, specifically thinking about the future of the neighborhood.  http://www.kcet.org/socal/departures/leimert­park/
  ● Notebook Assignment: Re-evaluate your assumptions about Leimert Park and your design. What new “cultural assets” stick out to you? Who or what is your design trying to address?

1-Apr  Tech II: Expanding on Raspberry Pi’s, Sensors
  ● Guest: Andrew Schrock
Watch: Macon Money http://www.maconmoney.org/
  o Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT91aQTFHiY&noredirect=1

Notebook Assignment: After reading Farman’s article, find a mobile or urban based game and critique it. How does the game enhance civic engagement? Does the project reflect its social context or neglect it? How might you make a similar project?

8-Apr Rapid Prototyping III: Revisit Designs - Shake up ideas
This session is set aside for working in groups on your designs. There will likely be a guest respondent/facilitator to critique or “shake up” the project group’s current concepts. Specific readings or activities might be added as needed.

15-Apr Rapid Prototyping IV: User Testing/Playthroughs
This session is set aside for working in groups on your designs. Specific readings or activities might be added as needed. Time permitting, groups will run “playtests” or user testing with fellow classmates or invited participants.

22-Apr Finalize Group Designs/Complete Presentations
This session is set aside for working in groups on your designs. Specific readings or activities might be added as needed.

29-Apr Final On-Site Presentations: Project Designs, Concepts, and Prototypes
The on-site presentation will be the final unveiling of your group projects to the class and a panel of respondents. The presentation should include some combination of the following: design fiction video, physical prototype or completed design, written handout or slides, and photo documentation. Presentations can also include additional materials that are relevant to your specific design or format.