COURSE DESCRIPTION

The object of the course is to introduce students to the discipline of architecture as a discursive field. The course aims to foster a critical understanding and awareness of some of the decisive ideas, theories and debates relating to architecture and urbanism over the past century and beyond.

*Perceptions of Architecture* is organized thematically into three parts. The first, “Architecture, a Brief History,” casts a wide historical net, examining architecture from its shadowy beginnings (the tomb, the stone, the tree) to its (dematerialized) present state. The purpose here is to interrogate the profession: what is the architect’s role and how has it changed? What questions and challenges are faced by architects in the design process? What is the architect’s responsibility vis-a-vis the larger public sphere? This first of three parts will foreground the role that urban and spatial organization play in the construction of social practices, human subjectivities and political awareness.

The second part, “Concepts and Representations,” will shift the focus from the architect to the building by examining key elements of architectural design: the drawing, space, construction and the plan. The goal here is to develop in students a more intimate sense of the way that architects conceive, develop and translate ideas into built form.

The third part, “Architecture in the Expanded Field,” takes its title from Rosalind Krauss’ pivotal essay on the land art sculpture movement in the 1970s. Krauss argued that sculptors had effaced all identifying markers of their discipline to the extent that their work could only be determined by a series of negative propositions (not-landscape, not-architecture, not-sculpture, etc…). This final part of the course seeks to interrogate the outer edges of architectural theory and practice, allowing us to reflect on the nature of architectural expertise and on the horizons and the limits of design thinking.
COURSE SUMMARY

PART I: Architecture, A Brief History
- The Architect
- The House
- The City
- Utopia

PART II: Concepts and Representations
- Drawing: Spatial Representation and Projection Systems
- Space: Abstraction and Experience
- Construction: Structure and Production
- The Plan: Function, Program and Spatial Organization

PART III: Architecture in the Expanded Field
- The Digital: From Computation to Replication
- The Architecture Industry (Lecture by Todd Rouhe)
- Datascape (Lecture by Leah Meisterlin)
- Against Architecture

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Readings**: There will be approximately 60-80 pages of reading a week. There are three required texts per week. The reading will be posted on courseworks. All readings must be completed before the relevant lecture. You are required to bring a copy of the readings to the Wednesday seminars. While it is preferable to print the readings out, you may have them ready on your laptop/tablet screen. Also, please keep in mind that it is essential to gain a good grasp of the main themes elaborated in the readings before class. You’ll probably need to read some essays twice and do additional research online to get a proper handle on the material.

2. **Course Assessment and Grading**:

   - Participation and Attendance (Seminars)  
     12 x 1 point  = 12%
   - Weekly Reading Response Questions:  
     12 x 1 point  = 12%
   - Class Presentation / Seminar Chair  
     = 16%
   - Assignment 1:  
     / Due: Fri 02/13  
     = 10%
   - Assignment 2  
     / Due: Fri 03/13  
     = 10%
   - Term Paper Outline  
     2 copies  / Due: Fri 03/06 at 10AM outside DIANA 500F  
     = 5%
   - Term Paper First Draft  
     / Due: Fri 03/27 at 10AM outside DIANA 500F  
     = 15%
   - Term Paper Final Draft  
     / Due: Fri 04/24 at 10AM outside DIANA 500F  
     = 15%
   - Term Paper Final Submission:  
     / Due Wed 05/13 at 10AM  
     = 20%

3. **Participation and Attendance**: Attendance to all course meetings is mandatory. An attendance sheet will be distributed at each meeting. More than two unexcused absences will lead to a reduction of one letter grade. More than four unexcused absences will lead to an automatic failure in the course. If you have a good reason for missing class, please inform the professor by email beforehand. Students are required to wisely and consistently contribute to the weekly seminar discussions. Only full participation will assure that you receive full marks for this course assessment criteria.

4. **Weekly Reading Response Questions**: Weekly Reading Response Questions are due Sunday nights at 7pm before Monday lectures. Questions should be between 100-150 words (no less, no more). Questions should not seek a factual answer (When did so and so...? How much ...? ) but should be used as a way to reflect on the overarching theme of the week. The idea is to briefly summarize one or more of the arguments in the readings, and to open this polemic to a larger discussion or debate. The questions will help generate a discussion during the Wednesday seminars. I will set up online discussion boards for each week. You will be able to see your classmates’ questions only after you have added your own question to
the forum. Once you have added your question, I recommend that you read some of the other questions on the forum. Please also bring a copy of your question to the Wednesday seminars.

5. **Class Presentations / Seminar Chair:** Students will be grouped into pairs (referred to here as “seminar chairs”) and the pair will be required to give a presentation and lead the discussion for one seminar. Each of the seminar chairs will present one of the two readings with bullet points. The third reading (marked by a dash), will be used as supplementary material that may be brought into the presentation if useful. Seminar chairs are also encouraged to consult some of the additional readings at the end of the syllabus. Seminar chairs are required to submit their presentation notes to the professor at the end of the seminar.

Seminar chairs should make sure to include these elements in their presentations:

i. **Background information on the author:** Be sure to open your close reading by telling us a little about the author. What was the author’s formation (an architect, philosopher?). Is the author an import figure? Why? What particular works or ideas is the author remembered for? Did the author have significant political or intellectual affinities? When did the author write their significant works? What context is the work reacting to? What debates was the author embroiled in?

ii. **A close reading of the texts:** A good close reading of a text will depart from the narrative sequence of that text and begin by foregrounding the main themes and arguments. In other words, you should identify the main themes and arguments (thesis) of the reading and state them at the onset of your presentation rather than tediously going through every element of the author’s argument. After that you can fill in the details: how does he support his/her claim? etc... A great presentation will have clearly stated the main themes, arguments and will have identified the stakes of such arguments (Why is this important? What is the context? How does this argument/idea differ from other possible interpretations?).

iii. **Visual presentation:** As chairs, you must each choose at least one building, urban scheme, or visual project to illustrate the main themes and questions addressed in the readings. You should combine your images into one slideshow which you’ll present as after the close reading on the texts. You may need to consult with your professor a week before your presentation to determine what might be appropriate projects to present.

iv. **Chairing the discussion:** The seminar chairs are responsible for leading the seminar discussion. Prepare a set of questions or discussion points to get the conversation started.

6. **Assignment 1:** Due: Fri 02/13. The first assignment is a review of *Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities*, an exhibit currently on view at the MOMA. Your seminar professor will give you more details regarding the submission format. Essays should be between 400-500 words and can include images of the show, or photographed details of the exhibited projects. You may want to read reviews of other shows on architecture to get a sense of the format and tone. The New York Times is a good place to start for these. You should also make sure to read all of the available material included in the show and refer to it in your review. Please make sure to use footnotes following the Chicago Manual of Style 16th edition.

7. **Assignment 2:** Due: Fri 03/13. Speaking of his approach to architectural design, Mies van der Rohe famously remarked that “God is in the details.” The Seagram building at 375 Park Avenue, between 52nd and 53rd Streets in New York City is among Mies’ most important buildings. For this assignment, I ask that you visit the building with a camera in hand and snap a photo of a detail of the building that you think is significant. Explain your choice in a 400-500 word essay. What does this detail that you’ve captured say about the building? What does it say about the building’s structure and construction method? How does the photo you’ve taken reveal something of Mies’ approach to architecture? Robin Evans describes the paradoxical nature of Mies’ buildings, is there something paradoxical about your photo?

8. **Term Paper:** Each student will prepare a 10 page term paper (2500-3000 words) based on the theme or topic of the student’s choice. You should set up an individual appointment with your professor to discuss your paper topic ideas before starting on your outline, which is due March 5th.

9. **Writing Fellows Program:** This course is part of the Writing Fellows Program at Barnard College. Writing Fellows will review the outline, the first draft and the final drafts of your term papers. Failure to submit your outline, or drafts to the Writing Fellows will result in a 10% grade reduction for the term paper.
The Head Writing Fellow for your course is Caroline Lange (cml2191@barnard.edu; 860-597-7860).

10. **Statement from the Writing Fellows Program:** One of the requirements of this course is working with a Barnard Writing Fellow. The Barnard Writing Fellows Program (founded in 1991) is designed to help students strengthen their writing in all disciplines. We believe that writing is a process; it happens in stages, in different drafts. Often the most fruitful dialogues about your writing occur with your peers, and the Writing Fellows are just that. They are not tutors or TAs; they are Barnard undergraduates who participate in a semester-long workshop in the teaching of writing and, having finished their training, staff the Barnard Writing Center and work in courses across the disciplines. It is not their role to comment on the accuracy of the content of your papers, nor to grade your work. They are not enrolled in your course. You will probably know more about the course’s specific material than they do, and your papers must therefore be written clearly enough so that the non-expert can understand them.

Two dates are listed for each piece of writing assigned. You will hand in your first draft to your instructor on the first date, who will pass it on to your Writing Fellow. The Writing Fellow will read it, write comments, and conference with you on it, after which you will have a week to revise the paper and hand in a final version on the second date.

Sign up for your Writing Fellow in class when you first hand in your paper. Conference locations will be indicated on the sign-up sheet. Please make a note of when and where you have scheduled your conference. Also, please make sure to record your Writing Fellow’s email and phone number when you sign up for your conference in case you need to contact her.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Develop a critical understanding and awareness of some of the decisive ideas, theories and debates relating to architecture and urbanism over the past century.
2. Develop an understanding of the history of the profession of architecture, and of the questions and challenges faced by architects in the design process.
3. Understand the role that urban and spatial organization play in the construction of social practices, human subjectivities and political awareness.
4. Understand the way that discourses traditionally seen as external to the discipline of architecture inform and elucidate its practice and production.
5. Understand the ideological and paradigmatic shifts in history that have shaped our notions of cities and architecture.
6. Demonstrate the ability to read texts critically and to relate issues encountered in these texts to contemporary architectural discourse and practice.
7. Develop research, writing, and critical thinking skills through the research and writing of a term paper that use textual and visual evidence to state a meaningful thesis.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment with me as soon as possible. Disabled students who need test or classroom accommodations must be registered in advance with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

In no case, may you copy from someone else's homework or notes. Similar essays submissions are grounds for failure. All paraphrases and citations of the words and ideas of others must be properly credited (author, title, page number) to avoid plagiarism, which is grounds for failure. This class is conducted in accordance with University policy on matters of academic honesty and integrity and with attention to the College’s Honor Code.
NOTE: All essays listed in the course schedule below are required reading.
- presentation reading
  - non-presentation reading

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1
Wed 01/21 Introduction

PART I: ARCHITECTURE, A BRIEF HISTORY

WEEK 2
Mon 01/26
[The architect through the ages: Renaissance disegno, 19th c. engineer vs. architect, beaux-arts "composition," the “avant-garde” architect, women in architecture, non-plan, the death of the author. Architectural theory through the ages: the treatise, the manifesto, after theory. The iconography of the architect. The architect’s instruments]

Wed 01/28
- Kenneth Frampton, “The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects” (1979)

WEEK 3
Mon 02/02
[The origins of shelter in Vitruvius, Cesariano, Laugier, Lequeu. Housing from the Renaissance to the present: Palladio’s Villa Rotunda, 18th c. character theory, the 19th c. interior, Loos’ Villa Muller, Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoy, Fuller’s Dymaxion house, bubbles and nomadic enclosures, Venturi’s Vanna Venturi house, Lynn’s Embryological houses ]

Wed 02/04
**WEEK 4**

**Mon 02/09**

[The emergence of the modern metropolis: the arcade, Marxism, St-Simon and the city as circulatory organism, railway space and time, Haussmann, the Opéra Garnier, the Flaneur, the modern Blasé individual. Modern schism between public and private sphere: the Looshaus. Speed and flow in modern and contemporary cities: linear cities to spaces of flow]

**Wed 02/11**

- Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903).

**Fri 02/13**

**Due:** Review of *Uneven Growth*, MOMA Exhibit

**WEEK 5**

**Mon 02/16**


**Wed 02/18**


**Sat 02/21**

**Field Trip:** Lower East Side. Led by Todd Rouhe
PART II: CONCEPTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

WEEK 6
DRAWING: SPATIAL REPRESENTATION AND PROJECTION SYSTEMS

Mon 02/23
[Perspectivism to objectivity: one and two-point perspective, anamorphosis, projective geometry, axonometry. “This is not a pipe”: the collapse representational space: Piranesi, Eisenstein, House X. Contemporary representation: CAD, diagrams]

Wed 02/25

WEEK 7
SPACE: ABSTRACTION AND EXPERIENCE

Mon 03/02

Wed 03/04

Fri 03/06
**Due:** term paper outline. 2 copies (submitted to your instructor and the writing fellow).

WEEK 8
CONSTRUCTION: STRUCTURE AND PRODUCTION

Mon 03/09

Wed 03/11

Fri 03/13
**Due:** Photograph and description of Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram building.
WEEK 10

THE PLAN: FUNCTION, PROGRAM AND SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Mon 03/23

Wed 03/25

Fri 03/27 Due: draft version of first half of the term paper submitted to your writing fellow.

Sat 03/28
Field Trip: New Haven (all day).

WEEK 11

Mon 04/06 Monday: writing workshop

Wed 04/08 Wednesday: no class

PART III: ARCHITECTURE IN THE EXPANDED FIELD

WEEK 12

THE DIGITAL: FROM COMPUTATION TO REPLICATION

Mon 03/30

Wed 04/01
WEEK 13

Mon 04/13
[Market dominance makes it difficult to reclaim architecture and architectural practice from the capitalist ideology of production. This lecture will explore the conditions under which architecture is initiated; observe architecture as a social act and search for definitions of architecture beyond the conventional spatial definitions of the object-form. Through looking at the architect's response to the status-quo and counter-culture sentiments, the objective of this discussion will be an increased awareness of the circumstances in which we operate leading to an expanded definition of architecture and architectural practice.]

Wed 04/15

WEEK 14

Mon 04/20

Wed 04/22

Fri 04/24
Due: draft of complete version of the term paper submitted to your writing fellow
WEEK 15


Wed 05/13  Due: Final version of the term paper submitted to your instructor.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

PART I: ARCHITECTURE, A BRIEF HISTORY

THE ARCHITECT
  • Avery Library, Catalogue of the Andrew Alpern collection of drawing instruments at the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Columbia University in the City of New York (NY: W.W. Norton, 2010).

THE HOUSE

THE CITY
• Margaret Crawford, excerpts from *Everyday Urbanism*, in *The Urban Design Reader*, Michael Larice and Elizabeth Macdonald eds. (Taylor and Francis, 2013), 344-357.

UTOPIA
• David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
• Anthony Vidler, “Cities of Tomorrow,” *Artforum International* (Sep 2012).
• Martino Stierli, “Building No Place: Oscar Niemeyer and the Utopias of Brasilia,” *JAE* 67, no. 1 (March 2013), 8-17.
• Mike Davis and Daniel Bertrand Monk, “Floating Utopias: Freedom and Unfreedom of the Seas,” in *Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism*
• Marie Theres Stauffer, "Utopian Reflections, Reflected Utopia- Urban Designs by Archizoom and Superstudio," AA Files 47 (Summer 2002).

PART II: CONCEPTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

DRAWING: SPATIAL REPRESENTATION AND PROJECTION SYSTEMS

SPACE: ABSTRACTION AND EXPERIENCE

CONSTRUCTION: STRUCTURE AND PRODUCTION

THE PLAN: FUNCTION, PROGRAM AND SPATIAL ORGANIZATION
• Peter Eisenman, “Post-Functionalism,” Oppositions 6 (Fall 1976): i-iii.
• Bernard Tschumi, “Illustrated Index, Themes from The Manhattan Transcripts,” AA Files 4 (July 1983), 65-75.

PART III: ARCHITECTURE IN THE EXPANDED FIELD
THE DIGITAL: FROM COMPUTATION TO REPLICATION

THE ARCHITECTURE INDUSTRY
• Karl Marx, “Ruthless Criticism, Letters from the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher Marx to Ruge”, September 1843.

DATASCAPES

AGAINST ARCHITECTURE
• Margaret Crawford, excerpts from Everyday Urbanism, in The Urban Design Reader, Michael Larice and Elizabeth Macdonald eds. (Taylor and Francis, 2013), 344-357.
• Anthony Vidler, ed., Architecture between Spectacle and Use (Clark Art Institute, 2008).