Figure: “Greater Utility, Luxury, Beauty, and Durability Because of Chemicals.”
*Monsanto Current Events Journal, Cover Collage (1926).*

4.603/4.604: Understanding Modern Architecture
Course Schedule: TR 11:00-12:30 / Virtual
https://mit.zoom.us/j/7778733261
Meeting ID: 777 873 3261
Password: 4603
4.603/4.604: Understanding Modern Architecture

Instructor: Jessica Varner
varnerj@mit.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30
Make appointment here: https://calendly.com/varnerj/varner-office-hours

Course Schedule:
TR 11:00-12:30 / Virtual
https://mit.zoom.us/j/7778733261
Meeting ID: 777 873 3261
Password: 4603

Teaching Assistants:
Olivia Houck / owhouck@mit.edu
Eliyahu Keller / ekeller@mit.edu

Course Description
This course provides an introduction to modern architecture and design in relation to political, economic, social, environmental, aesthetic, and cultural changes that occurred across the span of the twentieth century. Through these themes, the course will look at problems that have, over the last century, helped to define architecture and design’s moderns, modernities, and modernisms. The course will address how modern architecture and design responded and developed in relation to changing cultural dimensions during the first of the century, as well as the subsequent reactions and revisions to architecture and design in the latter half of the century. The course will also look at how “modern” architecture and design was constructed in relation to ancient, vernacular, native, or pre-modern categories. Lectures, discussions, and assignments will incorporate varied techniques of historical and philosophical thinking to situate and contextualize architecture and design discussions.

Requirements & Assignments

1) Readings & Discussion:
Assigned “readings” should be completed in advance of class meetings to facilitate the comprehension of lecture topics. Write 2-3 questions as you read to contribute in class discussions. Students are expected to ask questions during lectures, respond to prompts, and participate in class discussions. Students will be required to post responses (1 page, single spaced) uploaded to Canvas prior to scheduled workshops/discussion. Each student must submit a total of four (4) responses. (one analytical, one bibliographic, one visual comparative, one public history). (40%)

2) Attendance:
Active attendance at all lectures and course discussions is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will result in a lowering of the student’s “Discussion” grade. Exceptions per student support procedures outlined about.

3) Assignment 1, Criticism Experiment:
Using Twitter (minimum 5 post twitter thread), each student will compile descriptive and analytical criticism of an architectural experience of a modern building/landscape of choice (multi-media is encouraged), but visual representation is required alongside written criticism. (15%)

4) Assignment 2, History Experiment:
The assignment will involve utilizing one historical method (list to be discussed) to analyze and interpret a post-1945 building or landscape. (15%)

5) Assignment 3, Research Experiment:
Building on the midterm assignment, each student will write a research paper (approximately 2000 words in length) on one selected postwar architectural project. The paper, to be conceptualized, written, and formatted in the form of a research paper, will include historical research and reflection on the architectural concepts that the project sustains. It will incorporate 1-2 of the methods explored in Assignment 2 (30%)
General Course Information

Background Readings:
This is not a comprehensive survey course, but the course will introduce twentieth-century major architecture and design movements. Students should also be prepared to consult additional sources in order to familiarize themselves with architects, projects, buildings, designs, and writings that are not discussed in lectures. Recommended reference books on 20th century architecture: William Curtis, Modern Architecture Since 1900 and Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture: A Critical History. It is advised that you purchase or borrow these two books to supplement the lectures. (Available for request at MIT or online for purchase, used or new)

Additionally, a digital textbook will be compiled over the semester. It will include primary sources (currently set on the syllabus), a “terms and examples” list updated over the course of the semester, and additional readings to supplement the primary sources as the course progresses. The digital textbook will be informed by our discussions and each section will be uploaded before each workshop at the completion of a unit.

Due Dates:
Due dates for course assignments are listed below in the course schedule. Unless otherwise specified, assignments must be posted to Stellar no later than 9:00am on the date indicated. Late submissions will be penalized. Extensions will normally be granted per instructions below in student support section.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:
It is understood that students will have collective discussions of course materials on a formal and informal basis, and will benefit from such discussions. However, unless specifically approved or directed by the instructor, all submitted coursework must be completed independently by the student and must be original and representative of the individual student's ideas and grasp of course topics. Any instance of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will be disposed per Institute guidelines, with the instructor reserving the right to dismiss the student from the class and assign a grade of F for the course. For detailed information regarding standards of academic integrity and scholarly citation: See https://integrity.mit.edu/

Writing/Language:
Regardless of experience or native language, students should plan to take advantage of institute resources aimed toward improving communication skills, particularly in writing. The Writing and Communication Center is available to help students on an individual basis. See http://writing.mit.edu/wcc

Office Hours:
The instructor will hold regular office hours online, and all students are strongly encouraged to use office hours to discuss the course, course material, and other questions and issues. Office hour appointments can be booked online with calendly link above.

Graduate Student Enrollment:
The course is intended to provide an introductory understanding of the social and cultural role of modern architecture. Graduate students may enroll in the course with the permission of the instructor. The course is not intended for, and is not open to, graduate students pursuing a professional degree in architecture.

Grading Policies for Fall 2020 Semester:
For undergraduate and graduate subjects, grades that will be awarded include A, B, C, D/NE, and F/NE, where NE indicates that no record will appear on the external transcript. First-year undergraduate students will be graded on the normal P/NR (pass/no record) basis for all subjects in the fall semester.
Student Support Services and GradSupport:
If you are dealing with a personal or medical issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, undergraduate students should contact a dean in Student Support Services (S3) and graduate students should contact a dean in GradSupport. These offices are here to help you. The deans will verify your situation, provide you with support, and help you work with your professor to determine next steps. In most circumstances, undergraduate students will not be excused from coursework without verification from a dean. For graduate students, no verification is needed if arrangements are made between instructor/advisor and students. Please visit the S3 and GradSupport websites for contact information and more ways that they can provide support.

Disability and Access Services:
MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. Even if you are not planning to use accommodations, it is recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with the services and resources of the office. If you have already been approved for accommodations, please contact DAS early in the semester so that they can work with you to get your accommodation logistics in place. Please visit the website for contact information.
https://studentlife.mit.edu/das
SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND LECTURE TOPICS

Course Units:
1: Past Modern(s); 2: Technological; 3: Social; 4: Political; 5: Economic; 6: Environmental; 7: Future Modern (s)

September 1  Course Introduction: Modern(s) Architecture
No required reading

1: Past Modern(s) – The 19th Century

September 3 Modern(s) Architecture

September 8 Architecture and the Enlightenment, Neoclassicism, and Tradition
• RESPONSE 1 DUE

September 10 Workshop and Discussion: Moderns (Modern, Modernism, and Modernity)
• Required reading will be assigned with workshop prompt

2: Technological

September 15 Architecture and Construction/Function

September 17 Architecture and Noise
• Luigi Russolo, Intonarumoris, 1913. Sound Archive.

September 22 Architecture and Industry/Labor
• Gunta Stölzl, "Die Entwicklung der Bauhausweberei," (The Development of the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop), Bauhaus, July 1931.

September 24 Architecture and Engineering
• Pietro Belluschi, Equitable Building (Construction drawings), Syracuse Archives, Belluschi Collection.

September 29 Asynchronous Lecture/Conversation (Modern City, TBA)
• RESPONSE 2 DUE
* ASSIGNMENT 1, DUE September 29

October 1 Workshop and Discussion: TECHNOLOGICAL
• Required reading will be assigned with workshop prompt
3. Social

October 6  Architecture and the Home I
• "The Magic of America": Marion Mahony Griffin (Exhibition).

October 8  Architecture and Modern Objects
• Charlotte Perriand, Archival Drawings.

October 13  NO CLASS, Monday classes held.

October 15  Architecture and the Home II
• Charles Eames, John Entenza, and Herbert Matter, “What is a House?” Arts and Architecture, (July 1944).
• RESPONSE 3 DUE

October 20  Workshop and Discussion: SOCIAL
• Required reading will be assigned with workshop prompt

4. Political

October 22, Architecture and Post-World War II
• Alison Smithson, “Mat-Building: How to Recognize and Read It,” Architectural Design XLIV, no. 9 (September 1974): 573-590.

October 26, Architecture and the Nation

October 29, Architecture and Revolution
• Arata Isosaki, “City Demolition Industry Inc.” (1962) in Project Japan: Metabolism Speaks, 52-54.

November 3 – Election Day (No formal class)
• Extra office hours during class time to discuss grades/progress (required)
• RESPONSE 4 DUE

November 5  Workshop and Discussion: POLITICAL
• Required reading will be assigned with workshop prompt

5: Economic

November 10, Architecture and Money
• Advertisement section, Architectural Forum, February 1933 (36-48).

November 12, Architecture and Preservation
• “Farewell to Penn Station,” New York Times, October 30, 1963
• ABSTRACT FOR ASSIGNMENT 3, DUE NOVEMBER 12

November 17, Architecture and Post-Modernism/Post-Industrialization
• RESPONSE 5 DUE

November 19, Workshop and Discussion: ECONOMIC
• Required reading will be assigned with workshop prompt
6. Environmental

**November 19**, Architecture and Systems
- MIT Solar House I (1939), Maria Telkes 1948, (Construction Documents).

**November 23-27**, NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

**December 1**, Asynchronous Site Tour (TBA)
- RESPONSE 6 DUE

**December 3**, Architecture and Climate Change
- Plan for Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi (Construction Documents)
- Workshop and Discussion: Environmental
- Required reading will be assigned with workshop prompt

7. Future (Moderns)

**December 8**, Future Modern(s)
- Architecture podcast line-up, (TBA)

- ASSIGNMENT 3, DUE DECEMBER 10
December 14-December 18 – Final Exam Week (This class has no final exam)