

Arch 639 Spring 2009
Dept. of Architecture
Texas A&M

Instructor:
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Twentieth-Century Theory and Practice

Time: T/R 12:45-2:00 pm
Place: C307



Course Overview:

Arch 639 looks thematically at architectural theories and practices in the twentieth century. While topics discussed in this course follow a chronological arc, from modern to contemporary, the course is not a survey of the history of architecture, but instead, selectively examines the kinds of problems, both aesthetic and practical, various architects have considered with respect to the built environment, and the theories and concepts they devised to solve them. Classes will be comprised of lectures given by the professor, seminar discussions on the readings and student presentations.

Learning Objectives:

- Raise student awareness of the ideas, issues and theories seminal to the study of architecture.
- Develop the student's ability to speak and write effectively on architectural history and theory.
- Provide an intellectual framework for the student to realize his or her design philosophy.
- Complement the practical and conceptual projects in the design studio by surveying and analyzing historical precedents, investigating their meaning, and evaluating their usefulness as formal or programmatic models.
- Foster interdisciplinary research.

Course Requirements:

- Attendance and participation (15%)
- Written responses to assigned readings (15%)
- Student presentation 1 (20%)
- Student presentation 2 (25%)
- Final assignment (25%)

Textbooks (suggested):

Mallgrave, Harry and Christina Contandriopoulos, eds. *Architectural Theory, Volume II, An Anthology from 1871 – 2005*. This anthology is available for purchase at the University Book Store.

Readings:

Readings will be posted on our class's Google group. You will receive an email invitation to join.

Attendance and Participation:

Your attendance is mandatory. Absences will not be excused except for those allowed by the university guidelines as stated in Texas A&M University Student Rules. Please see <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm> for further reference. Non-excused absences may result in a lowered grade.

Since seminars provide an opportunity for students to develop their public-speaking skills, your participation is vital. It is important that you are thoughtful and respectful of the professor and your classmates, and that your participation is relevant to the course content and readings. (N.B. course content pertains to the architectural theories, concepts and work examined in this class).

Written responses to the assigned readings:

Your response must state the main argument(s) of the author, as well as contain a more personal, synthetic reflection. Perhaps you disagree with the author; perhaps the author makes you think of other important examples he or she has not mentioned; or perhaps you have a question about what the author means by a key term or concept. Occasionally, you may be asked to answer specific questions or to write a synthetic response to the class content and discussion to date. The responses are due 2 hours before class and must be posted on our Google Group website under "Discussions." Please come to class having read your colleagues' responses. Since the purpose of the response is to prepare you for the seminar discussion, responses submitted after the class is over will not be accepted. No exceptions.

Student Presentations and Final Assignment:

See schedule below.

Classbinder:

Please keep a binder for this class. Your binder should contain this syllabus, the readings, your class notes and assignments. Please organize your binder according to the class schedule.

There are no mandatory textbooks for the class. Instead, I will post readings on our class website in our Google Group, and you will be responsible for printing out the readings, preferably double-sided. The cost for student printing at the College of Architecture should amount to no more than \$25.00.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is a serious, academic offense and may result in a student failing the course.

Americans with Disabilities Act(ADA) Policy Statement:

The ADA is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please inform the professor and also contact the Department of Student life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Cain Hall (979-845-1637).

Schedule:

N.B.: schedule may change at the discretion of the professor. Guests to be confirmed.

1 A “New Style” of Architecture

Case studies: English Arts & Crafts, Art Nouveau, The German Werkbund

Margaret Olin, “The Kunstwollen,” *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl’s Theory of Art* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 148-153.

Gottfried Semper, “Prologomena,” *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts* (1860), trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Santa Monica: Getty, 2004), pp. 71-100. The introduction by Mallgrave (pp. 1-70) is informative.

“Muthesius/Van De Velde: Werkbund Thesis and Antithesis” (1914) in Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestos of Architecture* pp. 28-31.

2 The Form Problem in relation to Philosophical Concepts of Space and Time

Case Studies: Futurism, De Stijl, Russian Suprematism and the Early Bauhaus

Sanford Kwinter, “Physical Theory and Modernity: Einstein, Boccioni, Sant’Elia,” *Architectures of Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 34-50, 60-69.

El Lissitzky, “Proun Space,” *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution* (1930), pp. 138-140.

3 The Form Problem in relation to Programmatic

Case Studies: The Bauhaus, Le Corbusier and Russian Constructivism

Alexei Gan, Excerpt from “Constructivism” (1922) in Stephen Bann, *The Tradition of Constructivism*, pp. 32-42.

Moisei Ginzburg, “Housing Complex for Employees of Narkomfin, Moscow” (1929), p.129, and “New Methods of Architectural Thought” (1926), p. 120, 129, in Catherine Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde: Theories of Art, Architecture and the City*

Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, trans. P. Morton Shand (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1935).

4 Student Presentation 1 (two weeks)

Instructions: Many contemporary architects employ a Modernist vocabulary and harbor a deep appreciation of the history of Modern design. Using examples of his or her built work, explain how an architectural practice of your selection addresses the problem of form in relation to space/time (here you may need to employ other related key terms (such as cinematic movement, spatial psychology, phenomenology, and material effects) or to programmatic (function), or to both. You will work in teams of two. Format: powerpoint presentations with captioned images, notes (written points), and a list of the references you used.

Some suggestions: the early work of OMA, MVRDV, Zaha Hadid, Herzog and DeMeuron, Sejima, Joshua Prince-Ramus, Studio Gang, Norman Foster, Toyo Ito.

Submit your pptx file to me (I will download your entire presentation on to my computer) and upload an image from your presentation, as well as a one-paragraph synopsis on Google Groups. Remember to provide a caption for your image, indicating the architect, work, place and date, and a title for your synopsis.

5 Modern Architecture and Non-Western Cultures and Traditions

Case Studies: ATBAT Afrique, Tadeo Ando, Charles Correa

Readings:

Jean-Louis Cohen, “The Moroccan Group and the Theme of Habitat.” *Rassegna* (December 1992): 58-67.

6 Encounters with the “Primitive”

Guest: Professor Logan Wagner will speak about his studies on Pre-Columbian Architecture and his practice. **(Tues. Mar 3)**

Reading TBA

7 Student Presentations 2 (two weeks)

Instructions: Select a modern or contemporary architect whose work incorporates some aspect of a non-western tradition (including building materials and technology, social/cultural patterns of habitation, and philosophical concepts) and present this work to the class. The presentation must present not only the work in question, it must also clearly explain the architectural characteristics of the non-western tradition under investigation. Format: individual student presentations in powerpoint with captioned images, notes (written points), and a list of references.

Submit your pptx file to me (I will download it on to my computer) and upload an image from your presentation, as well as a one-paragraph synopsis on Google Groups. Remember to provide a caption for your image, indicating the architect, work, place and date, and a title for your synopsis.

8 Digital Biomimesis

Case Studies: Yona Friedman, Kostas Terzidis, Cecil Balmond, Greg Lynn

Terzidis, Kostas, *Algorithmic Architecture*. Oxford: Architectural Press, 2006.

Cecil Balmond, “New Structure and the Informal,” *Lotus International* 98 (1998), pp. 76-.

9 Urban Programmatic

Case Studies: Rem Koolhaas, MVRDV, Bjarke Ingels Group

OMA, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, “Bigness, or the problem of Large,” *S, M, L, XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), pp. 509-

“The Space of Optimism: A Conversation with Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries,” Luis Moreno Mansilla and Emilio Tunon, *El Croquis* (Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2003): 11-29.

“Redefining the Tools of Radicalism: A Conversation with Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries,” Cristina Moreno and Efren Grinda, *El Croquis* (Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2003): 31-47.

Suggested: John Rajchman, “A New Pragmatism?” *Anyhow*, ed. Cynthia Davidson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 217-

10 Evidence-Based Design

Guest: Dr. Kirk Hamilton **(Thurs. Apr. 16)**

Reading TBA

11 Sustainable Architecture in the Age of Globalization

Case Study: Pliny Fisk

Guest: Pliny Fisk **(Tues. Apr. 21)**

Reading TBA

12 Final Assignment

Your design philosophy: putting it all together. Must involve independent research. Include bibliography.