PERCEPTIONS OF ARCHITECTURE

Ralph Ghoche, rghoche@barnard.edu, Wed. 1:10-3pm, 500K Diana
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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
• Ignacio Galán: Exhibiting Architecture; Architecture in Print: Avery Classics

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
• Kadambari Baxi: Architecture and Globalization
• The Digital: From Computation to Replication
• Urban Ecologies
• Against Architecture

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Readings**: There will be approximately 50 pages of reading a week. There are two required readings per week and one additional reading. The readings will be posted on courseworks. All required readings must be completed before the relevant lecture. You are required to bring a copy of the readings to the Wednesday seminars. 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 (Seminars)**
   12 x 1 point = 12%

   **Weekly Reading Responses and Questions**
   12 x 1 point = 12%

   **Weekly Lecture Synopses**
   12 x 1 point = 12%

   **Class Presentation / Seminar Chair**
   = 14%

   **Term Paper Outline + Short Annotated Bibliography**
   / Due: Fri 02/10 (format determined by section instructor) = 10%

   **Term Paper Draft to Writing Fellow (~1000 words)**
   / Due: Fri 02/24, 10AM outside DIANA 500F

   **Term Paper First Draft to Instructors (~1000 words). Include copy of writing fellow comments.**
   / Due: Fri 03/25 (format determined by section instructor) = 15%

   **Term Paper Final Draft to Writing Fellow**
   / Due: Fri 04/14, 10AM outside DIANA 500F

   **Term Paper Final (~2500 words). Printed w/ images. Include comments from writing fellows**
   / Due: Fri 04/28 at 10AM outside DIANA 500F = 25%

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. **Class Field Trip to the Jewish Museum**: Saturday 02/03. Entry is free on Saturdays.
5. **Class Field Trip to New Haven:** Saturday 03/25. There are no required textbooks for the course, but students should expect to spend approximately $35 on transportation to and from New Haven, Connecticut. I will send an email with more information in early March.

6. **Weekly Reading Response and Question:** Weekly Reading Responses are due Sunday nights at midnight. I will set up online discussion boards for each week on courseworks. You will be able to see your classmates' responses only once you have added your own response to the forum. Once you have added your response, I recommend that you read some of the other responses on the forum.

For each week of the course, you are asked to:

- write a 200-250 word response (no less, no more) to issues and polemics encountered in the readings for that week. In responding to the readings, you will need to briefly summarize the arguments that you feel are central to the week’s theme.
- End your response with one question. The question should not seek a factual answer (how much..., when did..., etc.) but should address what you see as the main points of debate in the readings.

The purpose of weekly responses is:

- to demonstrate that you’ve read the assigned readings for the week.
- To show that, beyond simply reading the texts, you’ve thought about the central arguments and themes, that you’ve been able to draw connections between that week’s various readings (and possibly, the readings from previous weeks), and finally, that you’ve been able to scale-up your thinking and consider some of the larger social / political / personal … stakes involved.

Your responses should address all of the week’s required readings. The responses will be graded on a total of 1 point. In order to get a full 1 point, your response needs to demonstrate that you’ve read the readings and been able to focus on the main issues and arguments they present. Late responses cannot be accepted.

7. **Weekly Lecture Synopses:** Index cards will be distributed at the start of each lecture. During the lecture, you are asked to write your name and date on one side, and list the two to three central arguments (no more) presented in the lecture. You should submit your index card to the professor at the end of the lecture. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage active listening and to help students synthesize and organize the material delivered in the lectures. You may quote the lecturer verbatim but please make sure not to share your list with your classmates. See “academic integrity” below.

8. **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 presentations should end with a question or two directed at the class. You can use questions that have been posted on the discussion forums by your classmates if you wish. Presentations need to be very short and cannot exceed 10 max minutes for both presenters. 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 or email them promptly thereafter.

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? How does this argument/idea differ from other possible interpretations?).
iii. **Visual presentation:** You should use images to illustrate some of the buildings and projects described in the readings. If no building or visual project is described in the reading, choose a building or visual project to illustrate the main themes and questions addressed in the readings.

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

9. **Term Paper:** Each student will write a 8-10 page term paper (~2500 words). For the subject of your term paper you are asked to choose one of the architects, houses, cities or utopian projects listed at the end of the syllabus. Your essay should describe your chosen project and contextualize it within its time and in relation to some of the ideas we have explored in the course. Your task is not to tell us all there is to know about the project but rather to develop an original thesis statement or questions and examine the selected project from that specific point of view. You must use footnotes following the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition. See “Course Assessment and Grading” and “Course Schedule” for term paper submission deadlines.

10. **Term Paper Outline + Short Annotated Bibliography:** You are required to submit a term paper outline and bibliography by Feb. 10. The outline should include: 1. A thesis statement or question. What aspect of the selected project do you wish to examine? What are the questions that you wish to address? 2. A brief outline sketching out how you wish to develop your argument and lay out your evidence? 3. You should end your outline with a short annotated bibliography providing us with a line or two about each bibliographic source and how you plan to use it in developing of your paper. Your bibliography must employ library material or library e-sources. Online sources found on search engines must be grouped separately and cannot make up the bulk of your research materials.

**Some common writing problems to avoid:**

1. **Use of Quotations:** The most common issue has to do with the use of quotations. Students often use quotations in order to avoid explaining a point or making an argument themselves. They often will insert a quotation directly into a paragraph without context and without mentioning the source. Many students will use quotations that are two to three sentences long without any analysis. As a general rule, quotations should be used sparingly and need to be explained and discussed by the student. It is often preferable to paraphrase a quotation in the student’s own words and add a footnote citing the source.

2. **Thesis Statement:** All final papers must have a clearly articulated thesis statement (1-2 sentences long). Your thesis statement should focus on the larger stakes (why is this important? How does it add to or dispel some of our assumptions about subject X) and connect it to an existing discourse (this can be a discourse that we’ve examined in class or not…). A strong thesis statement will help structure your essay and give the reader a better sense of the purpose of each paragraph in the overall argument.

3. **Run-On Sentences:** Often, students will try and cram too many ideas into one sentence. This tends to lead to grammatical problems. Good writing often alternates between a short, declarative sentence, and longer descriptive sentences.

11. **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.
GRADING SCALE

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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.

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.

BARNARD HONOR CODE

Approved by the student body in 1912, the Code states:
We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

BARNARD WELLNESS STATEMENT

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions, please visit these sites: http://barnard.edu/primarycare, http://barnard.edu/counseling, http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about, Stressbusters Support Network

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you must visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for assistance. Students requesting eligible accommodations in their courses will need to first meet with an ODS staff member for an intake meeting. Once registered, students are required to visit ODS each semester to set up new accommodations and learn how to notify faculty. Accommodations are not retroactive, so it is best to register with ODS early each semester to access your accommodations. If you are registered with ODS, please see me to schedule a meeting outside of class in which you can bring me your faculty notification letter and we can discuss your accommodations for this course. Students are not eligible to use their accommodations in this course until they have met with me. ODS is located in Milbank Hall, Room 008.
All essays listed in the course schedule below are required reading.

- required reading
- additional reading

**WEEK 1**

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

Wed 01/18  
Introduction

**PART I**

**ARCHITECTURE, A BRIEF HISTORY**

**WEEK 2**

**THE ARCHITECT**

Mon 01/23  
[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 01/25  

**WEEK 3**

**THE HOUSE**

Mon 01/30  
[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 02/01  

**FIELD TRIP: Pierre Chareau Exhibition at the Jewish Museum**

Sat 02/03
THE CITY

Mon 02/06
[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 spaces to cities of spaces of flow]

Wed 02/08
- Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903).

Fri 02/10
Due: OUTLINE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY MS Word format. Emailed to section instructor.

UTOPIA

Mon 02/13

Wed 02/15

Ignacio Galán: Lecture on Curating and Exhibiting Architecture

Mon 02/20
[Need a list of issues, projects and case studies covered in this lecture]
- Need required reading here
- Need required reading here
- Need additional reading here

Wed 02/22
**Architecture in Print: Visit to Avery Classics**

Fri 02/24
**DUE: DRAFT VERSION OF FIRST HALF OF TERM PAPER:** to your writing fellow.
PART II  CONCEPTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

WEEK 7  DRAWING: SPATIAL REPRESENTATION AND PROJECTION SYSTEMS

Mon 02/27  [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]


WEEK 8  SPACE: ABSTRACTION AND EXPERIENCE


Fri 03/10  DUE: REVISED FIRST HALF OF PAPER: to your instructor. Include WF comments.

WEEK 9  SPRING BREAK
WEEK 10

CONSTRUCTION: STRUCTURE AND PRODUCTION

Mon 03/20

FILM: 5:45pm (TBD): Jacques Tati, Playtime (1967)

Wed 03/22

Sat 03/25
FIELD TRIP: NEW HAVEN (all day).

WEEK 11

THE PLAN: FUNCTION, PROGRAM AND SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Mon 03/27

Wed 03/29

PART III
ARCHITECTURE IN THE EXPANDED FIELD

WEEK 12

Kadambari Baxi: Lecture on Globalization

Mon 04/03
[Need a list of issues, projects and case studies covered in this lecture]


Wed 04/05
• Need required reading here
• Need required reading here
  - Need additional reading here
WEEK 13

THE DIGITAL: FROM COMPUTATION TO REPLICATION

Mon 04/10

Wed 04/12

Fri 04/14
**DUE: FINAL COMPLETE DRAFT OF TERM PAPER** to your writing fellow.

WEEK 14

URBAN ECOLOGIES

Mon 04/17

Wed 04/19
• Richard Buckminster Fuller, “Spaceship Earth,” in *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1968) (Lars Muller, 2008), 57-64.

WEEK 15

AGAINST ARCHITECTURE

Mon 04/24

Wed 04/26

Fri 04/28
**DUE: FINAL VERSION OF TERM PAPER** to your instructor. Include images and a bibliography. Include previous drafts with comments by writing fellows.
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).


• 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, “Illustated 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


**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).

