

# ROCK AND STONE: CULTURES OF MAKING IN NORTHERN ITALY

**Course ID: TBA (to be posted by December 15, 2017)**  
**July 1-July 28, 2018**

## FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTORS:

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## INTRODUCTION

This program is a multidisciplinary field course organized to analyze the geological formations and to study the eco-productive resources of pre-Alpine mountains and its immediate surroundings. Substantiated by the theoretical question of how rurality today can suggest alternative models of development, the course entails a field study focusing on the practices of stone usages. The participants will study and observe how a locally available resource can become a source of inspiration for future sustainable approaches on building and space organization.

The course aims to emphasize the resilient nature-culture continuum through a multidisciplinary approach that combines methods of anthropological fieldwork and architecture, conversations and practical activities, thoughts and crafts, theory and design. The additional presence of professional and local specialists will allow students to explore the ecology and local resources in order to develop a new design methodology based on the relationship between nature and culture.

Located mainly in the ecosystem of the Val Taleggio and extended to its surrounding valleys, the fieldwork will analyze the landscape, the natural and socio-cultural environment, and the architectural design of the region. It proposes to identify the cultural strategies of the use of rocks and stones in the processes of creation, construction, and transformation of these local resources along with the territorial adaptation and spatial configuration, while extending its insights to the larger contemporary socio-economic and cultural context.

The multidisciplinary course links both to the culture of making and to the territorial representation at different scales, combines fieldwork research and conversations with specialists. The second part of the course is linked to the representation of the territory and rigorous interpretation of the fieldwork through the development and definition of a storytelling project.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The class aims to create a multidisciplinary work environment, in which students from different disciplines observe, learn and share the new findings. The multidisciplinary approach will encourage students to formulate exploratory research questions relevant to their disciplines (architecture, anthropology, arts and humanities, economy, earth and environmental sciences, etc.).

Adopting the concept of 'test site' for Taleggio Valley, students will use explore, document, assess, and synthesize their fieldwork in the region. The course will thus introduce and make use of the techniques of ethnographic fieldwork in order to collect and rigorously organize the fieldwork data. The data will emerge from the immersion in the field, visits to sites of extraction of building materials (local quarries), restored vernacular architecture (the local *baita* - barn), and recently built structures.

Using storytelling as narrative tool, the students will learn how to combine visual, verbal and design elements to compose a complete narrative emerged from their field explorations and class time. They will be using their fieldwork collected data under the form of photography, interviews and drawings to construct a story about the stratified integration of rock and stone into the built environment and local economy.

The course aims to provide insights into the mutual-relationships between local economy, landscape, culture, and the architectural design. As the world today is looking for solutions facing the sustainability crisis, it is all the more important to analyze the present practices in order to advance visions of possible/alternative futures.

The students will be encouraged to engage in team work and group activities; the final product, however, will be individual.

Starting with the analysis of the pre-Alpine geological formations, the course continues with the study of traditional architecture and its current trends of restoration present in contemporary Alpine architecture and meant to enhance old materials and crafts. The main points of interest are interconnected with the Alpine mountain economic and cultural system, its geology, and the extraction systems that have allowed the use of stone in architecture.

During this field-based course, students will be encouraged to explore the following type of questions:

1. What is the main usage of rocks and stones in the local area? Where and how is stone used in construction systems and in vernacular and recent architecture?
2. How does the use of stone and related materials influence, enable, and limit the spatial organization of the built environment? How did those techniques change during the past two centuries and what are the socio-cultural transformations that accompanied them?
3. How do the proximity of the urban areas and the industrialization influence both the building techniques and the architecture/ spatial organization? What type of economic and cultural networks of exchange is present between the rural and urban environment? Can we talk about a continuum rural-urban rather than a separate space – and what is the role of architecture in this conversation?
4. What does the current trend in vernacular architecture restoration express, and what are its socio-economic and cultural implications?
5. Ultimately, what kind of relationship develops between humans and nature, and how is this expressed in building and organizing space and exchanges both among humans, and between

humans and the environment? What are the lessons to be learned from Val Taleggio inhabitants' approach to space, place, building, and resources?

### ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

**Credit Units:** Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units (equivalent to 12 quarter credit units) through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a private, highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see grading assessment and matrix). This field school provides a minimum of 160 direct instructional hours. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institutions prior to attending this field school.

**Transcripts:** An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One additional transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no additional cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the National Student Clearinghouse: <http://bit.ly/2hvurkl>.

### PREREQUISITES

There are no course pre-requisites. The course is open to any students in architecture, anthropology, arts and humanities, economy, earth and environmental sciences who have an interest in fieldwork methods.

Fieldwork is a serious research activity that requires physical labor and work outdoors and indoors, interaction with other people, and diligent documentation. Familiarity with fieldwork research methods is a plus.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the field school, students will be able to:

1. familiarize and solidify the participants' knowledge of ethnographic field research methods through a direct application of those methods to research questions of the course.
2. explore and extend the knowledge of Italian culture, in particular of the Taleggio Valley both in historic and contemporary contexts.
3. understand how the use of a particular resource (rocks) influence the culture of making in the region, and how does it integrate in different architectural currents.
4. observe and understand the rural/urban networks of economic and cultural exchanges as they express themselves in architecture and spatial organization
5. synthesize and disseminate the knowledge accumulated during the period through presentation of the group and individual work at students' research sessions.

### GRADING MATRIX

**40%:** Active participation in scheduled program, research activities, daily reports and readings.

**10%:** Individual field notebook to submit at the end of the course.

**25%:** Reading Abstracts (poster) Nature and artifact, midterm output: design and narrative development about nature and the culture of making, use and integrate bibliography and fieldwork materials, including written pieces, drawings, photos, models, 3D.

**25%:** Individual final deliverable - final piece organizing the fieldwork research results in a storytelling/narrative form. This can be a presentation (video, model, booklet, PPT or 8-10 page

paper, etc.) including documentation under visual/ audio form, or any combination that the professor will agree with the student.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students are expected to participate in all activities as outlined in the calendar, except for extenuating circumstances. All students are expected to observe professional-level standards regarding commitments to classes, meetings and production work. This course relies on the full and punctual participation of all students. Unjustified absences or tardiness to classes or assignments are not tolerated. In case of an emergency, let your instructor know as soon as possible.

### **TRAVEL & MEETING POINT**

Project staff members will meet the students arriving by air at Milano Malpensa (MXP) airport. Students are encouraged to book flights scheduled to arrive to Milano Malpensa (MXP) by 1pm on Sunday July 1, 2018. A private bus will collect students and take them to Sottochiesa. Information regarding how to reach destinations via public transportation will be provided.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email project director immediately. A local emergency cell phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

### **VISA REQUIREMENTS**

US and Canada citizens do not require a visa to enter Italy for less than 180 days but must have their passport valid for at least six months and have at least one blank page for the entry stamp. Travelers with passports that are found to be washed, mutilated, or damaged may be refused entry to Italy. Citizens of other countries are asked to check the Italian Embassy website page in their home country for specific visa requirement.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students will live in a residence in Sottochiesa, a charming village, 15 minutes away from the world famous San Pellegrino Terme. One or two-bedroom apartment with double or triple occupancy rooms will be offered to the students. Each apartment will have a kitchen and bathroom to be shared among the occupants. Shared working studio areas and open-air studio spaces will be provided. Students are expected to consider the studio as the base of their research on site and to spend most of their time outdoors. Indoor large spaces and/or tools studios are limited but available for communal activities.

Large, Italian style lunch will be provided daily in the field or at the residence, depending on the activity. Students are responsible for their own breakfast and dinner, and their own food on weekends (apartments have kitchens). Once a week, the Project Director and the entire team will eat dinner together at a local restaurant.

**Wi-Fi:** Free wifi is provided in the shared studio space for work purposes (due to the remote location the connection has limited capacity for long Skype calls or movie streaming). Class activities will be structured accordingly. There is no wifi in the individual apartments.

**Extra Expenses:** the course supplies lodging, local transportation using the public service for scheduled field trips, and one main meal a day except weekends. Breakfast and dinner are to be prepared by the individuals, provided the kitchen use in their shared apartments.

To be covered by students: Flight to MIL (MXP, LIN, BGY), travel to meeting location, Supplies (see equipment paragraph), Food when not provided, Extra - personal expenses.

### DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Outdoors activities such as walks, hikes, and weather conditions, while part of this class, could imply a certain degree of risk. Health insurance is provided by the IFR.

**Working languages:** All classes will be in English. Italian is not required for participating in this course.

Note that the village community speaks Italian – an project or research that would choose to engage with the community has to consider the language.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the project director.

Students are expected to participate in all programmed activities and to fulfill one relevant objective of this class: namely, the class expects to bring participants into active engagement with each other in addition to the natural environment. Daily collegial interaction with other students is an essential dimension of the field school experience, and students are expected to discuss their projects, receive, and provide feedback. Students are expected to take advantage of their staying by spending their time in the Valley, experiencing the Alpine environment, visiting sites, contacting local people, working with traditional and innovative materials, experimenting old and new technologies, sharing reflections and contents in workshop sessions, promoting their works in public happenings, as well as producing the final documentation for the class.

### COURSE SCHEDULE \*

\* Itinerary and timetable are subject to adjustments.

#### Week 1 (July 2-8, 2018): **GEOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT: HUMAN IN NATURE**

Week dedicated to the discovery of the Taleggio Valley: mountains, peaks and valleys, quarries, local mineral resources and stone materials for the built environment.

Monday 7/2	Morning: Welcome Coffee and Preliminary introduction Afternoon: site visit and hike Evening group dinner
Tuesday 7/3	Morning: Guest lecture and tour by Geologist Afternoon: visit to quarries and waterfalls - notes on environment, usages, and extractive forms Readings: Chapter "Geology" by Charles-Louis Joris, in <i>New Monte Rosa Hut SAC, Self-sufficient building in the high alps</i> Practicum: visual and photographic exploration
Wednesday 7/4	Morning: Lecture 'Photography as narrative tool' and workshop Afternoon: site visit and hike Readings: Chapter "The discovery of the peaks" by Marie-Anne Lerjen, in <i>New Monte Rosa Hut SAC, Self-sufficient building in the high alps</i> Practicum: visual and photographic exploration
Thursday 7/5	Morning: valley villages and local museum visits Afternoon: Guest Lecturer, Architect Readings: Chapter "Building in the mountains" by Adolph Stiller, in <i>New Monte Rosa Hut SAC, Self-sufficient building in the high alps</i> Evening group dinner
Friday 7/6	Bus 7.20 am: field trip to Bergamo

Bus 5.15 pm: Return  
Studio space and Apartment cleaning

Saturday Morning: discussion on field trip, building the teams for the final project  
Afternoon: Free

Sunday Free

Week 2 (July 9-15, 2018): **ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN: CULTURES OF MAKING**

Week dedicated to local architecture and culture.

Monday 7/9 Morning: Independent itinerary and field observations of the local architecture  
Afternoon: Guest Lecture, Ecologist  
Readings: Chapter "The mountain hut as tourist facility" by Franz Steinegger, in *New Monte Rosa Hut SAC, Self-sufficient building in the high alps*

Tuesday 7/10 Morning: Lecture 'Design, from ideation to production'  
Afternoon: Guest Lecture, Craftsman and tour of vernacular architecture  
Readings: Chapter "Sustainability" by Stefanie Hellweb and Melanie Goymann, in *New Monte Rosa Hut SAC, Self-sufficient building in the high alps*

Wednesday 7/11 All Day: Field trip to explore Liberty Architecture in San Pellegrino Terme: continue fieldwork notes taking and visual exploration

Thursday 7/12 Morning individual or group studio work  
Afternoon: Workshop - architecture in the environment. Enhancing the skills of observation  
Readings: Chapter 1, "Knowing from the Inside" in Making  
Evening group dinner

Friday 7/13 Morning: work session on site – finalizing the midterm output  
Afternoon: studio work and final midterm output  
Studio space and Apartment cleaning

Saturday 7/14 Morning: Midterm presentation

Afternoon: Free

Sunday 7/15 Free

Week 3 (July 16-22, 2018): **ROCK FORMATIONS IN THE TERRITORY: Fieldwork analysis and interpretation as Storytelling.**

Week dedicated to understanding and contextualizing the collected data. Includes consideration on the ethics of anthropological fieldwork and ethnographical methods.

Monday 7/16 Morning: Field notes and Fieldwork - methodological principles, ethical concerns.  
Afternoon: selection and organization of the collected materials (notes, pictures, videos, witnesses from the 2 previous weeks)  
Readings: Chapter 2, "Materials of Life" in Ingold 2013  
Practicum: visual and photographic exploration

Tuesday 7/17 Morning: Anthropology of the Making - theoretical approaches, discussion on bibliography  
Readings: Chapter 4 "On Building a House" in Ingold 2013  
Afternoon: "Thick description" - how to extract a story from the collected architectural materials

- Wednesday 7/18 Morning: Architecture and Anthropology - a fieldwork informed theoretical approach - shaping spaces, building culture.  
 Afternoon: workshop - generating ideas/ exploring possible narratives / deciding the theme for each individual projects.  
 Readings: Chapter 3, "On Making a Handaxe" in Ingold 2013  
 Practicum: visual and photographic exploration
- Thursday 7/19 All day: Independent guided work - analyzing the findings to enable the conception and production of the final project/ narrative.  
 Practicum: visual and photographic exploration  
 Readings: Chapter 6 "Round Mound and Earth Sky" in Ingold 2013  
 Evening group dinner
- Friday 7/20 Morning: Open studio - discussion of the first outlines/ ideas exchange  
 Afternoon: Anthropology and Art - discussion on bibliography  
 Studio space and Apartment cleaning
- Saturday 7/21 Morning: workshop - finalizing the outline of the team projects and the plans of execution  
 Afternoon: Free
- Sunday 7/22 Free

Week 4 (July 23-29, 2018): **Project building - final presentation**

Week dedicated to the definition of a storytelling project. Using photography, videos, drawings and written word to narrate a story about **rock & stone**: the integration of rock & stone into the built environment and local system of exchanges – present and futuristic visions.

- Monday 7/23 Morning: analysis of the selected fieldwork materials at the base of the final project/ narrative  
 Afternoon: workshop - inventory of the fieldwork material, start selecting for the final narrative.  
 Practicum: visual and photographic exploration
- Tuesday 7/24 All Day: Morning: - abstracts of the required literature due. How to use and integrate the literature in the final project.  
 Afternoon: Independent guided work - production of the final presentation
- Wednesday 7/25 All Day: Independent guided work - production of the final presentation
- Thursday 7/26 All day: Studio, final presentation with invited jury, feedback
- Friday 7/27 All day: Studio, final presentation with invited jury, feedback  
 Evening: group dinner
- Saturday 7/28 Free – Packing day - Return home/continued travel in Italy or elsewhere in Europe on your own – Bus to Milano 12.00 pm

**EQUIPMENT LIST**

Students will be required to bring and install (all software can be download and install using free education versions) a selection of the following:

- A small portable notebook for field notes
- A laptop. Special accommodations will be provided for students who do not own a laptop, but please let us know in advance.
- Smartphone, with camera.
- Any other available recording device (sound/ images)

- For architecture students: A modelling software (SketchUp, Rhino, or AutoCAD) (free educational install)
- For all students, a selection of the following software will be useful: Word, Power Point, Photoshop, Illustrator, or InDesign + a video editing software of choice (free educational install)
- Hiking boots, backpack, sunscreen, field notebook and water bottle
- Any medication you need and prescription medication to last for the duration of the field school

#### **REQUIRED READINGS**

- 2013 Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, Routledge, London and New York
- 2010 ETH ZURICH, edited by, *New Monte Rosa hut sac, Self-sufficient building in the high alps*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago

These texts will be discussed during the course of the four weeks. All other books will be used as reference and one copy of each title will be made available in the studio.

#### **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

- 2014 Sandra Henderson, *Alpine Modern*, Colorado
- 2006 Paul Oliver, *Built to meet needs: cultural issues in vernacular architecture*, Architectural Press, Amsterdam
- 2001 Vicky Richardson, *New vernacular architecture*, Laurence King, London.
- 1997 AAVV, *Cultures and habitats*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- 1994 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press, Boston, MA.