Culturally- and Environmentally- Sensitive Architecture

“An understanding of the loss of cultural identity, and the struggle to preserve, regain and continue to evolve [their] culture, is one of the fundamental challenges facing Native American tribes across the country, and therefore a fundamental challenge of designing contemporary Native American architecture.” – Daniel Glenn, “Design for the Seven Generations”

Course Description: The studio project will require the analysis of four sites on campus, the development of a program for, and the design of, a new building for UIUC Native American students, faculty, staff, and their guests. The new building must resonate with the diverse number of represented tribes coming to the UIUC campus by being culturally appropriate while taking into account respect for the land and regional seasonal changes. There are 565 Federally-recognized Tribes in North America with the Midwest Region being home to 35 tribal governments and reservations. The design task is to represent and celebrate their diverse and unique identity, but not by engaging in stereotypes or iconic specific images. At a recent (June 23, 2012) Indian Community conference held in Chicago there were conversations by the approximately 200 attendees concerning how they could respect their diversity while coming together to support one another. What emerged was recognition that they held in common a respect for the seasonal changes of the region. One of their plans is to establish a “sustainable calendar of events that are cyclical and seasonal in nature.” Your building design will be evaluated based on how successfully it supports Native Americans on campus, and its ability to reestablish tribal connections to the land by assisting people to perceive and appreciate the seasonal changes of the region.

Objectives:
1. Design a new building where Native Americans on campus and their visitors can gather.
2. Design a new building which incorporates the ideas concerning respect for land as held by a diverse Native American population who for centuries owned and occupied this land.
3. Articulate your own ideas about land and formulate a statement outlining your understanding of the relationship between land, architecture and the people who will be using the architecture designed by you. This will require research, sensory perception, and self-reflection to articulate how cultural and environmental sustainability are addressed within your value system. It will result in a position indicating how you believe buildings should touch the land, interact with the environment, and will indicate how your building designs can address a range of perceptual possibilities.

Process:
1. Four potential sites on campus have been selected. Teams will be assembled, and each will evaluate one of these sites from two perspectives: the sensorial and the Native American. The team will prepare a PowerPoint presentation and present it to the studio and invited guests.
2. Each team will read material by or on one Native American architect [Johnpaul Jones (Cherokee-Chocatow), Dr. Craig Howe (Oglala Sioux) or Daniel Glenn (Crow)] and determine how they articulate the relationship between the natural and built environment. This will be presented as an outline similar to the table “Principles of Sustainable Design” prepared by Stephen R. Kellert (Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection, page 97). Throughout the course of the semester you will also be evolving a table outlining your values and relationship to the environment which will demonstrate your design criteria.
3. Prepare a building program for the