

20.319: HTC III

Architectural Theory and Design

Application in the 20th - 21st Century

Fall 2020

Students

TBD

Course Description

The process upon which contemporary twentieth and twenty-first century-architects design, draw, write, and build is the focus of this course. The concomitant discourse amongst critics, the resulting scholarly critique, and the written design statement is a reflection of a complex set of values, hierarchies, and judgement criteria. This course's goal is to deconstruct the embedded and often at times hidden sets of values that influence the creation of architecture and govern its design, construction, production, use, and occasional demise. Students will emerge from this course with a thorough understanding of modern canonical design philosophies in conjunction with a more concise understanding of what forces govern the growth and development of their nascent design ethos.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the concepts supporting contemporary critical architectural theories;
- Apply contemporary criteria to analyze movements in the past eighty years of architectural theory;
- Evaluate the validity of criticisms on architectural and urban movements.

Measurable Outcomes

- Express in both writing and verbal discussion, forces behind major architectural movements.
- Present in writing, verbal and organized imagery, specific recent architectural theory periods, and associated critical evaluations.
- Conduct self-evaluations of cultural, societal, and commercial influences upon the development of one's architectural design governors.

Course Instructor

Daniel J. Whittaker



Figure 1: Mr. Masataka Yano, architect, of Tadao Ando Architect and Associates office

The crux of this architecture theory course is to immerse the students in an array of research and literature to enable the student to observe and identify other great designers' motivations, abilities and internal governing design criteria. Through thorough understanding of others' design methodology, the students can then embark upon the creation of their own personal design criteria, yielding improved critical thought processes.

Instructional Methods and Expectations:

This course's methodology relies upon the reading of established rhetoric of specific contemporary architectural practitioners and exploration of their philosophies through written prose as well as executed structures. In place of rote memorization of scholars' tomes, instead, mastery of their design ethos and governing principles of contemporary movements in architecture and theory will be tested through expository writing and the answering of queries posed in the form of timed short-essay, written-answer form (first 20 minutes of both lecture and recitation). Students are expected to read and contemplate the assigned course reading essay excerpts, extracted from well-established books and texts written by contributing architectural and philosophical canon academics. Lecture-discussions (60 minutes) containing visual imagery of built and unbuilt structures of featured architects and their contributions to architectural movements will spur additional discourse to supplant the topics contained within the critical readings.



Traditional library research

When architects and designers choose to write instead of draw, the output falls under a very different lense of scrutiny. Readings, reseach and investigation into various Eastern and Western critical essays will reveal deeper biases, schisms and dvisions between various camps of recent past and contemporary architectural thought.

Figures 2 and 3: Paper ephemera in the 'Bibliotheca'





Examination of designers' tangible evidence: sketching

Architects sketch. Students follow suit. What can be learned from these seemingly small and sometimes random scribbles or works of art? What generative creative ideas emerge out of the mind during this nascent thought processes? What can we learn from other designers' drawings, revealing their internal value structure?

Figures 4 and 5: In situ sketching and a plethora of results





Mirroring footsteps

Walking in the paths of giants; architecture students often times embark upon study abroad trips to follow in the footsteps of previously charted trips by prominent architects. In today's climate, what virtual tours can be conducted individually or en masse, as an entire class partakes in new adventures as a group?

Figures 6 and 7: Field sketching following the masters' footsteps in Corinth, Greece, or back in the classroom:





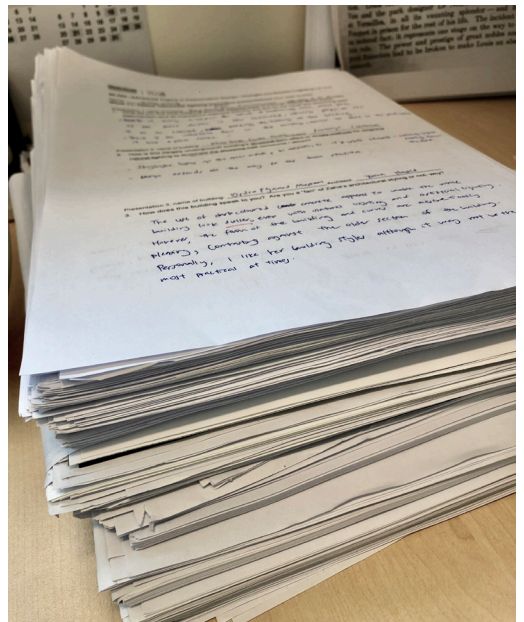
Grounded on campus

Returning to the safety of the classroom is expected as an eventuality; how will learning in a new / old environment forever change? The production of evidence documenting the retention of knowledge persists - the generation of short-answer quizzes is one metric by which comprehension can be measured.

Figures 8 and 9: short-answer quizzes in the classroom and concomitant results

Development of one's mind

Architecture and Sustainable Design students exhibit a wide spectrum of writing and verbal expressive talents. Collectively, they are able to dissect, describe and analyze design motivations and value-ranking criteria of their own design projects, their fellow peers, and professional architectural creations domestic and abroad. This course is to serve as a platform upon which students can review their value system and compare it with those established by both practicing architects, architectural theoreticians, and professional philosophers dwelling within as well as outside of contemporary architectural circles. These readings, discussions, and short essays will expand the students' range of understanding underlying architectural design motivations and broaden their ability to comprehend and write and verbally express themselves about complex architectural themes pertinent for today's professional.





Archival Investigations

Whether virtual or tangible visits, archival investigations often times yield too much information that is un-sorted and hence difficult to process. In what ways may the student, in a controlled environment, weave a narrative that is sensical and chronological, in order to better define a set of values of a past time period? Through such exercises, a better understanding of contemporary values, and what one disagrees or agrees with, is entirely possible.

Figures 10 and 11: Combing through the rare manuscript and map archives.





Technique

Establishing a personal methodology upon which one can assess the value of what emerges from an architect's pen in order to distill design criteria and ultimate value systems... all of this can be deduced through the skilled analysis of an architect's writings, drawings and correspondence. Patience allow the piecing together of lost links and the development of new narratives that explain the rationale behind the silent tangible buildings we inhabit today.

Figure 12: Examining unearthed archival treasures at the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts

Figure 13: Reviewing the unseen in order to see into the future

Faculty's Expertise:

Senior Lecturer, Daniel Joseph Whittaker, Ph.D., has taught design application, theory, and architectural construction courses in technical colleges and universities in academic institutions in Minnesota and Illinois, United States, 2003-2018. His dissertation at the Illinois Institute of Technology examined the architectural and urban theory, society, and political forces motivating the creation of localized new community museum institutions in the localized Chicago area, as well as globally, during the nascent Historic Preservation (Conservation) movement taking place in the 1960s onward. His research travels beyond the boundaries of traditional academic inquiries and involves the gathering of primary-source materials from a wide variety of peoples and disciplines to dissect complex and dynamic architectural histories which modern society lives upon and dwells within today.

