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instructor: Marta Gutman
course title: Architectural Theory and Methods
institution: City College of New York
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The City College of New York
School of Architecture, Urban Design, and Landscape Architecture

Arch 999.10. Architectural Theory and Methods

Fall 2007

Instructor: Prof. Marta Gutman

Wednesday, 2:00-5:00 pm, S-206

Credits: 3

Office hours: Wednesday, 10:30-12:30

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Objectives

This seminar is designed to enrich your knowledge of contemporary theory while honing analytical, research, writing, and presentation skills. Broadly speaking, this class will help you grasp the importance of viewpoint and subjectivity, explicitly in analyzing and implicitly in designing the built environment. As we use theory to probe the relationship of architecture (and other forms of material culture) to power, politics, and identity, we will examine how objects, buildings, and spaces shape and are shaped by social relationships and cultural values. It is my hope that thinking theoretically will help you come to grips with how architecture may be used for progressive (and not so progressive) purposes and as a tool for political critique and social change.

Method

You will select a building to document and analyze from different perspectives, offered in the readings. At each meeting, following discussion of assigned readings, two students will make concise, focused presentations to the seminar, applying to their buildings the method or theory under consideration that week. The presentation should be concise (about 20 minutes); in other words, you should get to and make the main points (be prepared: the clock will be running); a dry run before the presentation is encouraged. A one-page paper is also required at the presentation. Each student will make two presentations and write two short papers; the short papers will form the basis of a term paper.

The readings have been selected to offer overviews of the topic under discussion, examples of important writings, and applications of methods of interpretation. You are encouraged to read all of them, and are required to do so for the meetings when you make presentations. For other class meetings, you must read at least one of the longer required essays.

All research topics must be approved by the instructor. You must be able to visit the building or place you elect to study, so that you may observe, record, and analyze it first hand. It would be best if you chose a building in the New York metropolitan area that is open and accessible to the public.

Requirements

- Attendance (more than 2 unexcused absences will result in failure of the entire course)
- Participation
- Preliminary bibliography, 2 presentations, plus 2 short papers, due at your presentation.
- 10-page, synthetic, interpretive, smart paper, based on your presentations and short papers.

This seminar is intended for graduate students; advanced undergraduates may enroll with permission. All students are expected to strive for excellence in all aspects of this class--meaning in oral presentations, written work, reading critically, and above all, in thinking.

Readings and Resources

Required: Nick Crossley, Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory (2005).

Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture (2000).

Neil Leach, ed., Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory (1997).

These books are available for purchase at Labyrinth Books, 536 West 112th Street, New York, N.Y. Additional readings will be placed on electronic reserve (by the SAUDLA library).

Other useful resources:

Dana Arnold, Reading Architectural History (2003).

K. Michael Hays, Architecture Theory Since 1968 (2000).

Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine, ed., Key Thinkers on Space and Place (2004).

Kate Nesbitt, ed., Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995 (1996).

Joan Ockman, ed., Architecture Culture, 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology (1993).

Donald Preziosi, The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology (1998).

The College subscribes to a variety of digital databases, including Grove Art Online, AccuNet/AP Multimedia Archive, and ARTstor. The Architecture Slide Library has also built an extensive image database, "Art and Architecture Image Collections." To find these and other resources go the CCNY Library home page, click on "Quick Links to Selected Resources," and scroll through the links.

Grading

- Participation: 5%
- Presentations, short essays, and bibliography: 45%
- Term paper: 50%

Late work will be penalized; the grade will drop one step (A- to B+) for each meeting the work is late.

Take heed!

Attendance is required; come to class on time and prepared to discuss the material at hand. More than two unexcused absences from seminar will result in *automatic failure* of the seminar. Incompletes will not be granted except in the case of an extreme medical or family emergency, supported by a doctor's note or other written proof of the seriousness of the situation at hand. Please inform me about personal emergencies before they escalate. All discussions of personal matters will be held in strict confidence.

All written assignments must be your original work. Any copying, including short excerpts from a book, article, and Internet source, published or unpublished, will result in *automatic failure* of the seminar. In your papers, cite all sources, using footnotes, endnotes, or in-text citations, and include a bibliography. For the correct format, see the Chicago Manual of Style or the instructor. Be cautious about information posted online; make sure it has been written or vetted by recognized scholars. *Do not plagiarize.*

Learning Objectives

This course seeks to deepen students' grasp of the history of built form and the formation of landscape and urban design, and to hone their analytic skills, both as regards the form and meaning of monuments. It seeks to make students alive to the implications of architectural forms within society and the responsibility of those who design them.

NAAB Performance Criteria Fulfilled

1	Verbal and Writing Skills	10	National and Regional Traditions
2	Critical Thinking Skills	11	Use of Precedents
8	Western Traditions	13	Human Diversity
9	Non-Western Traditions	34	Ethics and Professional Judgment

Seminar Outline and Assignments

PART I: INTRODUCTION, DEFINITIONS, SCOPE

Week 1 (Wed. Aug. 29): Introduction to the course

Week 2 (Wed. Sept. 5). What is Architectural History? What is Architectural Theory?

Assignment: Start to record (describe) your building (words, photographs and sketches); research its history (architect, patron, site, program, period, etc.). Bring your work to class and come prepared to discuss it in relationship to the analytical tools used in the assigned readings.

Required reading:

Dana Arnold, Reading Architectural History, chap. 1.

Suggested:

Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," excerpt in Reading Architectural History, 71-82.

Week 3 (Wed., Sept. 12): No class (holiday)

PART II: METHODS

Week 4 (Wed. Sept. 19): Form

Assignment: Do a formal analysis of your building. Be sure to think about the meaning of the term "formal analysis." Are you analyzing form for composition? In terms of connoisseurship? In terms of human experience? Political and cultural meaning?

Required reading:

Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings, "Form," "Formal."

Suggested:

Colin Rowe, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," in Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays, 1-28.

Week 5 (Weds., Sept. 26): Function

Assignment: Do a functional analysis of your building. Be sure to consider carefully the meaning of the term, "functional." Why does Forty argue "determinism" needs to be "purged" from functionalist analyses? Does Herman's concept, "embedded landscapes," offer a useful alternative?

Required reading:

Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings, "Function."

Suggested:

Bernard L. Herman, "The Embedded Landscapes of the Charleston Single House, 1780-1820," in Exploring Everyday Landscapes, edited by Adams and McMurray (1997), chapter 3.

Paper: Preliminary bibliography and research due.

Week 6 (Wed., Oct. 3): Structure

Assignment: Analyze the structure of your building. Be sure to consider carefully the different meanings of the term, "structure" and "structural." Is there a grammar, or set of rules, that governs its form? What is its basis: Linguistic? Spatial? Geometrical? Social? Technological? As you analyze your building, think about whether there is such a thing as universal language.

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Required reading:

Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings, “Structure,” and “Semiotic and Structuralist Applications to Architecture” (in chap. 4, 80-85).

Suggested:

Roland Barthes, “The Eiffel Tower,” in Rethinking Architecture, edited by Leach, 172-180.
“Structuralism” in Rethinking Architecture, edited by Leach, 163-164.

Week 7 (Wed., Oct. 10): Nature

Assignment: Analyze your building’s relationship to nature, considering the concept, “nature” as it defined by Forty and Cronon. Does your building reject nature? Accept it? How?

Required reading:

Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings, “Nature.”

Suggested:

William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, edited by Cronon (1996), 69-90.

PART III: POLITICS, IDENTITY, AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Week 8 (Wed., Oct. 17): Ideology and Social Class (in Marxist terms)

Assignment: Apply the concept of ideology to your building. How is class interest expressed in your building? Be specific.

Required reading:

Friedrich Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, chap. 3, “The Great Towns.”
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “On Class,” in Class, ed. Joyce, 21-30.

Suggested:

Nicos Hadjinicolaou, “Art History and Class Struggle” (excerpt), in Arnold, Reading Architectural History, 124-126.
“Ideology” and “Identity (personal, social, collective, and ‘the politics of’)” in Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory, edited by Crossley, 144-147, 147-156.

Week 9 (Wed. Oct. 24): Economy (not in Marxist terms)

Assignment: Apply this method to your building. How may the effects of political economy be discerned in the physical fabric of your building? In relationship to its site?

Required reading:

Carol Willis, “Form Follows Finance: The Empire State Building,” in The Landscape of Modernity: New York, 1900-1940, edited by Ward and Zunz, 160-187.

Suggested:

Dell Upton, “Money,” Architecture in the United States, chapter 5 (selection).

Week 10 (Wed., Oct. 31): Gender and Sexuality

Assignment: Analyze the performance of gender, sexuality, and “other” social categories in your building. What does Butler mean by “performativity”? Compare Butler’s understanding of gender in space with Friedman’s. Be sure to differentiate gender and sexuality in your analysis.

Required reading:

Dana Arnold, “A Class Performance: Social Histories of Architecture,” in Reading Architectural History, 127-142.

Alice T. Friedman, "People Who Live in Glass Houses: Edith Farnsworth, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson," Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History (1998), chap. 4.

Suggested:

Judith Butler, "Subversive Bodily Acts" (extract) in Gender, Space, Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Palmer, and Iain Borden, 96-97.

"Performativity," "Sex/Gender Distinction" in Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory, ed. Crossley, 208-213, 280-284.

PART IV: IS SPACE POLITICAL?: MODERNITY, POSTMODERNITY, AND CRITICAL THEORY

Week 11 (Wed., Nov. 7): Lefebvre and the Social Production of Space

Assignment: What does the concept, "space is socially produced," mean? How is it relevant to your building? Who, and what, constructs the social meanings of spaces in your building?

Required reading:

Henri Lefebvre, extracts from *The Production of Space* in Rethinking Architecture, ed. Leach, 138-146; and extracts from *The Critique of Everyday Life* in Architecture of the Everyday, ed., Harris and Berke, 32-37.

Margie Ruddick, "Tom's Garden," in Architecture of the Everyday, ed., Harris and Berke, 107-119.

Suggested:

Mary McLeod, "Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*: An Introduction," in Architecture of the Everyday, ed., Harris and Berke, 9-29.

Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings, "Space."

Week 12 (Thurs., Nov. 14): Foucault, Power-Knowledge, and Space

Assignment: Do a poststructuralist analysis of your building, from Foucault's point of view. What does Foucault mean by power and power-knowledge? Is there a power-knowledge axis in your building? Who holds power? How is it exercised? Resisted?

Required reading:

"Poststructuralism" Rethinking Architecture, ed., Leach, 283-284.

Michel Foucault, "Panopticism" (extract) and "Space, Knowledge, and Power," in Rethinking Architecture, ed. Leach, 356-79.

Suggested:

"Body-Power/Bio-Power," "Discourse," "Power," "Power-Knowledge," in Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory, edited by Crossley, 23-28, 60-63, 211-221, 222-227.

Week 13 (Wed., Nov. 21): No class (Friday schedule)

Week 14 (Wed., Nov. 28): Constructing the Other: Hybridity, Race, and Ethnicity

Assignment: Apply, and critique, the concept of "hybridity" to your building. What does Bhabha mean by "thirdspace"? Consider carefully the contrast between cultural difference and cultural diversity and its implications for architectural space. Does "hybridity" describe the response to quilts from Gee's Bend?

Required reading:

Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Triffen, eds., The Postcolonial Studies Reader, 206-09.

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Michael J. Prokopow, "Material Truths: *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* at the Whitney Museum of Art" An Exhibition Review," Winterthur Portfolio 38 no. 1 (2003): 57-66.

Suggested:

"Hybridity," "Orientalism," "Racism(s) and Ethnicity," in Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory, edited by Crossley. 129-130, 144-147, 234-237.

PART V: SYNTHESIS

Week 15 (Wed., Dec. 5): Politics and Public Space

Assignment: Compare Jameson's and Kohn's description of public space. Does formal subversion have the same effect as political subversion--on architecture culture? Political culture? Come to class with a thesis statement and an outline and prepared to discuss your ideas. You need to start to write your paper before studio reviews.

Required reading:

Fredrik Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," and "Is Space Political?" in Rethinking Architecture, ed. Leach, 236-247, 255-269.

Margaret Kohn, "The House of the People," Radical Space (2003), chapter 6.

Suggested:

"Deconstruction," "Public Sphere," in Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory, edited by Crossley, 54-59, 227-234.

"Postmodernism" in Rethinking Architecture, ed. Leach, 207-08.

Papers due: Monday, Dec. 17, 2007. The late clock starts running at 9:30 am. No exceptions.