Architectural Design Theory and Methodologies / Precedents in Critical Practice

Meet with:
Course meets with Core 01 and with SMArchS independent advisors throughout the semester.

Level: graduate  Units: 3-6  Prerequisites: none

Schedule: Thursdays 2-5pm, Zoom link: https://mit.zoom.us/j/91498463841

Instructor: Antonio Furgiuele, af2@mit.edu

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Final Exam / Reviews
Final research dossier review

Description
Cedric Price once said that “architecture is everything architects make.” Sure, we could dismiss this as an unhelpful, overly empirical and even tautological statement. But instead, we will take it as a form of reinforcement for this class’s aim, we will take it to mean that architecture manifests itself in buildings, certainly, but also in drawings, in writing, in broadcasts, postures, experiments, social and professional organizations and modes of practice. In fact, it is the discursive, cultural, personal, historical, technological circumstances that give architecture its value, not by following some simple—one, two, base, superstructure—principle of causality, but often far more entangled routes of relation. It is far easier, of course, for an established and wise (and humorous) architect, to look back and say “architecture is everything architects make,” than it is for someone beginning in the field of architecture to feel reassured by that same statement.

In Architectural Design Theory and Methodologies / Critical Precedents, we will be open to various definitions of architecture and of criticality so as to light up possible paths through the discipline and the profession, both taken and previously unthinkable. To that end in this class we will acquaint ourselves with the characters, language and concerns that greet us upon entering the field. The key objective of this seminar then is to produce a map of contemporary architectural practice and to develop tools for scrutinizing that map, through formal reading, understanding of popular culture and politics, and by using our general grasp of the recent history of architectural thinking.

The seminar will open by examining several collective attempts at theorizing the current situation in architectural discourse, published in Hunch, Log, the last issue of Assemblage, Harvard Design Magazine, and more recently in The Avery Review and elsewhere. Drawing out the most salient themes from these, the course is structured in terms of 6 coupled themes: City → Global Systems,
Urban Plan –> Map of Operations, Program –> Performance, Drawing –> Media, Materials –> Matter, Utopia –> Projection. These are examined in terms of the recent history of the coupled subjects – as topics that are in the process of definition, rather than as strictly demarcated themes. Although the course proposes that these paired topics are in a historical relationship of sorts, they are not seen here as opposed to each other. Although the partially genealogical relationship between the two topics would suggest that the second theme in each heading has more contemporary currency than its predecessor, it would be wrong to think that we will be discussing examples of absolute evolution, where one theme is also more advanced as a result of its novelty, or for that matter that it has completely replaced the theme that in some way anticipated and prefigured it.

In order to set up each topic we consider a combination of texts and recent architectural work. A map of contemporary practice and discourse emerges as the course unfolds and as our terms/themes accumulate, allowing us to consider certain works through a variety of lenses and forcing us to invent lenses to accommodate new relationships that inevitably emerge from our discussion. We dedicate a large portion of our time to situating projects within a disciplinary and cultural context, which involves formal reading of buildings in conjunction with the reading of relevant texts. (Note, the course was originally developed by Ana Miljacki.)

Learning Objectives/Pedagogy:

Each of the six themes for the course are ideally developed over a period of approximately two weeks. Each class begins with a lecture/presentation by the instructor of the contemporary writings outlining the topic of the debate (and some of its earlier variations) and a presentation of architectural work. The second portion of the class is devoted to student presentations assigned for that meeting, followed by an open discussion intended to question the issues and topics introduced in the session.

Absence Policy:

Work in the studio will build sequentially. Therefore, student commitment to incremental development on a daily basis is of great importance. The demanding nature and pace of this seminar necessitates regular attendance and requires that deadlines are consistently met. Attendance in seminar and for the duration of all reviews is mandatory. Greater than two absences from the seminar without medical excuse supported by a doctor’s note or verifiable personal emergency could result in a failing grade for the course.

Evaluation Criteria, Completion Requirements & Grading:

- attending the weekly seminar session,
- completing all readings in time for respective class discussions,
- posting one question/comment weekly on Stellar (by midnight before class)
- delivering two 20 min. presentations over the course of the term (each presentation will deal with a specific theme, or body of work chosen in a short discussion with the instructor),
- producing a visual dossier on a theme, or body of work, that is of a particular interest to the student, which has to include a critical analysis/text of 1000-2000 words. The final form of this “deliverable” will be determined in conversation with the instructor.

Completion requirements:

All the required readings will be available on the Stellar course site as pdf files. Also, all the books I am recommending you peruse will be available on reserve at the library.
You will be writing every week on forum, and we will discuss some of the writing live, but you will also have to produce at least a 1000-word framing essay for your dossiers.

If you need help with grammar, exposition, style, and tone, please consult the writing center at MIT: Go to http://writing.mit.edu/wcc and click on "Appointment." If you cannot find an open appointment slot, click on the clock in the upper left-hand corner of each day’s block. When a cancellation occurs that day, you will be automatically notified by email. Because several people might receive that same message, go online ASAP to schedule that open spot; 96% of clients who want an appointment end up with one if they use the Wait List. The best way to guarantee yourself an appointment is to schedule early.

**Grading Definition:**
- class presentations (and handouts) in groups of 3 (25%)
- quality of your posting in the Class Forum on Stellar (20%)
- contribution to class discussions (25%)
- the visual dossier (30%)

**Resources:**
MIT Rotch Architectural Design Resources (Architecture and Art Librarian: Kai Alexis Smith, kaias@mit.edu)

MIT Thesis Database: DSpace (https://dspace.mit.edu/)
Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Lab on the third floor of the Rotch Library
Geocoding tutorials, census data, map projections, citation guidelines also part of the GIS lab (http://libguides.mit.edu/c.php?g=176295&p=1161396)
MIT Architecture Lectures and other online lecture videos (AA, GSD, Rice, GSAPP, etc.)

**Studio Culture:**
The Department of Architecture promotes a learning environment that supports the diverse values of the entire MIT community of students, faculty, administration, staff and guests. Fundamental to the mission of architectural education is the stewardship of this diversity in a positive and respectful learning environment that promotes the highest intellectual integrity and cultural literacy. As architectural design learning is often accomplished through project-based activities during and outside of class times, maintaining this environment at all times is the responsibility of the entire community. Faculty and students should strive to understand and mutually respect the varied commitments of each other and work together to manage expectations of time and effort devoted to assignments, pin-ups, and public reviews.

**Academic Integrity/Honesty**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology students are here because of their demonstrated intellectual ability and because of their potential to make a significant contribution to human thought and knowledge. At MIT, students will be given unusual opportunities to do research and undertake scholarship that will advance knowledge in different fields of study. Students will also face many challenges. It is important for MIT students to become familiar with the Institute’s policies regarding academic integrity, which is available at *Academic Integrity at MIT: A Handbook for Students.*
Course Schedule

Introductions → Stories and Maps

#1. September 3

Read:
Mark Jarzombek, “Un-messy Realism and the Decline of the Architectural Mind,” Perspecta 40, Monster, pp. 82-84.

Recommended:
Rem Koolhaas, Mark Wigley, Ole Bouman, and Jeffrey Inaba, eds., Volume 20: Storytelling (July, 2009).

#2. September 10

Read:

Recommended:
Elizabeth Diller and Anthony Vidler, “Architecture is a technology that has not yet discovered its agency,” LOG 28: Stocktaking, Summer 2013.
Laura Kurgan, “Trying not to avoid propositions altogether,” Assemblage 41. p. 37
Peruse:
Log 5, guest editors R.E. Somol and Sarah Whiting, Spring 2005
Harvard Design Magazine 20, Spring/Summer 2004: Stocktaking
e-flux, Positions series (for example), https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/positions/

City → Global Systems
#3. September 17

Read:
Chad Freidrichs, Pruitt-Igoe Myth (film, 2011).

Recommended:
Sam Jacob, “Postmodernism’s real qualities are mean and difficult, yet also psychedelically positive,” Dezeen, August 2015, https://minimalblogs.com/postmodernisms-real-qualities-are-mean-and-difficult-yet-also-psychedelically-positive/
Peter Galison, “War against the Center”, Grey Room, No. 4 (Summer, 2001), pp. 5-33

Peruse:

#4. September 24

Read:
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Recommended:
http://storefrontnews.org/programming/call-for-ideas-closed-worlds-designer/

Peruse:
Rem Koolhaas, Stefano Boeri, Sanford Kwinter, Nadia Tazi, Daniela Fabricius, Mutations (Barcelona: Actar, 2001). Praxis 5: After Capitalism, 2003

Urban Plan ➔ Map of Operations
(Tactics & Strategies)
#5. October 1

Read:
Recommended:

Peruse:
Keith Krumwiede: Freedomland (book)

Program ➔ Performance
(Events, Effects, Atmospheres)
#6. October 8

Read:

**Recommended:**


**Peruse:**


**Reading:**

October 15
Dossier review --- Core 01 review – SMArchS review

**November 5**

Drawing → Media
(information, imaging)
#7. October 22

**Read:**


**Recommended:**

Peruse:

#8. October 29th

Read:
Lucia Alias and John May, “Newish Media,” A conversation between Lucia Allais and John May at GSD, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqCUh16R4yw
Adam Fure, “What does it really mean to be “post digital” in architecture and beyond?” The Architects’
Charles and Ray Eames, *Communications Primer*, (film, 1961).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byyQtGb3dvA

Recommended:
Zeynep Celik Alexander and John May, *Design Technics: Archaeologies of Architectural Practice*. (University of
Minnesota Press, 2019).
Mario Carpo, “Digital Indeterminism: The New Digital Commons and the Dissolution of Authorship,” in
Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, “Representation to Presentation,” in *Objectivity* (Brooklyn: Zone
digital/248076/digital-post-ontology/

Peruse:
*From Control to Design: Parametric/Algorithmic Architecture* (Actar, 2008)

November 5th
Dossier review -- Core 01 review -- SMArchS review

Material → Matter
(Energies, Assemblies)
#9 November 12

**Read:**


**Recommended**


Ola Wedebrunn, “Physiological Architecture” in *Climate and Architecture*, (Routledge, 2010).

**Peruse:**


*Overcoming Carbon Form*, Log 47, Fall 2019.

#10. November 19

**Read:**


**Recommended:**

Alejandro Zaera Polo, "The Politics of the Envelope," *Volume* 17, pp. 76–105. > skim only


K Michael Hays, “The Envelope as Mediator,” *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st*
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Peruse:
Barry Begdoll and Peter Christensen, Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), 2008.

November 27 – No class

Utopia  Projection
#11. December 3

Read:

Recommended:
Fredric Jameson, “Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?” Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1982, pp. 147–158.
Terry Eagleton, After Theory (Basic Books, 2004).
#13. December 10
NO CLASS
(final studio review week + help thesis students)

#14. December 17
Dossiers due + final review with special guests (TBC)