

4.607 Fall 2023

**Thinking About Architecture: In History and at Present**

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M: 2.00-5:00 Room 5-216

This class will be constructed as a lecture-discussion, the purpose being to engage important theoretical issues while simultaneously studying their continuing historical significance.

The sequence of topics that will be introduced cannot be absolutely predetermined, but some of the primary issues that will be addressed are, as they relate to the status of architecture as 'a discipline' within the warp of our enlightenment and modernist intellectual constructions of society, architecture and creativity. The course will roughly be divided into two halves. The first part will look at the architecture/builder divide in the context of the cult of abstraction. The second will try to engage the difficulty of critically positioning oneself as an architect in the hegemonies of the civilization industrial complex. There will be two group-oriented projects.

The course will portray the history of theory neither as the history of architectural theory exclusively, nor as a series of pre-packaged static pronouncements, but as part of a broader set of issues and concerns that must be continually probed and queried.

**REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS**

There is no final exam or final 'big' project. The idea of the class is to distribute the workload throughout the semester into smaller bits. That does mean, however, an attention to the rhythms of the class.

The grade will be determined along three registers:

1. **Blog posts** We will ask all students to write something in the blog post after each class. These can be based on notes taken during class, or comments about some sentences from the presentation etc. We will expect these by Thursday after the class. The minimum is 8 such entries for the semester.
2. **Weekly exercises:** Students must complete all exercise, which will be assigned roughly every week at the end of class and will be due by Monday morning before class the following week to start our discussion. These will range from sketch exercises, readings, or field work.
3. **Group project and presentation (Assignments 1 and 2):** Students will work in small groups (preferably 2) on a research question posed by the instructor and will present their research in class on October 16 and December 4. These projects will include writing components - thoughts and explanations etc.- that will be handed in. Groups must meet with the TA before their presentation for a dry run.

4. **Attendance and class participation:** More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a letter-grade reduction. If you cannot make a class, please inform us beforehand.

Dates:

Sept. 11      Cult of Abstraction  
Sept. 18      The Builder  
Sept. 25      Beyond the Site  
Oct. 2        PopArch Possibilities  
**Oct. 16 Project 1: student presentations**  
Oct. 23      The Bicameral Thesis  
Oct. 30      De-Ontology  
Nov. 6        Positioning  
Nov. 13      Social Imaginary  
Nov. 20      'Land' / Earth / Cosmos  
Nov. 27      Reading Locke  
**Dec. 4 Project 2: student presentations**  
Dec. 11      The return of the de-ontological position