Arch. 563

History of Architecture: Contemporary Issues

University of Southern California
Spring 2023
2.0 credits
Lecture: Thursdays 9am-10:15am, HARRIS 101
Discussion Sections, Thursday, either: 10:20-11:05 am or 11:05 am-11:50am*

Instructor, Lectures: Ginger Nolan (Office hours, Friday 1pm-2pm via Zoom)
Instructors, Discussion Sections: Faye Nixon and Shane Reiner-Roth

*For information on where/when to meet, please see Discussion Sections Assignment in Blackboard’s “Content.”

Contact Information
Please direct e-mails related to assignments, grading, and attendance to your discussion section instructor, either Faye Nixon (fnixon@usc.edu) or Shane Reiner-Roth (reinerro@usc.edu). For issues related to Blackboard postings or lecture material, please email Ginger Nolan (vgnolan@usc.edu). Before e-mailing instructors, please verify that your question is not already answered in the syllabus, assignment descriptions, or course-related e-mail's. Please expect up to three days for response. If you have received no response at that point, please don’t hesitate to send a reminder e-mail!

Course Description
This course explores: 1) how theoretical frameworks can help us interpret architectural practices and architectural discourses; and 2) how architects have proposed theoretical concepts and models as a part of architectural practice. Toward this end, we’ll examine the lineaments of theory—as it exists both independently of and entangled with architectural practice. The course is framed through questions and critiques posed by poststructuralist, postcolonialist, posthumanist, and feminist scholarship within various disciplines including architecture and architectural history. We will ask what sorts of assumptions, historical circumstances, relations of power, and rhetorical devices underlie various texts and discourses. Through course readings, lectures, and discussions, we will pursue the following questions:

- Who theorizes, how, and on behalf of whom or what?
- How does architecture shape relationships between humans and other (human or non-human) entities and processes?
- How are architecture and architectural theories implicated in relationships among architects and between architects and different publics?
- Through what methods do scholars and architects research cities and societies to better understand them?

Learning Modality
This course will be conducted in-person, unless circumstances related to public health render it advisable to move one or more sessions onto Zoom. Because of past problems with recording live lectures, we will typically avoid offering Zoom options. If hybrid learning is offered, Zoom attendance will not be considered an alternative to in-person attendance, unless with the explicit permission of discussion section leaders.
Learning Objectives

We will study texts which are intended to unsettle some of the basic categorical precepts of architectural discourse including: modernity, development, nature, politics, culture, technology, and the human. The aim of the course is not to cement students’ familiarity with an established lineage of architectural or extra-architectural texts, but rather:

- to consider the effects of architecture and discourse on different societal groups, examining the effects of colonialisms and neocolonialisms as well as practices and theories of decolonization
- to introduce disciplinary and interdisciplinary terms, concepts, and methods through which to approach various contexts of architectural research and production; and to be attentive to both the positive uses and potential biases or shortcomings of different research methods and concepts
- to inculcate habits of interrogation, contextualization, and careful reading and note-taking

The course encourages students to:

- situate and analyze objects, concepts, and debates within their broader political, economic, and social contexts
- hone interpretive and critical thinking skills through a close analysis of images and texts and the use of comparison
- draw connections between theoretical concepts and architectural projects

Assignments and Expectations

GRADING BREAKDOWN:

- **50% - Reading Responses:**
  
  **Purpose:** Assigned readings and responses are intended primarily to help students further develop skills of textual interpretation, comparison, and critical thinking, while also exposing students to new ideas, perspectives, and histories. Reading responses also help develop explanatory and persuasive writing skills.

  Students will submit weekly reading responses each Wednesday, due 11:59pm. Students may miss three reading responses (out of thirteen) without penalty, submitting a total of ten during the semester. If you submit more than ten, we will drop the lowest grade(s).

  You are asked to *not rely on direct quotations* from the assigned texts or other sources, as the purpose of this assignment is for you to synthesize author’s ideas and arguments and express your own interpretations in your own words. The only exception would be if you are “unpacking” the author’s own words—that is, performing a close reading on a passage, making it crucial to cite that passage.

  No late responses will be accepted after 9am Thursday unless for illness with doctor’s note or other major emergency. For students observing major holidays that conflict with due dates, please arrange with instructor to submit the assignment before the holiday.

- **22% - Weekly Mini-Quizzes (+ Attendance):**
  
  **Purpose:** As digital devices increasingly compete for attention, this assignment encourages students to tune out digital applications and to actively evaluate lecture material and arrive at their own conclusions.

  Instead of a final exam, students will submit each Thursday a couple short answers addressing key points about one or more projects discussed during the lecture. This submittal will also count toward our attendance record. Students are permitted to miss three mini-quizzes (out of fourteen) without penalty. That is, they should submit a total of eleven project evaluations. If you submit more than eleven, the lowest grade(s) will be dropped.

  Sometimes, we will make time at the end of lecture for you to submit the project evaluations. Other days, they will be administered during discussion sections.
23% - Writing Assignment:

**Purpose**: Students are encouraged to draw connections between course material and architectural practice, including their own studio work.

Students are asked to evaluate an architectural project selected from either: their studio research, their own studio design practice, or other contemporary practices. In 1,000-1,200 words (three pages double-spaced), students are asked to detect and evaluate discrepancies between what designers and scholars have claimed about a project’s intentions and effects and other possible interpretations of a project’s relationship to social forces, practices, policies, and institutions. Students are asked to apply concepts from assigned readings in evaluating this project. One-paragraph proposal due Feb. 26. Rough drafts due April 5 and 8. Final assignment due May 12 (date to be confirmed). Further details on Blackboard.

5% - Participation: Students should participate during discussion sections and are also encouraged to participate during lectures, which includes interrupting to add comments or ask for clarifications. Students are strongly discouraged from using electronic devices during lectures. Cellphone use is banned. If, during the semester, computers use is disrupting attentiveness, the instructor may ban all electronic devices, and discussion section leaders may likewise choose to ban electronic devices.

Students are strongly encouraged to miss no more than two lectures and two discussion sections. Missing more than two may negatively impact grade. Absences beyond two are permitted only for legitimate reasons presented to Discussion Section instructors (e.g., holidays, family emergencies, illness with doctor’s note). Excessive unexcused absences may result in failing the course. For holiday-related absences, please contact your instructor before the holiday to make appropriate arrangements for submitting assignments.

All assignments must be posted to Blackboard. You are responsible for verifying that your assignment is uploaded successfully. If you have difficulty uploading, please email the assignment to your instructor and then upload it to Blackboard within 24 hours.

Plagiarism: Any assignment which attempts to pass off other persons’ words, work, or ideas as your own will receive a “0”. (See section on “Academic Conduct” below for explanation of further consequences.)

Feedback: Students will be given detailed feedback on their first two reading responses. Thereafter, students will typically receive numerical grades on reading responses, and instructors will provide some overall feedback mid-semester on both reading responses and project write-ups. If students have concerns about their work in the course, they are encouraged to arrange meetings with instructors.

**Grading Scale**


**Reading Responses**: Each of the twelve reading responses is worth five percentage points of your final grade for the course. You will receive partial credit for having read only part of the assigned readings, so it is better to read just one text and submit half a reading response than to not submit at all.

Responses are graded as follows:

- 4.5 - 5.0: Student demonstrates a strong effort to analyze the authors’ arguments and ideas for all assigned texts.
- 3.5 - 4.0: Student appears to have skipped significant portions of the assigned texts or to not have read closely enough to understand basic points.
- 1.0 - 3.0: Student either appears to have not read much of the texts; relies excessively on quoting authors’ words rather than using own words; or submits assignment late.
- 0: Student either: appears guilty of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism (subject to discussion with instructor), fails to submit assignment, or submits it significantly after the start of class time.

**Weekly Mini-Quiz**: Each mini-quiz is worth two percentage points of your final grade for the course. These submissions will be given a cumulative grade once at mid-semester and again at the end of the semester. You are
not being graded for the elegance of your writing or your analytical skills (and therefore will not be given detailed feedback). Rather, this is way to encourage attentiveness during lectures and active—rather than passive—modes of receiving lecture material.

Project Evaluations are graded as follows:

- 2.0: Student demonstrates attentiveness to basic details
- 0.5 - 1.5: Student is present in class but appears to have been inattentive to lecture material
- 0: Student has not submitted assignment or appears to have committed a breach of academic integrity

Calendar

WEEK 1: WHAT IS THEORY? WHAT IS ARCHITECTURE?
Jan 12. INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

I. KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNIQUE: AS MODES OF POWER and AS MODES OF DISSENT

WEEK 2: IDEOLOGY + REVOLUTION


WEEK 3: KNOWLEDGE + POWER: TOP-DOWN
Jan. 26. LECTURE ONLY: From Colonialism to the Paradigm of Development


WEEK 4: KNOWLEDGE + POWER: BOTTOM-UP
Feb. 2. LECTURE: Autoconstruction and Public Spheres
WEEK 5: BIOPOLITICS + DISCIPLINE

Feb 9. LECTURE ONLY: Architectures between Biopolitics and Care


WEEK 6: BIOPOLITICS + RESISTANCE

Feb. 16. LECTURE: Camps, Prisons, and Shelters


II. MEDIA, ARCHITECTURE, PSYCHOTECHNICS

WEEK 7. “GLOBAL VILLAGE”

Feb. 23. LECTURE: Systems-Thinking and Cybernetics. RESEARCH PRESENTATION / NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS (to be confirmed.)


Feb. 26. Thursday, 11:59pm, DUE: One-paragraph proposal for writing/research assignment

WEEK 8: SPECTACLE
Mar 2. LECTURE: Postmodernism: From the Festival of African Cultures to Big Box Retail


- For EXTRA CREDIT (up to two points on your final grade), also include approx. 200 words addressing one of the following recommended texts, discussing how it relates to Debord’s idea of spectacle.

**RECOMMENDED:**


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**WEEK 9. THE MEDIUM**

Mar. 9. LECTURE: Capitalism and Architectural Representation


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**III. CITIES: GLOBALIZATION + PLACE-MAKING**

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**WEEK 10: URBAN REDEVELOPMENT**

Mar 23. LECTURE: Redlining, Slum Clearance, Jane Jacobs, and Robert Moses.


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**WEEK 11: URBAN RESEARCH**
Mar. 30. LECTURE—Urban Sociology as Activism—FOLLOWED BY WRITING WORKSHOP (instead of normal Discussion Sections). BRING ABSTRACTS + ONE RELEVANT IMAGE TO ANALYZE.


AND EITHER:


OR:


OR:


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Apr. 5. Wednesday, 11:59pm: Rough Drafts due on Blackboard

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WEEK 12: WRITING WORKSHOP (NO READING ASSIGNMENT). BRNG ROUGH DRAFTS.

Apr. 6. Writing Workshops: Group A: 9:00-10:20am / Group B: 10:30-11:50am

Apr. 8. Submit revised rough drafts for instructor feedback, 11:59pm.

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WEEK 13: BODY + PLACE:

Apr. 13. LECTURE: Norming and Queering Bodies and Places


- Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci (New York: Rizzoli, 1979): SKIM ONLY / LOOK AT IMAGES.

RECOMMENDED:


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IV. DATA: QUESTIONS OF CRITIQUE + SOCIAL JUSTICE

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WEEK 14: SMARTNESS vs. CRITICALITY
Apr. 20. LECTURE: The Post-Critical


RECOMMENDED: SHORT FILM: Michael Meredith, Notes for Those Beginning the Discipline of Architecture (online; link to be provided on Blackboard).

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WEEK 15: DATA, CITIES, ARCHITECTURE

Apr. 27. LECTURE: Part 1: Data-Driven Urbanism / Part 2: Memory + Evidence


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May 12*: Final writing assignment due.

*Date to be confirmed, pending information from Registrar concerning when final grades are due.

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Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university’s mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage. The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity’s website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Collaboration. In this class, you are expected to submit work that demonstrates your individual mastery of the course concepts. Group work. Unless specifically designated as a ‘group project,’ all assignments are expected to be completed individually. Please ask instructors if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment.
Instructors will be available during the scheduled writing workshop to answer questions concerning what sorts of statements require citation and/or attribution.

**Students and Disability Accommodations**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

**Support Systems:**

**Student Counseling Services (SCS)** - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - 1-800-273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)** - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/)

**Sexual Assault Resource Center**
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [http://sarc.usc.edu/](http://sarc.usc.edu/)

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance** – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [https://equity.usc.edu/](https://equity.usc.edu/)

**Bias Assessment Response and Support**
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/)

**The Office of Disability Services and Programs**
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [http://dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

**Student Support and Advocacy** – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/)

**Diversity at USC**
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [https://diversity.usc.edu/](https://diversity.usc.edu/)

**USC Emergency Information**
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, [http://emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

**USC Department of Public Safety** – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime: [http://dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)