

# IMAGINARY TERRITORIES

## *-Cultural Center for Fictional Worlds*

### COURSE SYLLABUS

#### Section 1

**Course Coordinator:** Assoc. Prof. Ahmet Emre DİNÇER

**Research Assistant:** Necmettin Sancak

#### Section 8

**Course Coordinator:** Inst. Dr. Ömer Faruk PAMAK

\* Although the studio sections will operate under a shared theme and common project framework, the design process will be carried out within each studio section **independently**. Students will continue their studio work in their **assigned section** and receive critiques from their **own studio instructors** throughout the semester.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This vertical design studio explores architecture as a tool for **spatial interpretation, cultural construction, and narrative production** through the design of an **imaginary settlement** and a **cultural center** embedded within it.

The studio is grounded in **The Dictionary of Imaginary Places** by **Alberto Manguel and Gianni Guadalupi**, which brings together fictional geographies described in **literature, mythology, and speculative narratives**. Students are required to select one **imaginary place** and reinterpret its internal logic as an architectural and spatial system.

The design process operates on a real physical ground. Students will work on one of two predefined project sites located within an existing built environment and characterized by specific topographical and slope conditions. Each student will be assigned to one of these sites at the beginning of the semester according to their study level.

Within the given site, students are expected to reinterpret the existing spatial structure in accordance with the **environmental, cultural, and social characteristics** of their selected imaginary world.

### KEYWORDS

Imaginary Architecture, Cultural Center, Narrative Space, User-Oriented Design, Atmosphere, Spatial Interpretation

### STUDIO STRUCTURE:

The studio is conducted as a vertical design studio integrating Studio 4, Studio 5, Studio 6, and Studio 7 under a shared conceptual framework.

All studio levels work with the same **theme, design process, and building type**. Differentiation between studio levels occurs through variations in **scale, spatial complexity, programmatic depth, and architectural resolution**.

Students will be distributed between **two project sites** to ensure diversity of spatial interpretations and to enable comparative discussion throughout the semester.

The vertical structure aims to establish a common intellectual ground while allowing each studio level to engage with architectural design at its academic level.

### DESIGN PROBLEM:

Students are required to develop an architectural proposal through two interconnected design scales within a single project site.

#### Phase 01 — Master Plan Scale

Students will analyze the assigned site in terms of its existing **built fabric, open spaces, circulation systems, and topography**.

Based on the selected imaginary world, students are expected to:

- reinterpret the existing built environment
- reorganize spatial hierarchies and public spaces
- propose new relationships between built and unbuilt areas
- develop a coherent settlement structure reflecting the imaginary universe

The master plan serves as the conceptual and spatial framework for the project.

### **Phase 02 — Architectural Scale**

Within the proposed master plan, students will define a specific project area and design a **Cultural Center** as the primary architectural intervention.

The location, orientation, and spatial role of the cultural center must be justified through the master plan decisions and the cultural structure of the imaginary world.

The cultural center is expected to function as a **key public and symbolic element** within the proposed settlement.

### **SPATIAL REQUIREMENTS:**

The total enclosed area of the Cultural Center project is defined according to the studio level. The given areas represent target values and allow a  $\pm 10$  percent flexibility, in accordance with the conceptual approach and spatial requirements of each project.

**Studio 4 — ARCH 202** / Total Enclosed Area: **4,000 m<sup>2</sup>** (plus ~20% for circulation and service)

**Studio 5 — ARCH 301** / Total Enclosed Area: **5,000 m<sup>2</sup>** (plus ~20% for circulation and service)

**Studio 6 — ARCH 302** / Total Enclosed Area: **6,000 m<sup>2</sup>** (plus ~20% for circulation and service)

**Studio 7 — ARCH 401** / Total Enclosed Area: **7,500 m<sup>2</sup>** (plus ~20% for circulation and service)

**Open and semi-open spaces should be included** and will be evaluated as part of the overall architectural proposal. The density and spatial organization of the **master plan** must be compatible with the scale and spatial influence of the cultural center.

### **PROGRAM PRINCIPLES:**

Although the building type is defined as a Cultural Center for all studio levels, the internal program is not fixed.

Students are expected to generate their own program by interpreting:

- the definition of **culture** within the selected imaginary world
- the **cultural practices, rituals, or forms of collective experience** present in that world
- the **physical, sensory, and perceptual characteristics** of its users

Accordingly, the **distribution, hierarchy, and spatial organization** of programmatic components may vary significantly between projects. Each proposal is expected to present a unique architectural interpretation derived from its narrative and contextual framework.

### **METHOD OF LEARNING**

- ARCH 202-301-302-401 are applied courses in the form of a studio. The studio is the essential environment where students come together with instructors to discuss and develop their term projects through class **discussions, panel or table critiques, in-class assignments, and individual working hours**, based on a learning-by-doing understanding.
- The course might include a **teamwork** assignment.
- First 6 weeks of the course, all the design critiques will be given on **only hand drawings and sketches!**

### **COURSE OUTCOMES**

- The student is able to define a place with the help of tangible and intangible elements and concepts.
- The student is able to formulate a guiding theme and is aware that this should structure the design activities and the required spaces for a public space project.
- The student can integrate information from different scales in the design and offer a holistic approach to an ill-

defined design problem.

- The student can analyze and interpret a given program of requirements, the location, and the surrounding landscape. The student demonstrates awareness of the value of this interpretation for the design and offers unique, flexible solutions with future potential.
- The student can document the design process in architectural signatures, sketches, and models.

<b>ASSESSMENT*</b>	
<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Weight (%)</b>
Warmup 02	5
Assignment 01: Site Analysis	5
Assignment 02: Case Study	5
Midterm Jury	20
Pre-Jury	15
Final-Jury	50

### ATTENDANCE

\* There is a total of 15 weeks (120 hours) of class for this course.

\* Each week has 2 theory hours and 6 application hours. In total, there are 30 hours of theory and 90 hours of application. If the student misses more than % 30 of the theory hours (9 hours) or more than % 20 of the application hours (18 hours) they will get NA and fail (approximately 6 studio classes).

\* Missing any of the juries (midterm, prejury, final) may result in **failing**.

\* Medical reports do not change the attendance status for the classes, but are acceptable for exams.

### TIME PLAN

<b>Week Nr.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Program</b>
<b>ASSIGNMENT 01 &amp; ASSIGNMENT 02</b>		
1	09/02/2026	<b>Introduction</b> Given: Warm-Up 01 Assignment and Submission Assignment: Warm-Up 02 Assignment, Assignment 01 - Site Presentation and Analysis
2	16/02/2026	<b>Site Presentation (Selected Fictional Spaces)</b> Submission: Assignment 01 - Site Presentation and Analysis Assignment: Assignment 02 – Case Studies
3	23/02/2026	<b>Presentations of Case Studies</b> Submission: Assignment 02 – Case Studies Assignment: Initial Scenario / Concepts
4	02/03/2026	<b>Presentations of Initial Scenario / Concepts, Stain Study/ Bubbles on Site</b> Submission: Initial Scenario / Concepts, Stain Study/ Bubbles
<b>MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT</b>		
5	02/03/2026	Discussions of <b>Early Design Decisions</b> Submission: <b>Warm-Up 02</b>
6	09/03/2026	<b>Panel Critics of Early Design Decisions &amp; Spatial Organization</b>
7	16/03/2026	Discussions of <b>Spatial Organization, Plan – Section Drawings</b>
8	<i>date tba</i>	<b>Midterm Jury:</b> <b>Site Analysis &amp; Conceptual Design &amp; Floor Plans – Sections</b>
9		Good luck for the midterms!

FINAL ASSIGNMENT		
10	06/04/2026	<b>Final Design:</b> Spatial Organization, Plan – Section – Elevation Drawings
11	13/04/2026	<b>Final Design:</b> Spatial Organization, Plan – Section – Elevation Drawings
12	20/04/2026	<b>Pre-Jury:</b> <b>Spatial Organization &amp; Drawings</b>
13	27/04/2026	<b>Overall Critics</b>
14	04/05/2026	<b>Façade Critics</b>
15	11/05/2026	Discussions of <b>Drawing Quality, Poster &amp; 3D Model Quality</b>
16		Eid Mubarak!
17	<i>date tba</i>	<b>Final Jury: “IMAGINARY TERRITORIES - Cultural Center for Fictional Worlds”</b>

## READING LIST

- Erlich, R. D. (2000). The Dictionary of Imaginary Places. *Utopian Studies*, 11(1), 181-181.
- Farrelly, L. (2007). *The Fundamentals of Architecture*. AVA Academia.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. In *The production of space*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203132357-14>
- Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city*. MIT Press.
- Manguel, A. & Guadalupi, G. (1980). *The dictionary of imaginary places*. Harcourt Brace.
- Norberg-Schulz, C. (1996). *Genius loci: Towards a phenomenology of Architecture*. Rizzoli.
- Zumthor, P. (2006). *Peter Zumthor - atmospheres architectural environments - surrounding objects*. Birkhäuser.

*\*the pdf's of the readings are available upon request.*

## SITE DEFINITION:

The studio will be conducted on two alternative project areas, referred to as Area 1 and Area 2, both located in **Safranbolu, Türkiye**.

Safranbolu, with its layered urban structure, historical built environment, and pronounced topographical characteristics, provides a complex spatial context in which existing fabric, slope conditions, and settlement patterns play a significant role in spatial organization.

At the beginning of the semester, students will be assigned to one of the project areas according to their studio level:

- Studio 6 and Studio 7 students will work on **Area 1**
- Studio 4 and Studio 5 students will work on **Area 2**

Each student will work on only one project area throughout the semester.

The exact boundaries of Area 1 and Area 2 will be defined by the studio instructors and introduced at the beginning of the term.

Detailed technical information, including site dimensions, area boundaries, topographical data, slope values, existing building footprints, and circulation systems, will be provided during the initial weeks of the semester.

Students are expected to develop their proposals within the given site constraints while reinterpreting the existing built environment according to the environmental, cultural, and narrative logic of their selected imaginary world.

SITE: Safranbolu, Turkey

Area 1: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/zGVZYwzUnFQCEvi6>

Area 2: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/V86iVafjwPoxETts6>

