

ARCH UN 3920 CURATING ARCHITECTURE

DRAFT COPY: This is a provisional syllabus for informational purposes only and is subject to change prior to the commencement fall classes.

Barnard and Columbia Colleges, Architecture Department
Fall 2020 B, M/W 2:40-3:55 F 2:40-5:25 | Room TBD + Zoom
Ignacio G. Galán, igalan@barnard.edu, 212 854 5262
<https://calendly.com/igalan>, Diana Center 503B



Wafa Hourani, Qalandia

A. BRIEF

This course studies curatorial platforms as critical spaces and media in which architecture is exhibited, broadcasted, disseminated, and discussed, both within the discipline and in conversation with larger publics. We will study the history of modern fairs and exhibitions, books and journals, pedagogical platforms, and new media, and we will regard how each of them disseminates architecture, mediates its objects, and transforms its priorities. We will consider that curatorial platforms are not only repositories of stable knowledge and pre-defined artifacts but also critical conduits for the definition of what we call architecture: for the shaping, transgression, and disruption of its porous boundaries, its interests, its histories, its methods, and its canons, and for the signification of the artifacts that concern both the discipline and the profession. Curatorial platforms are not secondary to architecture, but the space in which architecture has been given its current form. In a moment of radical destabilization of past disciplinary hierarchies and a questioning of the forms of privilege that those hierarchies grant, we will discuss opportunities for new forms of disciplinary inclusion and for new priorities to be shaped.

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A weekly series of lectures will introduce the history of curatorial platforms in the modern period and will highlight a number of selected case studies. These lectures will be accompanied by seminar discussions through a small number of readings per topic. In addition to this history, this course will provide a platform for the discussion of contemporary curatorial practices through a weekly series of guest lectures with protagonists in the field. Finally, the course will provide a platform for the development of a project, particularly focused on the curation of digital space. Working in collaboration with IMATS, students will develop a website in which they will be asked to simultaneously shape new disciplinary priorities and organize the shapelessness of the internet. We will consider the digital space just as an exhibition room or as a publication page: a medium with its own constraints that effect the way in which architecture is disseminated and a space in and of itself, with its own architecture that can be intentionally arranged.

B. COURSE ORGANIZATION

This is an immersive course and will benefit from the new forms of teaching and learning allowed by this new format. There will be four 75min sessions per week, one on Mondays, one on Wednesdays, and a double session on Fridays. Each session will used for a diverse format: Lectures dedicated to the history of curatorial platforms, Seminar sessions with readings associated to those lectures, Guest lectures to discuss contemporary curatorial platforms, and Workshops sessions dedicated to develop the project.



Design Review in "Social and Behavioral Factors in Design" at the College for Environmental Design, University of California Berkeley.

Provisional calendar

M	26 Oct.	Lecture 1: Introduction
W	28 Oct.	Lecture 2: Fairs
F	30 Oct.	Guest Lecture
F	30 Oct.	Workshop Visit to MoMA (TBC—students taking the course online will be able to participate in the visit remotely)
M	-	
W	4 Nov.	Seminar 2: Fairs
F	6 Nov.	Guest Lecture
F	6 Nov.	Workshop. Assignment 1 due.
M	9 Nov.	Lecture 3: Museums
W	11 Nov.	Seminar 3: Museums
F	13 Nov.	Guest Lecture
F	13 Nov.	Workshop. Website (IMATS)
M	16 Nov.	Lecture 4: Publications
W	18 Nov.	Seminar 4: Publications
F	20 Nov.	Guest Lecture
F	20 Nov.	Workshop. Website (IMATS). Assignment 2 due.
M	23 Nov.	Lecture and Seminar 5: Heritage
W	-	
F	-	
M	30 Nov.	Lecture 6: Schools
W	2 Dec.	Seminar 6: Schools
F	4 Dec.	Guest Lecture
F	4 Dec.	Workshop. Assignment 3 due
M	7 Dec.	Seminar 7: New Media and the City
W	9 Dec.	Seminar 7: New Media and the City
F	11 Dec.	Guest Lecture
F	11 Dec.	Workshop: Pre-review
F	18 Dec.	REVIEW. Assignment 4 due

C. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Throughout the development of this advanced seminar, students should be able to:

1. Develop an understanding of the history of curatorial practices and their role in shaping architecture discourse.
2. Develop an understanding of the relationship between architecture and diverse media
3. Demonstrate the capacity to read texts critically, locate arguments, and advance sophisticated responses.
4. Demonstrate discussion skills, including the ability to contribute to collective forms of inquiry, analysis, and criticism.
5. Demonstrate advanced presentation competence, including diverse modes of oral presentation and the use of visual material.
6. Demonstrate the capacity to formulate and develop research in diverse media platforms.

D. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**Prerequisites**

There are no pre-requisites for this course, though you are expected to have a general knowledge of architecture, art history, or urban studies. A survey course in any of those disciplines is advised.

Attendance

Attendance to all course meetings is mandatory, either online or in person. Lectures will be recorded to facilitate a-synchronous learning. Absences due to illness, personal crisis, religious observance, or for other personal reasons need to be promptly communicated to the instructor by email. In such cases, I encourage you arrange an opportunity to review any important information you may have missed. Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's participation grade. Special considerations for the online version of this class will be communicated at the beginning of the semester and accommodations for students in incompatible time zones should speak to the studio instructors.

Participation

Participation in lectures, seminar discussions, and workshops is a key component of the class. Discussions are central to advance both individual and collective understanding of the course materials as well as to rehearse new arguments and lines of research.

Weekly Responses

Students should prepare a 150 to 250-word response to each set of readings. Responses should demonstrate that students have read the assigned texts critically and have been able to understand the main arguments at stake in the session. Rather than a summary of each individual reading, responses should highlight the main arguments of the session, relate the readings among them, highlight critical terms or passages. You can conclude your response either with a question that aims to generate discussion, a passage of the texts that you want to discuss, or an image with which you want to illustrate an argument central to the session.

Responses should be posted the night before the class (by midnight) in online discussion boards prepared on Canvas. Responses posted later than noon the day of the class will not count towards the grade. Students can miss one response throughout the semester. Responses will be evaluated on their capacity to analyze the texts, synthesize a response, and highlight areas of discussion.

Workshop Exercise

Throughout the semester, students will work to develop a curatorial intervention in the MoMA collection: either expanding it with a new set of artifacts or reorganizing its priorities through new conceptual frameworks. Considering the increasing relevance of digital platforms for the dissemination of architecture knowledge, and the renewed relevance that the virtual space has gained in the last months for study, work, and socialization, students will develop this project as a website. A series of workshops in collaboration with IMATS will facilitate the development of the project. Students are invited to think critically about the design and organization of the website in relation to the artifacts it aims to display and the overall topic. The project aims to simultaneously shape new disciplinary priorities and have a thesis about the internet as a medium for disciplinary discussion and dissemination.

The evaluation of the exercise will consider:

- the clarity and originality of the topic and curatorial approach, considering its relevance in relation to architecture discourse and contemporary questions beyond the discipline, its capacity to expand, challenge, or disturb current understanding of what architecture is, how it is conceptualized, and how it relates to the world.
- the selection of the exhibited artifacts, considering the media mobilized,
- the introductory text and the captions accompanying each of the artifacts
- the organization of the exhibition and the website
- the design aspects

Students are encouraged to work in small groups of 2-3 students, but are allowed to work independently. Wordcount and number of artifacts is per student.

Assignment 1. Exhibition Topic + 200 words description of the topic + 3 images

Assignment 2. Exhibition Title + 400 words curatorial text, including a reflection about the organization of the exhibition materials and the media mobilized + 3 press images + selection of 6 artifacts

Assignment 3. Exhibition title, with graphic design + 400 words curatorial text, including a reflection about the organization of the exhibition materials and the media mobilized + website organization+ 3 press images + selection of 6 artifacts, with 100 word text each.

Assignment 4. Final Website, including a 400 words curatorial and 6 artifacts with 100 word text each.

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Grading

Class Participation	10%
Reading Responses	15%
Assignment 1	10%
Assignment 2	15%
Assignment 3	20%
Assignment 4	30%