COURSE OBJECTIVES: ARCH 8856 Advanced Architectural Design Studio is the first of four upper-level options studios in the Master of Architecture curriculum within the School of Architecture. The studio will focus on issues related to architectural production via three key themes: The City, Technology, and Typology. Methods of analysis and design as research will preface each studio's foray into one collective exercise on the theme of Structure/Systems/Balance, and one instructor-specific exercise on the theme of Architectural Typology/Technology.

STUDIO RESEARCH QUESTION: In confronting the current arc toward social polarization (one that seems to increasingly pit future workers against one another and industry's advancing technologies), can innovative design thinking help rekindle communities of integration? In this spirit of collaboration and the new interdisciplinary worker, a joint studio effort among Georgia Tech, Auburn, and Tuskegee architecture students was recently funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The challenge: a planning and design program to create a world-class Arts-Tech Hub, for millennials and underserved populations, at the Sloss Furnaces National Landmark in Birmingham, AL.

PROGRAM: The SPARK@SLOSS Mayoral Masterplan Initiative anticipates the design and development of an interdisciplinary artists' community, consisting of housing and education/training facilities to provide emerging artists an opportunity to work and collaborate with resident artists in four quadrants: Q1/fire arts (metal arts, ceramics, glass blowing); Q2/media arts & robotics; Q3/industrial design; and Q4/performing & acrobatic arts.

SITE: Sloss Furnaces operated as a pig iron-producing blast furnace from 1882 to 1971, and after closing was designated a National Historic Landmark by the US Department of the Interior. The originally developed site currently serves as an interpretive museum of industry, and hosts a nationally recognized metal arts program. Its contiguous open parcel also serves as a concert festival venue. The combined site is part of a proposed linear park through downtown Birmingham, where community outreach will be an important part of the masterplan strategy.

STUDIO CHALLENGE: Students will initially collaborate and work in small teams to develop integrated site plans, into which individual students will develop unique, signature designs for 1 of the 4 quadrants outlined above. According to Renee Kemp-Rotan, the Director of the SPARK@SLOSS Mayoral Masterplan Initiative, such building designs should seek to explore one or more of the following challenges:

- Address industrial design, railroad history, and possibly train cars as containers.
- Interpret and celebrate worker history and the quest for economic and civil rights.
- Explore new interpretations of southern regional vernacular and climate in ways that are ecologically sound.
- Research the history of the Bauhaus as a precedent of interdisciplinary industrial design workshops.
- Investigate the works of Cedric Price (the Fun Palace), Archigram (the Walking City), Diller Scofidio + Renfroe (the Highline and Culture Shed), and the design of Birmingham’s new Railroad Park District.