

ARCH 401 / ID 425 / LA 460: Interdisciplinary Studio
Designing at the Margins for those Living on Society's Edge:
Empowerment and Opportunity across the Lifespan

Students often assume that others have their remarkable adaptive abilities, but these competences may be compromised in many others for a variety of reasons. This studio challenges students from the disciplines of architecture, interior design and landscape architecture to transcend both their disciplinary assumptions and assumptions about users and critically consider how and for whom they design. Our society is heterogeneous, with different people having different reservoirs of experience that condition their current environmental experiences. If one considers the issue of stress, many people have various coping mechanisms that they employ to relieve such stress; but many individuals are compromised in their coping abilities. This studio focuses on the needs of two populations who may experience such compromised competence: the socially-isolated elderly; and family members of domestic violence. In both cases, stress often arises from a sense of helplessness and a lack of control, thus the themes of empowerment and choice become catalysts for a more critical consideration of how their environments may facilitate those conditions of autonomy. Students will work with advocates for as well as members of these various populations to gain a greater, experiential understanding of their perspectives.