

SEMESTER & YEAR	FALL 2026	ELECTIVE TYPE (DEPARTMENTAL / CROSS ELECTIVE) *	Elective
COURSE CODE	ARCH-6006	ELECTIVE MODE (SEMINAR / STUDIO / WORKSHOP)	Seminar
NO. OF CREDITS	3	PREREQUISITE COURSE(S) (IF ANY)	None
COURSE NAME	Beyond Aesthetics: Safety and Vulnerability in the Built Environment		

* Departmental Electives are only open to JSAA students and Cross Electives are open to all JGU students.

Faculty Name: Alokeparna Sengupta

Faculty Bio

Alokeparna did her B. Arch from MS University, Baroda and Masters in Urban Design from Domus Academy, Milano and Wales University, Cardiff (dual degree). She received her PhD from Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani (DASTU), Politecnico di Milano, Italy. She specialises in the field of urban mobility, inclusive mobility design and political ecology of urban transport. She examines urban mobility through the intersectional lenses of design and social science. She has a wide and developing interest in Safety Science and has designed and taught courses on Disasters , Road Safety and Politics of Transportation Infrastructure in JSDA in the last 9 years. She is currently an Associate Professor at the Jindal School of Design and Architecture, O.P Jindal Global University.

Course Descriptor

While aesthetic preferences and visions have increasingly become a primary consideration in design practices across internal and external environments, integrating safety and accessibility is a crucial component that design service practitioners need to incorporate into their work. This is done through a thorough understanding of the sociological concerns that govern debates over vulnerabilities and equity, followed by design know-how to reduce vulnerabilities and increase safety.

Should safety standards be compromised for aesthetic preferences? Or should they be prioritised to lead the way in design considerations?

Safety is critical yet tricky. When it comes to incorporating safety standards into project

budgets, people often compromise to reduce costs while allocating larger budgets to what they perceive as aesthetics. While some safety standards have been made mandatory through documents such as codes and standards, many critical ones remain legally non-binding as guidelines.

We are not unsafe every day. Earthquakes and floods are not everyday occurrences. We do not get out of the house thinking or knowing if we will lose our lives in a fatal crash or be victims of a serious road traffic injury. However, what we can see every day are the aesthetically pleasing interiors, the false ceiling with its lighting, the building façade and the cars we buy and drive at high speed over wide, highway-type roads with minimal edge treatment.

In this course, students of architecture and urban design will find themselves at this intersection, where they will be trained to see beyond aesthetic considerations, challenge their lived biases in discussions of safety, and orient their view towards scientific reasoning and understanding of safety and vulnerability. The course will discuss social vulnerability, precarity, and safety through two modules – one on disaster studies and the other on road safety. Students will conduct safety and accessibility audits of buildings and urban roads, By the end of course, students will understand how to approach safety as a design consideration both at a building and at a city-public space level.

Key Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the students will be able to:

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| L01 | Critically evaluate the relationship between aesthetics, safety, accessibility, and equity in architectural and urban design practices |
| L02 | Apply concepts of social vulnerability, precarity, and risk to assess safety challenges in buildings, public spaces, and urban infrastructure. |
| L03 | Conduct safety and accessibility audits of buildings and urban roads using scientific reasoning, design standards, and observational analysis. |
| L04 | Examine the role of codes, standards, guidelines, and policy frameworks in shaping safety and accessibility outcomes in architecture and urban design. |

Assessment & Evaluation System

The assessment combines critical reflection with hands-on techniques. Internal evaluation (70%) will be based on short assignments, simulation exercises and audits, seminar presentations, where students critically respond to the readings and translate theoretical insights into analytical arguments within an applied framework. Final evaluation (30%) will consist of a viva, in which students present their final essay, articulating its theoretical grounding, methodological choices, and political significance.

References/Citations

- Blaikie, Piers, Terry Cannon, Ian Davis and Ben Wisner 1994, 2003. At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters. Routledge, London, 320 pp
- Sainath, Palagummi. Everybody loves a good drought: Stories from India's poorest districts. Vol. 10. Penguin Books India, 1996.
- Humar, Jag Mohan, David Lau, and Jean-Robert Pierre. "Performance of buildings during the 2001 Bhuj earthquake." Canadian Journal of Civil Engineering 28.6 (2001): 979-991
- IS 4326: 2013. "Earthquake Resistant Design and Construction of Buildings-Code of Practice." (2013).
- IS 13920: 1993. "Ductile Detailing of Reinforced Concrete Structures Subjected To Seismic Forces - Code of Practice" (1993)
- Jacobs, J. (2016). The death and life of great American cities. Vintage.
- Gehl, J. (2013). Cities for people. Island Press.
- Holston, J. (1989). The modernist city : An anthropological critique of Brasília. University of Chicago Press.
- Accessibility guidelines from Samarthyam. (<http://samarthyam.com/category/publications/>)
- Gehl, J. (2013). Cities for people. Island press. 12 Quality Criteria Survey
- URSA Road Safety Audit Form
- IRC-SP-117-2018 (Universal Accessibility) – Audit form at the end of the document
- TRIPP (2015) Traffic and Safe Communities. New Delhi: Transportation Research & Injury Prevention Programme, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi.