How do we define meaning in a dense urban environment? How do we go beyond simple form to communicate experience through architecture? This seminar will study the intersection between meaning, form and experience using Chicago’s urban spaces as the site of investigation. Students will define their own approach of representing meaning in architecture, develop a rich and trackable process for doing so, and develop their point of view on ways to combine the empirical and the experiential.

Our studio time together will combine two main components: field investigation and critical discussions about contemporary architectural philosophy. We will spend time absorbing the qualities of urban spaces, including the basic physical dimensions, qualities of light, tactility of materials, and the sounds of the space and it’s inhabitants.

For the field investigation, students will map, record and present a combination of practical and experiential data for multiple urban sites throughout the Loop, culminating in a design project where students will use their newly-developed process to create a specific space within the urban fabric of Chicago’s Loop.

Our critical discussions on contemporary architectural philosophy will include works by Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Perez-Gomez, Gaston Bachelard, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, Louis Kahn, Christian Norberg-Schulz, Martin Heidegger, Herman Hertzberger, Bernard Tschumi, John Dewey, and Italo Calvino, among others.