

*America's historic sites offer unique opportunities for learning, for reflection, for inspiration.*

*At their best, they can be powerful places that provide great value to their communities.*

*They can offer programs, services, and experiences that are relevant to many of the most pressing issues of our day.*

*America's historic places should be places to nurture the human spirit.*

*Despite this potential, however, many of America's historic sites are experiencing declining attendance and financial instability, they are increasingly viewed by their communities as irrelevant and unresponsive to the societal changes around them.*

2007 Kykuit II Summit: The Sustainability of Historic Site

## PREMISE

The success of a public space can be judged by the number of people who use it. Whether in the walls of a museum, historic house, or the expanse of a public square, creative activation is what makes a space a place, gives meaning, and builds personal attachment. This never-ending design process, known as *placemaking* seeks to engage diverse audiences in the life of a building, street, public space or city by acknowledging the ever changing social, political and technical landscape. The hypothesis is that these spaces fail, at least in part, by their inability to accommodate the real-life, quirky, and emotional experiences of everyday life.



<https://www.newportrestoration.org/roughpoint/>

## CONTENT

This research-oriented course will explore architectural and urban interventions that can enliven and activate historical sites. The students' work will build on the concepts introduced in the [Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums](#), a best-selling book co-authored by the course instructor. Through the course of the semester, the students will explore both local sites and those owned and managed by Newport Restoration Foundation in Newport, Rhode Island. The most notable of these sites is the Rough Point Museum, the Newport home of heiress, collector, and philanthropist Doris Duke.

After undertaking an analysis and design process that combines rigorous, methodical, and critical thinking with ideas that are speculative, subjective and anecdotal, students will suggest interventions to enliven these sites and ultimately increase their visitation.

## METHOD

Students will undertake an analysis of historical places and the temporal events that occur within them using techniques that may include Video and Sound Mapping; Habitation, Movement and Distinct Activity Studies; Imagination, Excitement and Energy Graphs; and various tagging techniques. They will also become familiar with the *Tactical Urbanism* movement that incorporates low-cost, temporary installations in hopes of creating long-term change.

## EVALUATION & GRADING

Quiz on Readings 10%; Research Studies 40%; Tactical Anarchist Plan/Project(s) 50%

## CLASS TEXT

Lydon, Mike & Anthony Garcia, [Tactical Urbanism: Short Term Action for Long Term Gain](#), Island Press 2015  
Ryan, Deborah and Franklin Vagnone, [Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums](#). Left Coast Press, 2015