The Japan Cultural Center: Architecture in a Transition Environment
Illinois School of Architecture       University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
ARCH 573, Spring Semester 2016
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The graduate design studio intends to explore the meaning of Architecture generated by the cultural, political, and philosophical determinants of our constantly evolving ethnic heritage. Though we are a diverse society of many origins, our first two centuries of Architectural, urban, and landscape development have been rooted in the history of Western European influences, thought and practice. Such a legacy has left America with an Architecture, Urban, Landscape environment grounded by European typologies and only substantially challenged by the early century leap to embrace the modern movement and its planning impact. In the last 50 years, the built design professions have been challenged culturally, politically, and philosophically to respond to this duality.

The Japan Cultural Center and gardens challenges the new urban landscapes of decentralized spaces, vast landscapes connected by gridded thoroughfares, and architecture built to recognize the technological impact of the automobile. The challenge is increased by the insertion of a culture with a substantial impact on 20th century western architecture.

Topics representing theory, thought, and architectural history will have a significant impact on the design studio process: History of Japanese Architectural influences, Japanese cultural expectations, History of the American street and campus.

THE JAPAN CULTURAL CENTER

The intent is to design a cultural center on a site where Japanese companies reside or with a University with a long heritage of appreciation for and study of Japanese culture.

The Japan Cultural Center offers an environment for maintaining a cultural link to the Japanese homeland. The center becomes a place for social contacts, for cultural events, and for initiating orientation programs. As important as it is to create a celebration of the Japanese culture into the American consciousness through outreach programs.

The site will be a large multi-acre tract of land with three site choices: the University of Illinois Arboretum near the current Japan House, Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield Hills, or a nationally known extensive landscape area with the inclusion of Japanese Gardens.