



*Ant Farm, "Clean Air Pod", 1970.*



*Lara Almarcegui, "Construction Materials of Exhibition Room," 2003*

## **ARCH 563**

### **Contemporary Architectural Theory**

University of Southern California

Spring 2022

Harris 101

**Lecturer: Jasmine Benyamin PhD**

Email: [jbenyami@usc.edu](mailto:jbenyami@usc.edu)

CAs: TBD

Thursdays 9:00-10:50am

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-12 via Zoom (request appointment at least 24 hours in advance)

### **Contact Information**

Before e-mailing CA's or instructor, please verify that your question is not already answered in the syllabus, class documents, or instructor and CA e-mails. Due to high enrollment in this course, we cannot always respond immediately to questions that have been already answered elsewhere. Likewise, if you do not direct inquiries to the correct contact person (see below), we may not respond in a timely fashion.

Please direct general e-mail inquiries to our CAs (TBD)

For sensitive personal issues, please contact instructor directly at [jbenyami@usc.edu](mailto:jbenyami@usc.edu). Please expect up to 3 days for a response. If you receive no response after 3 days (or sooner if the matter is urgent) please do not hesitate to email me a reminder.

### **Course Description**

One of the distinctive features of modern and contemporary architecture, in addition to their technological and spatial orientation, is their pronounced use of theory to articulate their aims. One might argue that modern and contemporary architecture are so because of their incorporation of theory.

Rather than examine the development of contemporary architectural theory chronologically, we will explore topics that facilitate multiple, micro- and trans-historical vantage points. These themes enable us to understand how certain architectural theoretical concepts endure, while others are questioned and ultimately rejected and/or re-written.

Through weekly lectures, readings and assignments, students who successfully complete this course will learn many of the key debates in late-modern and contemporary architectural theory; its distinctive language(s); histories of the most significant concepts and authors.

The following questions are central to this class:

- What is theory? How and in what ways is theory defined as an expression of a particular social/political/cultural zeitgeist?
- On what other disciplines and schools of thought does theory rely on?
- For whom has architectural theory been written? Which audiences and constituencies have been embraced, and which have been left out?
- Who are the authors who participate in the writing of architectural theory (since theory manifests itself primarily – but not exclusively- in written discourse)?
- At what scales of building (production, representation, and reception) does theory operate/orient itself?

### **Learning Objectives**

The texts and lectures associated with this course will serve to expand conventional definitions of what constitutes a 'canon' in architectural discourse. More established narratives will be assigned alongside newer ones that aim to thicken and / or de-stabilize said narratives. Weekly themes will address topics in and around form, function, context, ideology and methodology.

The following are explicit learning objectives for the course:

- to instill habits of critical reading, listening and note taking.
- to introduce central terms, concepts and themes that drive current architectural production across scales and disciplines.
- to be able to identify biases / blind spots in authorial agendas.
- to deepen students' understanding of the societal/cultural/political constellations within which each theory or set of theories is grounded.
- to develop students' abilities to evaluate texts and images closely.
- to enhance students' understanding of formal and technical terms.
- to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding in classroom discussions.

### **Assignments and Grading**

#### **1. Quizzes: 60%**

Students will be given three short surprise quizzes during the semester, addressing assigned readings. If one quiz is missed because of a permissible absence (see "Attendance" below), the student can instead submit to Blackboard within five days a make-up quiz. Beyond that, missed quizzes cannot be made-up and will receive a grade of "0". You're allowed to refer to your notes (but not internet sources) during the quiz, but you have limited time. The quizzes will test you on the general themes and meaning of the readings (not on small details) and are intended to encourage students to keep up with reading assignments.

#### **2. Final Evaluation: 40%**

The evaluation will be in lieu of a conventional final "exam." Students will be able to choose from a list of short answer and essay questions.

**3. Participation:** Regular class participation demonstrating knowledge of class readings will add one to three percentage points to a student's final grade (i.e., an A- could become an A). Discussion questions will be introduced in advance most weeks, giving students a chance to prepare for discussion.

**4. Attendance:** Students are allowed one absence without a doctor's note. Unless there are clear extenuating circumstances, students will receive a "0" on any quizzes missed, *except* for a quiz missed because of an allowable absence, if the quiz is made-up within five days. Numerous absences will result in a lower grade.

**5. Questions for class discussion:** It is optional (but highly recommended) that you bring to class a couple questions about the texts. These can simply point to a particular passage that requires clarification; they can be about a term the author uses; or about seemingly contradictory claims on the part of the author.

### Evaluation

Students are assessed on the following criteria:

- Students who can demonstrate that they are reading assigned texts, attending closely to lecture material, and understanding (more or less) of key concepts and arguments should receive a satisfactory grade in the course (from a B- to an A). Quizzes are graded quite generously, with an emphasis on content over style. Having said this, there is an expectation for all assignments that best writing practices are adhered to.
- Students excelling in the course usually demonstrate an appreciation for the nuances and intricacies of assigned texts, seeing them not in over-simplified terms or categories but as lending themselves to multiple interpretations.

**Grading Scale:** Refer to USC “Definition of Grades”: <http://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=282>

**Plagiarism:** Any assignment which attempts to pass off another person’s work as one’s own will receive a “0”.

### Accreditation Statement

The USC School of Architecture’s five-year Bachelor of Architecture Program and Master of Architecture Program are accredited by the National Architecture Accreditation Board (NAAB). Conditions for accreditation can be found at: <https://www.naab.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-NAAB-Conditions-for-Accreditation.pdf>.

Course Responsibilities: As a required course for an accredited professional degree program, this course is accountable for achieving learning outcomes associated with the following NAAB Criteria.

Program Criteria:

- *PC.4 History and Theory—How the program ensures that students understand the histories and theories of architecture and urbanism, framed by diverse social, cultural, economic, and political forces, nationally and globally.*
- *PC.8 Social Equity and Inclusion—How the program furthers and deepens students' understanding of diverse cultural and social contexts and helps them translate that understanding into built environments that equitably support and include people of different backgrounds, resources, and abilities.*

### **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](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).
- **Students and Disability Accommodations:**
- USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process

(registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

- **Support Systems:**

- *Counseling and Mental Health* - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
- [studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)
- Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
- [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
- [studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)
- Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
- *Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX)* - (213) 740-5086
- [eeotix.usc.edu](https://eeotix.usc.edu)
- Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.
- *Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment* - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
- [usc-advocate.symlicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symlicity.com/care_report)
- Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.
- *The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)* - (213) 740-0776
- [osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu)
- OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.
- *USC Campus Support and Intervention* - (213) 821-4710
- [campussupport.usc.edu](https://campussupport.usc.edu)
- Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.
- *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* - (213) 740-2101
- [diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu)
- Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.
- *USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

- [dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)
- Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.
- *USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*
- [dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)
- Non-emergency assistance or information.
- *Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*
- [ombuds.usc.edu](https://ombuds.usc.edu)
- A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.
- *Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)*
- [chan.usc.edu/otfp](https://chan.usc.edu/otfp)
- Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

## SCHEDULE (subject to change)

### 13 January\_Introduction

### 20 January\_What is Architecture Theory Anyway?

Sylvia Lavin, "The Uses and Abuses of Theory." *Progressive Architecture*, August 1990, pp. 179-181.

Hanno-Walter Kruft, "Introduction: What is Architectural Theory" in *A History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1990), pp. 13-19

Irene Cheng, "Structural Racism in Modern Architectural Theory" in *Race and Modern Architecture* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 134-143, 150-152

### 27 January\_Modernism's Discontents

Robert Venturi "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture – Selections from a Forthcoming Book", in Kate Nesbitt editor, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture – An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996 pp. 72-76

Gwendolyn Wright, "Building Global Modernisms" in *Grey Room 7* (2002), pp. 125-134

Sean Keller, "The Anxieties of Autonomy," in Robin Schuldenfrei ed., *Atomic Dwelling* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 127-137, (skim the rest)

Irene Cheng, Charles Davis, Mabel Wilson, "Introduction," in *Race and Modern Architecture...*, pp. 3-14

Recommended: Mary Mcleod, "Modernism," in *40 Ways to Think About Architecture*, (London: Wiley, 2014)

### 3 February\_Space I

Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" (1967) in Neil Leach ed., *Rethinking Architecture*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 348-356

Bernard Tschumi, "Architecture and Transgression," (1976) in *Architecture and Disjunction*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 65-78

Christian Norberg-Schulz, "The Phenomenon of Place" (1976) in *Theorizing a New Agenda...*, pp. 412-422

### 10 February\_Space II

Mimi Zeiger, "Getting There"

<https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/positions/280817/getting-there/>

Eyal Weizman and Tina Di Carlo, "Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality" *Log 20* (2010)

Sergio Lopez-Pineiro, "Archipelagos of Detritus – The Need for a Theory on Spatial Waste" in *MAS Context 28* (2015), pp.

<https://www.mascontext.com/issues/28-hidden-winter-15/archipelagos-of-detritus-the-need-for-a-theory-on-spatial-waste/>

## 17 February\_ Tectonics

Marco Frascari, "The Tell-Tale Detail" (1984) in *Theorizing a New Agenda...* pp. 498-504

Kenneth Frampton, "Rappel a L'Ordre: The Case for the Tectonic," (1990) in *Theorizing a New Agenda...* pp. 516-528

Jorge Otero-Pailos, "An Olfactory Reconstruction of Phillip Johnson's Glass House" (2008) in *AA Files* 57, pp. 40-45

Ann Anlin Cheng, "Skins, Tattoos, Susceptibility," in *Representations* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Fall 2009), pp. 98-107

## 24 February\_ (Re)presentation

Robin Evans, "Translations from Drawing to Building" in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, selections

Stan Allen, "Mapping the Unmappable: On Notation" (1989/1997)

[https://doubleoperative.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/allen-stan\\_mapping-the-unmappable-on-notation1.pdf](https://doubleoperative.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/allen-stan_mapping-the-unmappable-on-notation1.pdf)

Beatriz Colomina, "Enclosed by Images: The Eameses' Multimedia Architecture" in *Grey Room*, 2 (2001), pp. 6-19.

Trevor Patt, "The Collective Image: Form Figure and the Future," in Trotter and Choi eds., *Architecture at the Edge of Everything Else* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), pp. 138-150

Zeina Koreitem, "Some Notes on Making Images with Computers" (2019)

<https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/becoming-digital/248077/some-notes-on-making-images-with-computers/>

## 3 March\_ Environment I

"Sustainability and Beyond," in Mallgrave and Goodman eds., *An Introduction to Architectural Theory*. (Wiley: 2011), PP 215-218

Reyner Banham, "A Home is Not a House." *Art in America*, (1965), pp. 70-79.

Reyner Banham, "Unwarranted Apology in *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* (1969), pp. 9-17

Antoine Picon, "Anxious Landscape: From Ruin to Rust," in *Grey Room* 1(2000), pp. 64-71.

## 10 March\_ Environment II

Kathryn Yusoff, "Geology, Race, and Matter," first section

<https://manifold.umn.edu/read/untitled-5f0c83c1-5748-4091-8d8e-72bebc5b94b/section/6243cd2f-68f4-40dc-97a1-a5c84460c09b>

Timothy Morton, "Architecture Without Nature" in *Tarp: Architecture Manual* 10 (2012), 1-6

Simon Guy, "Pragmatic Ecologies" in Ariane Louri Harrison ed., *Architectural Theories of the Environment: Posthuman Territory* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 138-144, bottom of 146-150

Alessandra Ponte, "Inhabiting the American Desert" in *The House of Light and Entropy*, AA books (Architecture Words, 2014), pp. 66-80

### 17 March\_ No Class (Spring Break)

### 24 March\_ Bodies

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975; 1995) excerpts from 3-7 and 195-209.

Diana Agrest, "Architecture From Without – Body, Logic and Sex" (1988), in *Theorizing a New Agenda...*, pp. 541-550

David Gissen, "Disability as Architectural Criticism" (2008)

<https://htcexperiments.org/2008/10/03/disability-as-architectural-criticism-yale-1996/>

Jos Boys, "The Disordinary Architecture Project" in *Funambulist* 19 (2018), pp. 36-43

<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10088538/1/JosBoys-DisOrdHandyGuide-Funambulist19.pdf>

Sam Jacob, "Body Building" in *AA Files* 70 (2015), pp. 89-91

### 31 March\_ Program

Bernard Tschumi, "Spaces and Events," in *Architecture and Disjunction...* PP.139-153.

Ana Miljaki, Amanda Reeser Lawrence, Ashley Schafer, 2 Architects, 10 Questions on Program" in *Praxis* 8, 2006)pp. 7-12, 15

Kiel Moe, "Specifically Generic Architecture – Convergence as a New Program for Architecture" in Kiel Moe, *Convergence* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 246-261

Amber Wiley, "Schools and Prisons," The Aggregate website, Volume 3, March 2015.

<http://www.we-aggregate.org/piece/schools-and-prisons>

recommended: Joe Day, "The Panopticon and the Guggenheim," in *Corrections and Collections* (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 88-102

### 7 April\_ Politics

Jameson, Fredric (1984) "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 236-246.

Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), selections

Inez Weizman, "Architecture's Political Spectacles" in *AA Files* 59, pp. 60-69

Michael Sorkin, "Afterward – Architecture Without Capitalism" in Peggy Deamer, *Architecture and Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2014)

Recommended: Margaret Crawford, "Can Architects be Socially Responsible?" in Diane Ghirardo ed., *Out of Site* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), pp. 27-31

Recommended: "Designing Inequality" in Jacob Moore and Susanne Schindler eds., *The Art of Inequality*, (New York: Buell Center 2015), pp. 60-81



## 14 April\_Labor

Bryan E. Norwood, "Whiteness and the Architectural Profession in the United States ," Platform (21 Sept 2020).

<https://www.platformspace.net/home/whiteness-and-the-architectural-profession-in-the-united-states?fbclid=IwAR3vrWtospw5Sc4qIknDhVYqYY10H5S1gCVC3QuLcyLjEmsaOe6xyFd7faA>

Peggy Deamer, "Architectural Work, Immaterial Labor" in Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff and Nick Beech eds., *Industries of Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 137-138, bottom 142-147

Kadambari Baxi, Jordan Carver, and Mabel O. Wilson, "Who Builds Your Architecture?: A Critical field Guide" (2017) selectons

<http://whobuilds.org/who-builds-your-architecture-a-critical-field-guide/>

## 21 April\_Color (Blind)

Charles Davis, "Blackness in Practice: Toward an Architectural Phenomenology of Blackness" *Log* 42 (2018) pp. 43-46, 50-54

Sean Canty, "Domestic Vigilance as an Aesthetic Practice" (MAS Context)

<https://www.mascontext.com/issues/33-vigilantism/domestic-vigilance-as-an-aesthetic-practice/>

-Amanda Williams on Color(ed) Theory

<https://www.archdaily.com/776953/video-color-ed-theory-amanda-williams>

## 28 April\_Final Evaluation