About
Our perception, understanding, affective response, and ultimately behavior in a given setting is greatly shaped by what we carry of it in our minds. It follows then, that our built environment has to be organized not just to fit human activity and patterns of life, but also the human mind, and that the limitations and particular propensities of the mind constrain the shape of the built environment as much as physical functional requirements do. The main purpose of the course is to give students an introduction to selected topics within psychology and cognitive science that help us understand how we shape buildings and are in turn shaped by them.

Content
The course content will be covered under four distinct topics: spatial orientation and wayfinding, affective psychology of buildings, vision, and aesthetics/psychology of art. Through these, students will be introduced to an assortment of mental representations—mental models, cognitive maps, images, frames, and structures for aesthetical appraisals—that mediate our use and conception of buildings. Although the material presented comes from psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience, the course will focus on helping students to sharpen their design intuitions and develop insights about the built environment.

Organization
The course is project-based. Once the essential content has been delivered, students will work through the semester on a single study. These studies will take one of two forms: explorations carried out through design exercises, or projects of empirical research. A set of potential projects will be made available to the students, but it will also be possible for them to pursue projects of their own interest, so long as they conform to the main themes of the course.