Skyscrapers are important landmarks of the city and contribute to urban quality and livability. Mixed-use high-rises, which combine residential, office, and retail spaces, can make a positive contribution to Chicago’s Loop (Central Business District) in terms of architectural significance, urban vitality, and urban infrastructure. The project is designed to explore the relationship of the skyscraper to a complex physical, social, and environmental context while engaging issues of detail and construction in expressing architectural ideas and concepts. Mixed-use tall buildings resemble vertical cities when we consider their complex interplay of program, building systems integration, vertical circulation, security and life-safety, performance, and scale.

Site. The one-block site is located in Chicago’s River North District on the north bank of the Chicago River, just to the east of the Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers and south of the NBC Tower. It is bounded by E. Illinois Street (north), East River Drive (east), E. North Water Street (south) and N. Park Drive (west). This area continues to be vital for mixed-use high-rise development.

Integrated Building Systems. Tall buildings optimize design criteria, such as vertical circulation, life-safety and accessibility, space utilization, and performance-based criteria. This project will stress integration relating it to Leonard Bachman’s Integrated Buildings: The Systems Basis of Architecture (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 2002).

Requirements. The studio will require at least one or two field trips to Chicago to visit the site and to meet with architects. The nature of the project requires research about the city and precedents in order to understand how to design a high-rise complex that is programmatically and technically feasible as well as site-specific. The first few weeks of the semester will focus on site and case study research and building a site model. We will work with Martin Wolf and Mark Frisch of Solomon Cordwell Buenz (Chicago) who will serve as project advisors. The design process will require multiple reviews (formal and informal) with expertise from related areas, such as structural engineering and mechanical systems. Special attention will be given to the integration of physical systems with programs that occurs at each stage of the project.

Reviews. Pin-up reviews will occur weekly and bi-weekly with models and drawings. There will be two formal reviews: a mid-term with schematic designs and a final review with design development. A detailed model and a full set of drawings of the project will be required for the mid-term and final reviews. The studio will culminate with a public presentation of the projects.

This will be an intensive studio dedicated to the contemporary skyscraper conceived as a vertical city with office, living, retail, and parking. It will require technical and design skills, and significant time outside of studio.