

## ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM IN AMERICA 1850-2012 [2016]

Columbia Barnard Course UN3901

Instructor: Suzanne Stephens

Hours: Thursday 11:00-1:00 p.m.

**Course Description:** This seminar investigates the criteria for judging architecture and urban design in the last 150 years in America. In doing so, the class will explore the values (such as functionalism, organicism), principles (compositional, contextual, etc.) and intellectual thought (such as idealism, positivism, phenomenology, structuralism, and post-structuralism) that shaped the criteria for evaluating the buildings. Seminar students will criticize the written results in order to arrive at an understanding about how architectural criticism could be improved.

The focus is on “applied” criticism in magazines and newspapers, where the buildings are evaluated according to criteria derived from theoretical principles peculiar to a certain time. During the seminar students analyze the critical essays to isolate those principles and criticize their effectiveness, while placing them within historical and philosophical frameworks. At the end of the semester, students themselves will criticize a contemporary work of architecture in New York for a seminar presentation.

**The seminar readings:** Readings include essays by seminal 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century architects and architectural historians, theorists and journalistic critics, such as Viollet-le-Duc, Montgomery Schuyler, Lewis Mumford, Philip Johnson, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Colin Rowe, Ada Louise Huxtable, Alan Colquhoun, Mark Wigley, Catherine Ingraham, Martin Filler, Michael Speaks, Sarah Whiting, Robert Somol, and George Baird. Interspersed among these essays are pertinent readings from the works of philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant, Emerson, Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Roland Barthes.

**Course Requirements:** There is no final paper and there is no exam. Instead, a one or one-and-a-half page paper is due each week, in which the student evaluates the readings according to an assigned topic. The last paper will be a short critique of a current work of architecture written by the student. Occasionally, the students will deliver short presentations (with slides) in lieu of the weekly paper. Another form of presentation is the debate, which students, divided up into opposing teams, will participate in during the last part of the semester.

Students will be graded on papers, class participation and the presentations. Readings may be changed during the semester, and substitutions can be made if a student has a particular interest in a topic not on the list.

Class attendance is seriously mandatory. One unexcused absence results in a lowered grade for the papers (e.g., A to B) due that week, plus a failing grade for that week on class participation. Two unexcused absences will result in a lowered grade for the course

(e.g. A to B). Three unexcused absences constitute a failing grade. To arrange an excused absence, you must discuss the matter with the instructor before the class. Two excused classes require a make-up class at the end of the term. Notifying the instructor by e-mail the day of the class is unacceptable. If the student can't make the class due to illness, he or she must call the instructor before class (212-684-4377 or 212-904-3698).

Papers have to be submitted each Thursday during class, unless a student has asked for an extension (one or two days for special circumstances). If the paper is late without permission, the paper will automatically be lowered a grade.

### **Learning objectives for seminar**

Students should be able to:

analyze readings, organize, and write brief critiques.

verbally present independent or group analyses and research using multiple media formats.

formulate and conduct advanced research related to architectural criticism in the U.S.

demonstrate an understanding of the history, role, and types of architectural criticism in the U.S.

### **SYLLABUS: American Architectural Criticism**

[The essays should be on COURSE WORKS. However the old classifications remain in case you need them. READER: refers to the reader of **xeroxed** articles, which can be purchased, and is on reserve at Barnard Library. BOOK: refers to a book of essays **on reserve**, Barnard Library, or in some cases Avery.]

### **I 19<sup>th</sup> Century Theoretical Groundwork**

Plato, "How Representation in Art is Related to Truth" (Chap. 35) in *Republic of Plato*, trans. Frances Cornford (Clarendon Press/Oxford) 1958, pp314-325. [READER]

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Thoughts on Art," 1841 in *America Builds*, ed. Leland Roth, 1983, pp.90-99 [BOOK}

John Ruskin: "Lamp of Truth," "Lamp of Sacrifice," "Lamp of Beauty," in *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849 [BOOK]

Eugene Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc "Lecture X" in *Lectures on Architecture*, (Entretiens sur l'Architecture), v. 1, 1877, pp. 446-50; 454-55; 466; 482-84 . (BOOK, AVERY RESERVE]

## II A New Building Type: The Tall Office Building

Aristotle, excerpt from “The Imitative Art of Poetry” in *Philosophies of Art & Beauty*, ed. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (U. Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 104-105. [READER]

Louis Sullivan: “A Tall Office Building Artistically Considered,” 1896, in *America Builds*, ed. Leland Roth, 1983; pp. 340-46. [BOOK]

Montgomery Schuyler: The ‘Sky-scraper’ Up-to-Date,” 1899 in *American Architecture and Other Writings by Montgomery Schuyler*, eds. William Jordy and Ralph Coe, 1961, pp.437-41.[BOOK]

Frank Lloyd Wright: “In the Cause of Architecture,” I (1908), in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings*, ed. Bruce Pfeiffer, v.1, 1894-1930 (1992), pp. 84-100. [BOOK]

Russell Sturgis, “Larkin Building in Buffalo,” *Architectural Record*, v. 23, (April 1908), pp. 310-21 [READER]

Frank Lloyd Wright, “Response,” Jack Quinan, Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Larkin Building: Myth and Fact*, 1987, pp. [BOOK]

Montgomery Schuyler: “Towers of Manhattan and Notes on the Woolworth Building,” *Architectural Record*, v. 33 (Feb. 1913), pp.98-122. (READER)

## III Columbian Exposition

Kant, Immanuel, Excerpts from *Critique of Judgment*, Second Book, Analytic of the Sublime Sublime, §40.”Of Taste as a Kind of Sensus Communis”, p. 312-13; §46. “Beautiful Art is the Art of Genius,” in *Philosophies of Art & Beauty*, ed. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (U. Chicago Press, 1976),pp.314-315 [READER]

Montgomery Schuyler: “Last Words About the World’s Fair,” 1894, in *American Architecture*, eds. Jordy and Coe, pp . [BOOK}

William Dean Howells, “Letters of an Altrurian Traveler,” 1893. [READER]

Paul Bourget “Farewell to the White City,” (1893) in *Architecture in America*, eds. Coles and Reed, 1961, pp. 185-86 [BOOK]

Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, “At the Fair” *The Century Magazine*, v. 46, May 1893, pp. 2-13 [READER]

Henry Van Brunt, “The Columbian Exposition and American Civilization,” in *Architecture and Society, Selected Essays of Henry Van Brunt*, ed. Wm. Coles, 1969, pp. 305-18. [BOOK]

Louis Sullivan, "Chapter 15, Retrospect," in *America Builds*, ed. L. Roth, pp.361-64. [BOOK]

#### **IV New York Skyscrapers of the Twenties and Thirties**

Colin Rowe, "Chicago Frame," *Architectural Review* (1956), in *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, 1976, pp. 89-117 [BOOK]

Lewis Mumford, "Notes on Modern Architecture," *The New Republic*, (March 18, 1931), pp. 119-122. [READER]

Douglas Haskell, "The Filing-Cabinet Building," *Creative Art*, (June 1932), pp. 446-49 . [READER]

Douglas Haskell, "The Rockefeller Necropolis," *The Nation*, v. 136, (May 31,1933), pp. 622-24. [READER]

Lewis Mumford, "Frozen Music or Solidified Static, Reflections on Radio City," *New Yorker*, v. 7 (June 20, 1931), in *Sidewalk Critic, Lewis Mumford's Writings on New York*, ed. Robert Wojtowicz, 1998, pp.54-59. [BOOK]

Lewis Mumford, "Mr.Rockefeller's Center," *New Yorker* (Jan.14,1933), in *Sidewalk Critic*, ed. Robert Wojtowicz, 1998, pp. 107-109. [BOOK]

Lewis Mumford, "Rockefeller Center Revisited," *New Yorker*, (May 4, 1940), in *Sidewalk Critic*, ed. R. Wojtowicz, 1998, pp. 266-69. [BOOK]

#### **V International Style and Modern Architecture in America**

Neurath, Otto, "The Social and Economic Museum in Vienna," sections 1 (1925),2 (1931), 3 (1933), in *Empiricism and Sociology*, eds. Marie Neurath and Robert S. Cohen, (D.Reidel, 1973), pp. 214-225. [READER]

Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson "The International Style, " 1932, in *America Builds*, ed. Leland Roth, 1983, pp.488-501 [BOOK]

Harold Sterner, "Architecture Chronicle," *Hound & Horn*, 1932, pp.452-460. [READER]

Royal Cortissoz, "An Exhibition at the Metropolitan and MoMA," *New York Herald Tribune*, section 7, (Feb. 14. 1932), p. 9 [READER]

Catherine Bauer, "Exhibition of Modern Architecture, Museum of Modern Art," *Creative Art*, v. 10 (March 1932), pp. 201-06. [READER]

Talbot Hamlin, "The International Style Lacks the Essence of Great Architecture," *American Architect*, v. 143, (Jan. 1933), pp. 12-16. [READER]

H.H. Mencken, "The New Architecture," *American Mercury*, 1931, pp. 164-65. [READER]

Philip Johnson, "The Architecture of the New School," 1931, in *Philip Johnson Writings*, 1979, pp.32-36. [BOOK]

Douglas Haskell, "The New School," *The Nation*, (Feb. 25, 1931), pp. 221-23. [READER]

## **VI Debates at Mid-Century: Historicism/Vernacular**

Colin Rowe, "La Tourette," in *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Others Essays*, 1976, pp. GET PAGES. [BOOK]

James Stirling, "Garches to Jaoul," *Architectural Review*, v. 118, (Sept.1955), pp. 145-51). [READER]

James Stirling: "Ronchamp, Le Corbusier's Chapel or the Crisis of Rationalism," *The Architectural Review*, v. 119, (March 1956), pp. 155-61. [READER]

Philip Johnson: "100 Years, Frank Lloyd Wright and Us," 1957, in *Philip Johnson Writings*, 1979, (pp.192-98). [BOOK]

## **VII Architecture and Language**

Robert Venturi, *Complexities and Contradictions in Architecture* (pp.22-103) (1966) [BOOK]

Roland Barthes, "Ornamental Cookery," (1954-56) pp. 78-80 and (optional) "Myth Today," 109-159 in *Mythologies*, 1972. [BOOK]

Roland Barthes, "La Tour Eiffel," (1964) in *VIA II*, (1973), 163-82. [READER]

Montgomery Schuyler: "An Interesting Skyscraper" *Architectural Record*, v. 22, (Nov. 1907), pp.365-68. [READER]

## **VIII Post-Structuralist Influence on Criticism**

Derrida, Jacques, "Structure, Sign and Play," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, (U. Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 278-293. [BOOK]

Catherine Ingraham, "Slow-Dancing: Architecture in the Embrace of Poststructuralism," *Inland Architect*, (Sept.-Oct. 1987), pp.44-47. [READER]

Mark Wigley, “Deconstructivist Architecture,” in catalogue, “Deconstructivist Architecture Exhibition,” Museum of Modern Art, 1988. [READER]

Herbert Muschamp, “The Leaning Tower of Theory,” *The New Republic*, (Aug. 29, 1988), pp.36-40. [READER]

Rowan Moore, “All That’s Solid Melts into Air,” *Blueprint*, (April 1990), pp. 26-31 [READER]

## **IX Experiential Criticism: Bilbao and the Getty and Beyond**

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, Excerpts from “The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences,” trans. James M. Edie, (address given to Société française de philosophie, November 23, 1946, in *Selected Essays of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology, Language & Society*, ed. John O’Neil, (Heinemann, 1974), pp 196-202. [READER]

Juhani Pallasmaa, “Hapticity and Time, Notes on a Fragile Architecture,” (2000) in *Encounters Architectural Essays* (2005), pp. 321-333. [COURSEWORKS]

Herbert Muschamp, “The Miracle in Bilbao,” *The New York Times*, (Sept. 17, 1997), pp.54-59, 72, 82. [READER]

Lawrence Weschler, “ Before the Bulldozers” on the Getty, *LA Times*, Dec. 7, 1997, <http://articles.latimes.com/1997/dec/07/magazine/tm-61462>

## **X Typology Today**

Raphael Moneo “On Typology,” Excerpt from *Oppositions 13*, Summer 1978, pp. 22-28 only. [READER]

Colquhoun, Alan, Democratic Monument (Stirling & Gowan’s Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart) *Architectural Review* (London), December 1984, <http://www.architectural-review.com/archive/1984-december-democratic-monument-by-alan-colquhoun/8612396.article>

Hawthorne, Christopher, Barnes Foundation Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, *ArchitecturalRecord.com* (from print June 2012 page 46)

Huxtable, Ada Louise, “The New Barnes Shouldn’t Work—But Does,” *WSJ* May 25, 2012 (<http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304019404577417984288542236>)

Goldberger, Paul, “The New Barnes Foundation Building: Soulful, Self-assured , and Soaked with Light,” <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2012/05/barnes-foundation-building-tod-williams-billie-tsien>

## **XI Litigation against the Critic**

1. “The Insolence of Architecture,” by Martin Filler, *New York Review of Books*, June 5, 2014

Review of

*Why We Build: Power and Desire in Architecture*

by Rowan Moore

Harper Design, 392 pp., \$30.00

Xerox of New York Review of Books handed out in class

2. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/aug/25/zaha-hadid-suing-qatar-article-2022-world-cup>

3. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/237928755/Zaha-Hadid-s-Defamation-Lawsuit>

4. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/sep/25/apology-zaha-hadid/>

5. <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2014/08/zaha-hadid-worker-conditions-lawsuit>

by Paul Goldberger

6. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/la-comedie-architecturale#> by Joseph Giovannini  
*October 12th, 2014*

7. <http://jamesrussell.net/zaha-hadid-wins-defamation-battle-loses-reputation-war/>  
August 26, 2014

8. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/29/opinion/high-culture-and-hard-labor.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/29/opinion/high-culture-and-hard-labor.html?_r=0)  
By ANDREW ROSS MARCH 28, 2014

9. <http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/comment/a-critic-has-the-right-to-unfairness-in-order-to-force-through-much-needed-change/8669284.article>

10. *A critic has the right to unfairness in order to force through much-needed change* 5 September, 2014 | By Owen Hatherley

Note Bene: Read the articles chronologically. They are NOT listed chronologically.

## **XII Criticism in a Computerized Global Age**

Michael Speaks, "Design Intelligence and the New Economy," *Architectural Record*, January 2002, 72-79. [COURSE WORKS]

Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting, "Notes Around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism," *Perspecta 33: The Yale Architectural Journal* 2002, pp. 72-77. [COURSEWORKS]

George Baird, "Criticality and its Discontents" *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall 2004/Winter 2005, pp. 1-6. [COURSE WORKS]

## **XIII Student Critiques**

Each student will select a building or an interior in New York to criticize and present during the last class. The selection must be approved by the instructor.