Our country is in the throes of a deep reckoning with racial injustice, economic precarity, legacies of discrimination and violence, and other civil rights issues. This advanced research course explores the presence of these civil rights issues, their heritage, and opportunities for reckoning at the scale of the site and the landscape. How should site of civil rights struggles, triumphs and other legacies be recognized, interpreted, preserved, managed and otherwise made visible?

The course will draw on several fields, including history, preservation, management, and design. It will consist of lecture/seminar sessions (to outline and examine issues) and practical workshops (applying and exploring professional tools for designing, preserving and otherwise sustaining the sites themselves). The workshops will also create a space to collaborate with colleagues at Tuskegee University’s Department of Architecture and other partners.

The workshops will focus on two specific civil rights heritage sites:

- Armstrong School, a small, early 20th-century building on the grounds of a Baptist church in Macon County, Alabama. It is a rare legacy of Jim Crow discrimination and separate racial education, a precursor to the Rosenwald Schools. Preservation efforts are in their first stages for the School; we will partner with Tuskegee to devise practical, yet imaginative futures for the school and its surrounding landscape.
- Marian Anderson House, in Center City Philadelphia, the longtime rowhouse home of the renowned musician and civil-rights icon, which has been preserved and interpreted as a heritage site but faces a crossroads in its management, design and programming.

Individual student projects will be related to one of these two sites. WSOD’s Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites plans ongoing work with both sites, beyond this semester’s work.

Enrollment in the course will be strictly limited to 10-12 students, and we welcome those from a variety of backgrounds, disciplines and departments.
PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

January 20
Problem Statements/Conceptual Framework of the course

Readings will include:
Ta-Nehisi Coates. Between the World and Me. (selections)
The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

January 27 and February 3
Civil Rights Historiography
Review of contexts

Readings will include:
Equal Justice Initiative. Reports.
National Park Service theme studies and other reports.
Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History.
As well as varied websites, museum exhibits, and digital humanities sites.

February 10
Workshop 1:
Introductions to both sites: Armstrong School; Marian Anderson House
Introduce and initiate comparables research

February 17
Student case studies presentations: find, analyze and present a civil rights heritage site or issue of your choosing

February 24
March 3
March 10
Case histories from the National Trust's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund:
Readings and interviews exploring the stories of six Action Fund grantees associated with civil rights sites, including: (two each week)

- 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham
- Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham
- Tuskegee University in AL
- McDonough School in New Orleans
- Paul Robeson in Philly
- AG Gaston Motel, Birmingham
March 17
Workshop 2:
Opportunities Assessments of both Armstrong and Marian Anderson sites

March 24
Student-led presentations on issue papers (and associated research)

March 31
Workshop 3:
Draft Programming and Preservation Recommendations / Introduce final project assignment

Project dossiers by each team will require:

- research the site’s cultural significance and conditions
- conduct interviews about future programming opportunities
- research and analyze comparables
- prepare a final report on the challenges and opportunities
- deliver a presentation to project partners/owners

April 7
Student-led presentations on issue papers (and associated research)

April 14
April 21
Work sessions with individuals and groups on final project dossiers

April 28:
Columbia-Penn student exchange, part 2 (presentation of final project dossiers)

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Research a case study on civil-rights heritage preservation/memorialization (10-slide deck and short in-class discussion)
- Issues paper and presentation (5 pages; lead short in-class discussion)
- Project dossiers on either Armstrong School or Marian Anderson House (students will be organized into teams and contribute to both collaborative and individual work products, which will differ somewhat according to site demands)
- Participation in class discussions and workshops, including the April 28 student-led exchange/colloquium with students from Columbia’s historic preservation program (a continuation of the Fall 2020 dialog)