

## OVERVIEW

This studio focuses on designing and building an outdoor education facility at Camp Crystal near Keystone Heights, Florida. Sited on Crystal Lake at the intersection of three major ecosystems, Camp Crystal is a unique, environmentally-charged educational setting for Alachua County's school-age children, all of whom will visit the camp at some point in their education. The camp's ecological and historical layers, its intensive and indispensable resources for public education, and the multiplicity of stakeholders and participants afford the design-build studio rich opportunities to explore a complex, pedagogically charged program and to rethink ecological frameworks for design at three scales: material detail, open-air building type, and master plan.

The studio exposes students to "reflective building" as a process of thinking and making architecture. Preliminary design stages will include detailing, intensive site planning, master planning, materials and building systems analysis, and meetings and design charrettes with the camp's director, staff, and other stakeholders. Initial phases will also make connections between the camp's pedagogical objectives and the natural environment: how might earth, air, fire, and water become critical provocations for the process of design, experience, and education? And how might these factors, as elements and resources, inform architecture phenomenally and productively?

Learning outcomes include the following: the studio will continue the development of students' advanced design process, collaboration, and site analysis and planning; this "hands-on" experience will provide a unique opportunity to learn how to build at full scale; students will increase their understanding of how the processes of designing and building are linked; and students will discover overlaps between the studio environment, community involvement, and future modes of architectural practice, as an important step in their preparation for MRP, internships, and other activities after graduation. Overall, it is expected that this process of "reflective building" will frame growth as a "reflective practitioner."



## INTRODUCTION

This studio seeks to understand how “reflective building” links thinking, making, and sustaining. In this context, the studio explores the design-build process as a hinge between university and community. Design-build work, as service learning, combines active community participation with pedagogical objectives of reflection, collaboration, and hands-on experimentation.

To open and sustain a dialogue between university and community, we will design and construct the components of an outdoor educational facility at Camp Crystal Lake. Less than thirty miles from campus, the camp has provided outdoor educational opportunities for Alachua County’s K-12 student population since its founding by the school board in 1948.

Within Florida’s unique climate and landscape, the camp’s ecological and historical layers, its intensive and indispensable resources for public education, and the multiplicity of stake-holders and participants afford the design-build studio rich opportunities to explore a complex, pedagogically charged program well-suited to the goals and objectives of fourth-year design at UF.

## RETHINKING DESIGN-BUILD

In the spirit of reflective practice, the studio, as a workshop, provides a forum to rethink design-build in a pedagogical and community-oriented context. The process of camping, traditions of summer camp, and the loosely held typology of the outdoor classroom provide an unexpectedly architectural yet powerfully grounded medium for exploring why and how we build across disciplinary and shared boundaries. Within the studio group, we will also draw from previous collaborative experiences to understand the dynamics of group work in the context of full-scale, on-site, community-oriented projects. One outcome of the studio will be critical reflection about the design-build process and recommendations for future sites, projects, and methods. An additional outcome will synthesize methods of detailing (and constructing details/joints) with the process of camping and the context of Florida’s landscape.

## SUSTAINING COMMUNITY

Another expected outcome of this studio will be an understanding of how place-making might sustain environmental education and community. Given the dynamic context of the camp situated between Keystone Air Base and an ecologically diverse system of lakes and wetlands, the studio will explore linkages between the camp’s pedagogical goals, its physical and natural surroundings, and our community’s values and dynamic identities. Consequently, we will find “common ground” – ways of communicating and discussing not only design ideas but also issues of ownership, public space, and programmatic necessities. As the design-build studio becomes a method for place-making, it is expected that other assumptions about the architectural “charrette” and the community meeting will also be transformed and rethought.

## MAKING CAMP

Taking the process of camping and the Florida context as starting points and design provocations, the studio will explore how reflective building engages modes of place-making and of constructing home-away-from-home. With Camp Crystal’s educational mission as a background, the studio will also look critically at how camping folds into the process of education. Does the camp’s inherent temporariness allow us to critique assumptions about permanence? Does it offer a unique proximity to its natural

surroundings? How do the camp's histories and traditions provide a memory of previous experience? Are there ways to make the camp and the camping experiences more accessible? More educationally effective? More direct? How can other camp permutations – local, national, and global – inform this particular camp's programs and infrastructures, and its educational objectives?

## CAMP CRYSTAL

Camp Crystal Lake is a unique educational setting for Alachua County's school-age children. The School Board purchased the site's 140 acres in 1947, when portions of the Keystone Heights Army Air Corps Base were decommissioned. Infrastructure from the air base remains throughout the campsite and provides possibilities for deconstruction and building recycling. Every second-grader in the Alachua County public school system participates in a field trip to the camp to hike and learn about the natural environment; fifth-grade students over-night at the campground. The camp's sharply graded terrain, its ravines, lake ecosystems, and diverse vegetation and animal life make it an ideal place for investigating the relation between education and environment. The social and communal implications of the campground itself present an opportunity for School of Architecture students to complement their design education with greater involvement in the community – in this case, through a project that will benefit school-age children of all backgrounds.

## OUTDOOR EDUCATIONAL FACILITY

The outdoor classroom will provide an open-air site for interactive education, with direct connections to the surrounding natural environment. The project will include the design of walkways and pavilions that will link the camp's diverse ecosystems. We will also make design proposals for a two thousand square feet building to house a wide range of learning programs. Each aspect of the project (both designed and built) serves as a didactic instrument to understand ecological systems of lithosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere. The studio will seek to understand how the learning facility can frame views, capture light and air, demonstrate hydrologic systems, and reveal geologic layers. The studio will also consider alternative building and environmental systems (such as solar technology, passive cooling, and geothermal systems) that reflect the facility's educational objectives. With the outdoor classroom as a critical site, the design studio's process of "reflective building" links service learning opportunities for university students with the "adventure learning" goals of the outdoor classroom.

## OBJECTIVES

- To understand and develop a multi-disciplinary approach to design-build work specifically and future professional activity generally.
- To participate in collaborative activities and discussions with members of the community.
- To develop an ability to select, adapt, and apply methodologies and theoretical approaches related to design-build activity.
- To pursue research methods and design process that reduce disconnections between design and construction.
- To integrate architectural process and cultural values through the design-build approach.
- To synthesize analysis, design process, and implementation.
- To develop graphic, written, and oral communication techniques that integrate aspects of the design-build approach.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation in studio work, design-build activities on-site, and community meetings.  
Written reflection on the process.  
Documentation and preparation of a booklet, summarizing the reflective building process.

## SCHEDULE

Week 1: Preliminary exercise: Detailing and joining with wood  
Week 2: Completion of prelim. exercise, and begin site visits, interviews, and documentation  
Week 3: Design charrette and schematic design, with input from Camp Crystal participants  
Week 4: Finalized design, site work, permitting  
Week 5: Deconstruction and material salvaging  
Weeks 6-12: Construction  
Weeks 13-15: Wrap-up, documentation, and writing

## PRODUCTION

1. Site planning documents, including “master plan” exercises taking into account expansions and future projects
2. Design project boards, demonstrating collaborative process and final design synthesis
3. Built project: outdoor educational facility
4. Documentation for subsequent booklet about the project

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