

Refugee Housing: Uganda

ARC 404: Architecture Design Practicum



Photograph: UNHCR/F. Noy, "Matiop's First Days as a Refugee in Uganda," CC BY-NC 2.0

Professor: Korydon Smith

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Location: Crosby 315

Time: 11a – 1:40p

Though not well known, "Uganda has one of the most favourable refugee protection environments in the world—providing for freedom of movement, right to work, and...land for refugee settlements."

- UNHCR (Uganda country website)

Background

Media coverage has been widespread regarding the worldwide refugee crisis, documenting the heralding journeys of refugees across borders or their plight in refugee camps, as well as the security concerns of pass-through and destination countries. Aside from an October 2016 article in *The Economist*, however, journalists and scholars have paid little attention to proactive, effective, and large-scale non-camp resettlement strategies such as that seen in northern Uganda through the work of the Danish Refugee Council.

In recent history, Uganda has hosted refugees fleeing violence and other insecurities from Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other countries. As of the end of 2016, Uganda hosted more than 600,000 refugees from South Sudan alone. South Sudan, the world's newest country, has experienced international and domestic conflicts since its secession from the Republic of Sudan in 2011. Fighting beginning in early July 2016 forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee to Kenya, Sudan, and other regions within South Sudan, but primarily Uganda. The number of refugees entering Uganda increased from averages of about 200 per day the first half of the year to thousands per day starting in July, including more than 8,000 on July 21. Throughout September 2016, an average of 2,829 South Sudanese refugees crossed into Uganda each day; during a similar time frame, refugee settlements in the Adjumani region saw an influx of nearly 1,000 refugees per day, making it one of the largest refugee resettlement areas in the world, with over 200,000 South Sudanese expats.

The influx placed a strain on refugee collection-, transit-, and reception centers, as sleeping quarters, latrines, food stocks, and health clinics approached breakpoints. Decongestion of such centers, i.e., rapid resettlement of new arrivals, became exceedingly urgent, and remains a challenge. Among the greatest difficulties is providing quality affordable housing that meets UNHCR guidelines, cultural needs and preferences, and tight timelines.

This semester, therefore, we will have a simple but ambitious question motivating us:

The Challenge

What are the potential strategies for providing 7,000 culturally informed dwellings per week at a cost of \$500 per unit for South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda?

Goals and Objectives

Learning about and exploring solutions for the immense and complex challenges of refugee resettlement, housing in particular, is one major goal area for the course. A second goal is to provide an opportunity to explore various methods of design thinking and, as graduating seniors, reflect upon the design methods you have used in prior studios. The objectives for each of these goal areas are outlined below:

Goal 1: Exploring refugee resettlement and housing, including:

1. understanding the geo-political context of South Sudan and Uganda
2. documenting the trends, demographics, and experiences of South Sudanese refugees
3. documenting the challenges that the UNHCR and its partners face in northern Uganda
4. documenting current resettlement processes and housing strategies in northern Uganda
5. classifying the housing prototypes and strategies for refugees seen in other contexts

6. developing alternative prototypes and strategies for refugee housing in northern Uganda

Goal 2: Exploring methods of design thinking, including:

1. *disciplinary thinking*, which emphasizes highly specialized knowledge and incremental progress in filling knowledge gaps
2. *multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary thinking*, which seeks to understand the full complexity of problems and utilizes both closely allied disciplines and less obvious disciplines and sources of knowledge to understand and solve problems
3. *metaphorical and analogical thinking*, which utilizes seemingly unrelated terms, concepts, and processes to frame problems and explore solutions
4. *dialectical thinking*, which utilizes a tri-partite framework—thesis (an assertion), antithesis (its opposite), and synthesis (a search for common ground)—to define problems and explore options
5. *associative thinking*, akin to “free thinking,” which seeks to connect emergent thoughts with the personal experiences and knowledge of the individual
6. *wild thinking*, which seeks to remove the limits of conscious thought by using any one of an array of deconstructionist or surrealist tactics

Structure

I will act, primarily, as a facilitator, seeking the full engagement of all students each session and between sessions. While the larger goals of course have been set, week-to-week work will be guided by the questions, curiosities, and interests of each of you. Questions and ideas will be launched during class, utilizing one of the design thinking techniques described above, and further articulated for the subsequent class. We will begin each day with short presentations and feedback on the work done over the past week. You are encouraged, though not required, to work in teams of 2-3, and to change teams week to week. Presentations and submitted work, each week, will be in the form of an 8.5x11” infographic and a short-form blog/essay (400-500 words). The final weeks of the semester will be devoted to developing the most promising ideas and organizing the work of the studio. The schedule, subject to change, is as follows:

Week 1, Feb 03: Introductions

Week 2, Feb 10: Clarification (Pt. 1: Big Questions)

Week 3, Feb 17: Clarification (Pt. 2: The Context)

Week 4, Feb 24: Clarification (Pt. 3: Housing Prototypes and Strategies)

Week 5, Mar 03: Ideation (Pt. 1: Disciplinary Thinking)

Week 6, Mar 10: Ideation (Pt. 2: Interdisciplinary Thinking)

Week 7, Mar 17: Ideation (Pt. 3: Analogical Thinking)

Week 8, Mar 24: Spring Break (No Class)

Week 9, Mar 31: Ideation (Pt. 4: Dialectical Thinking)

Week 10, Apr 07: Ideation (Pt. 5: Associative Thinking)

Week 11, Apr 14: Ideation (Pt. 6: Wild Thinking)

Week 12, Apr 21: Development (Pt. 1)

Week 13, Apr 28: Development (Pt. 2)

Week 14, May 05: Development (Pt. 3)

Week 15, May 12: Organization and Exhibition

Assessment

Grades will be linked to the fulfillment of the learning goals, engagement in course activities, and submission of weekly assignments, per the following:

Engagement	13 sessions x 2 points = 26 points
There will be one point for attendance and one point for delivering clear, useful, and continuous peer feedback.	
Infographics	9 boards x 4 points = 36 points
There will be one point each for: (a) content relevance, (b) conceptual and visual impact, (c) graphic organization, and (d) quality and accuracy of content.	
Essays	9 essays x 4 points = 36 points
There will be one point each for: (a) content relevance, (b) logic and flow, (c) referral/citation, and (d) grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	
Developed Proposal	3 iterations x 4 points = 12 points
Grading criteria will be established collectively during week 12.	
Bonus Credit	TBD
Total	110 points

Grades, generally, are as follows, with +/- used for borderline cases:

- A 90+ points
- B 80+ points
- C 70+ points
- F Less than 70 points or failure to earn at least 20 “engagement” points

Attendance

If you are absent due to illness, family emergency, etc., please contact the professor via e-mail or phone as soon as possible. If you are absent from all or part of a session, please gather all information, handouts, and discussion notes from your colleagues.

Resources

A set of initial resources for the course has been assembled and will be discussed in class. In addition, we all will add to these resources throughout the semester.

Additionally, students with any documented needs or preferential requests are advised to speak with me as well as the appropriate campus agency, e.g., Office of Accessibility Resources, as soon as possible in order to provide appropriate accommodations or modifications to the learning and assessment techniques of this course.

Integrity

This course provides a collaborative learning environment, including a large reliance on one another for information sharing, idea generation, and feedback. Likewise, teams will utilize the ideas and feedback of other teams and resources. It is important to keep track of the sources and evolution of your work, and to cite sources accordingly.

Equally important: while you may think of yourself only as a student, I believe you are here both to learn and to teach; you are capable of teaching—of teaching yourself and of teaching others. Reciprocally, I am here not only to teach but also to learn. Please aim for openness and humility in the personal, cultural, and scholarly expertise each of us brings. Strive toward clarity in speaking and in listening. Clarity and high-quality education are underpinned

by integrity—honesty with your instructors, honesty with your colleagues, and honesty with yourself. Please be generous in sharing your concerns, satisfactions, and recommendations as we move through the semester.

Appendix 1: Teamwork Survival Guide

The course offers an engaged, collaborative, *thinking-doing* environment. It simulates the intense, interdisciplinary setting of many modern work environments that tackle complex problems. Problem definition and solution finding are often cyclical and iterative, not linear. Likewise, the methods used are often diverse, and the process is often not fully planned at the outset, but becomes clearer over time (what some call “emergent design”). Flexibility, in both working and thinking, is essential, particularly as problems and solutions come from multiple domains and multiple scales. Often times, individual success depends on team success and vice versa.

Good teamwork comes from an awareness of oneself, as well as an awareness of the dynamics of the group. Differences in gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, personality type, life experiences, and a host of other factors influence discussions and, therefore, the progress of the team. Please be mindful and respectful of these differences. Enrollment in the course implies consent with the guidelines below, which are adaptations from and additions to Susskind and Cruikshank’s “Suggested Ground Rules” in *Breaking Robert’s Rules* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

1. Each person agrees to fully participate, through active listening and speaking, in all studio discussions.
2. Only one person shall speak at a time. Everyone else shall listen keenly, not “wait to talk.”
3. Each person is responsible for making sure she/he understands what has been said. Each person shall ask questions of clarification when necessary.
4. Each person shall be as succinct and direct as possible, giving time for others to speak.
5. Each person shall express her/his own views, not speak for others. (E.g., do not preface your comments with “we think”; instead consider saying: “I think.”)
6. Each person shall make her/his best effort to stay on topic and follow the trajectory of the conversation.
7. Each person is responsible for stating when she/he disagrees and, then, provide an alternative.
8. Each person shall make every effort to be open-minded and to evaluate others’ comments based on the merits of what is being said, not based on personality or biases.
9. Each person shall make clear, when speaking and when listening, the difference between factual statements and statements of opinion.
10. Each person shall seek to identify and clarify multiple sides of a debate (issue), and, simultaneously, seek to provide a common ground (resolution).
11. No one shall ask individuals about their religion, sexuality, ethnicity, other personal information, etc., and at no time will anyone make derogatory or inflammatory comments about individuals or groups based on religion, sexuality, and ethnicity.
12. No one shall make personal attacks. The instructor reserves the right to dismiss anyone from the Global Innovation Challenge and pull anyone aside who does not abide by this or other policies.

Appendices 2: Infographics and Essay Guide

Guidance will be provided in class regarding the infographics and essays.