

**ARCH 499 SEMINAR / Fall 2021**

3 Units

Thursday, Watt 212, 9-11:30AM

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Office: 354 Watt Hall, University of Southern California School of Architecture

Office hours: by appointment

## 499: Positions and Practices

### 01 / COURSE DESCRIPTION

The seminar-workshop will investigate the diverse range of positions and practices in architecture with an emphasis on contemporary and emerging tendencies related to new mediums, models of practice and shifts in organizational hierarchies. The interplay between thinking/rhetoric and the activities of working on architecture has seen significant recent transformation with emerging interest in social practices, post-digital aesthetics, artificial intelligence, and a competing set of positions that speculate on the future identities of the discipline of architecture.

Conceived of as a topical seminar with an activist interest, this course will expose students to the current discourse and understanding of architecture as a spectrum of positions and practices, insisting that architecture – in addition to buildings - includes an expansive set of activities such as writing, forms of image representation, social media, exhibitions and books. The more ambitious and advanced practices not only underpin their practices with a set of positions about how they view and understand architecture as a discipline in the world, but attempt to shape and speculate about the future forms of architectural practice.

### 02 / LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The 499 seminar will be focused on the discourse and design surrounding the positions and practices of contemporary architecture. This will include an understanding of how we define and frame theory and practice, how these terms interact with other terms such as rhetoric, representation and communication; how we view and make sense of a wide range of architectural practices and positions; how we define and understand the emerging mediums of architecture and what this means historically vs now.

The seminar will be conducted in an open format where all students are invited/expected to bring their personal interests and cultural identities to the table in order to stimulate conversation and critical thinking. The seminar initiates with a series of conversations and case studies, gradually becoming more focused on a graphic essay.

The seminar will consist of concurrent modes of inquiry and production:

1. **Lecture/Discussion** – readings/response, lecture and conversation around the positions and practices of architecture.
2. **Case Studies** – presentations, analysis and discussion around specific practices of architecture under different thematic categories.
3. **Conversations** – discussions and conversations with special invited guests about the positions and practices of architecture.
3. **Graphic Essay** – a comprehensive graphic essay working on particular student interests based on the content of the course and beyond.

The course will operate as a seminar-lecture-workshop with weekly discussions around the contemporary discourse of architectural practice, in addition there will be conversations with special guests focused on specific positions and practices. Readings will be assigned throughout the semester to challenge students with a range of sensibilities and points of view. Significant contemporary architectural practices will be researched and presented as model precedents. Individually students will respond to readings through written response and criticism, working individually and in groups to produce presentations through a range of platforms.

### **03 / DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS/ GRADING BREAKDOWN**

Except when teamwork is required, work will be produced individually. Students will receive regular evaluations of their work by the Instructor. There will be weekly readings with a one page response. Each student will be assigned an architecture practice to study, unpack and prepare a presentation around. There will be a two stage graphic essay based project due at midterm and final.

Final grade evaluations for this seminar will be based upon the following breakdown:

Participation and discussion 10%

Written responses to readings (6) 25%

Practice/precedent presentation 15%

Draft Graphic Essay 15%

Final Graphic Essay 35%

Students are expected to complete the required reading before each class session and submit a one page, single spaced response before class begins (via google drive); engage productively during class hours in order to fulfill the requirements of the seminar. Full and robust participation is expected at all class meetings. Collaboration is a prerequisite for the course and it is expected that students will share equally in all team based responsibilities.

Student attendance is required at all class meetings. More than two (2) unexcused absences will result in the loss of a full letter grade, with each subsequent absence resulting in the further lowering of a half letter grade. An absence can only be considered 'excused' if the absence is due to a serious illness, an emergency, an approved academic reason, or a religious observance.

## **499 Seminar Schedule**

<b>Week 1</b> 8/26	<b>Introduction/Overview</b> HP Introduction and Overview/Assignments/Schedule, etc.
<b>Week 2</b> 9/2	<b>Defining Positions and Practices</b> Lecture / Discussion #1 <b>Readings:</b> <i>'Practice vs. Project' in Practice: Architecture, Technique + Representation</i> , Stan Allen <i>'Introduction' in Spatial Agency, Other Ways of Doing Architecture</i> , Awan, Schneider, Till <i>What is Practice?</i> , Louis Althusser <b>Reading Response #1 Due</b>  Precedent practice presentation #1,2  Special Guest #1
<b>Week 3</b> 9/9	<b>Revisiting Modernism: Expansive Practice and Collaborations</b> Lecture / Discussion #2

**Readings:**

*Collaborations - The Private Life of Modern Architecture*, Beatrice Colomina  
*The Concept of Practice: Dialogue*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer  
*Inside the office of Charles and Ray Eames*, Max Underwood

**Reading Response #2 Due**

Precedent practice presentation #3,4

Special guest #2

**Week 4**  
9/16

**The Recent Past tees up the Present**

Lecture / Discussion #3

**Readings:**

*Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism*,  
Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting

*I am interested in a Project of Engaged Autonomy*, Sarah Whiting and Peter Eisenman  
*Kissing Architecture*, Sylvia Lavin

**Reading Response #3 Due**

Precedent practice presentation #5,6

Special guest #3

**Week 5**  
9/23

**New Practices: Beyond the Building**

Lecture / Discussion #4

**Readings:**

*'Office Policy' in Selected Works*, Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample

*'MOS Practices... What the !@#?'* John McMorrough in *Selected Works*, Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample

*Deadpan (in) Architecture*, Kyle Miller

**Reading Response #4 Due**

Precedent practice presentation #7,8

Special guest #4

**Week 6**  
9/30

**Post-Digital Samplings**

Lecture / Discussion #5

**Readings:**

*Not Interesting: On the Limits of Criticism in Architecture*, Andrew Atwood

*Post Digital Materiality from LINEAMENT*, Ellie Abrons and Adam Fure

*The Great Roe from LINEAMENT*, Sam Jacob

**Reading Response #5 Due**

Precedent practice presentation #9,10

Special guest #5

**Week 7**  
10/7

**Expanding Practices and Positions**

Lecture / Discussion #6

*Expanding Modes of Practice*, Bryony Roberts

*Radical Repair*, Mabel O. Wilson and Bryony Roberts

*Formats of Care*, Jia Yi Gu

*Social Practice Meets Systems Aesthetics*, Margo Handwerker

Precedent practice presentation #11,12

Special guest #6

**Week 8**

10/14

**Fall Recess (NO CLASS)**

\*Proposal and Draft Bibliography due 10/18

**Week 9**

10/21

**Introduce Graphic Essay**

Group presentation/discussion of research paper and process

\*Preliminary Outline due 10/27

**Week 10**

10/28

**Group Workshop**

Group Meeting/review of proposals and sources

\*Annotated Outline and Revised Bibliography due 11/03

**Week 11**

11/4

**Group Workshop**

\*\*Midterm Draft Submission of Graphic Essay due 11/10

**Week 12**

11/11

**Individual Meetings**

Review of Rough Drafts (individual)

**Week 13**

11/18

**Individual Meetings**

\*\*\*Final Graphic Essay DUE 11/24

**Week 14**

11/25

Thanksgiving Holiday (NO CLASS)

**Week 15**

12/2

**Final Presentations**

**FINAL EXAMINATION (Final Graphic Essay due):** Thursday, 12/9, 11AM-1PM

**Special guests:**

Alfie Koetter

Laurel Broughton

Wes Jones

Bryony Roberts

Joanna Grant

Jia Gu

New instructor USC

Anna Neimark

Mira Henry

**Precedent Presentations**

Students will produce research and presentations about contemporary architecture practices – focusing on the positions and cultures of each practice and the range of activities and mediums that they work in. The total presentation should be designed/composed as a whole and be approx 30 minutes in length following the general format below, with the students assigned below:

\*See schedule for presentation dates.

## **Possible practices for presentations:**

Bryony Roberts  
T+E+A+M  
HECTOR  
Mabel Wilson  
First Office  
Welcome Projects  
Assemble Studio  
MASS  
Bair Baillet (medium)  
Mira Henry  
Andres Jacques  
MOS  
AMO

## **04 / GENERAL INFORMATION**

### ***Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems***

#### *Academic Conduct:*

*Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.*

#### *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. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://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. [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. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://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: [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. [equity.usc.edu](http://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. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)*

*Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.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. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://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. [diversity.usc.edu](http://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. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)*

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