

## Course Description

Since the time of our first known architectural theorist, theory and practice have formed two equally indispensable halves of architecture. Although arguably architectural practice is our ultimate aspiration, theory serves as its **conscience and provocation**. It seeks and shapes the limits of the discipline, reflects on what we have accomplished, and speculates on what we might.

*Theory and Context* is an examination of architectural theories that understand the designed environment as a cultural medium and product of a socio-cultural process that expresses values and ideas. The purpose of this course is to uncover significant threads of architectural theory. It will become clear that no one unifying theory of architecture exists, nor should we expect one to. Rather the interrelated nature of thinking and making arises in a myriad of voices.

In this course, we will examine architectural theory from ideas of origins and the paradigmatic shifts of the modern period to the pluralistic discourses of the last fifty years. Understanding of these theories will be enhanced through the analysis of paradigmatic buildings, urban form and ideologies that have influenced architectural culture.

Course Instructor: Chad Kraus

Class Time and Location: TR 2:30-3:45; 2001 Malott Hall

Office Hours and Contact: MWF 1:00-3:00; 113 Marvin Hall; t: 785.864.4129; email: ckraus@ku.edu

## Shadow and Substance

Marcus Vitruvius Pollio. De Architectura, Book I, Chapter I. *The architect should be equipped with knowledge of many branches of study and varied kinds of learning, for it is by his judgment that all work done by the other arts is put to test. This knowledge is the child of practice and theory...It follows, therefore, that architects who have aimed at acquiring manual skill without scholarship have never been able to reach a position of authority to correspond to their pains, while those who relied only upon theories and scholarship were obviously hunting the shadow, not the substance. But those who have a thorough knowledge of both, like men armed at all points, have the sooner attained their object and carried authority with them.*

## Why Theory?

K. Michael Hays and Alicia Kennedy. After All, or The End of 'The End of'. *[Theory] uncovers aspects of architecture practice that, while not useful or even correct for building now, may become a resource for future architectures. The theoretical text seeks out for us what we cannot otherwise imagine (this is its properly utopian vocation), but it does so not by presenting us with a concrete representation, or even a guide to one, but rather by exposing the gaps and holes in our discipline and our discourse that are our own inability to see beyond the present and its ideological closure.*

## Recommended Background

A course on **Modern Architecture** is highly recommended prior to enrolling in this course. As a supplement, you are encouraged to reference *Modern Architecture since 1900* by William J. R. Curtis.

## Examinations and Assignments

The semester will be divided into five parts, each culminating in an exam. The incremental (non-cumulative) exams will consist of multiple choice questions to assess general familiarity with the material covered in lectures and readings as well as an optional short essay question for extra consideration to assess a deeper knowledge of the material and **critical thinking skills**. Missed exams will only be made up if valid written documentation for absences related to medical or family emergencies is submitted in a timely manner.

75% Exam I (15%), Exam II (15%), Exam III (15%), Exam IV (15%), and Exam V (15%)  
25% Theory Project (25%)

## Theory Project: Short Film Series

Working in teams of four, the project for this course is to create an 8-minute digital narrative based on a **careful 'reading' of a work of architecture as well as the intentions of its creator** within a specific theoretical framework. The project is divided into four parts; Subject, Script, Short Film, and Reflection. All submissions are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated in both analog (in class) and digital form (emailed). The focus will be on **practicing skills of analysis and application of concepts**. Your team will need to place the narrative within a robust theoretical and historical context (meaning your facts are correct and your theoretical construct makes sense). In the end, the group is to **demonstrate an understanding of theoretical perspectives and historical contexts and communicate theoretical perspectives via a new medium**. [Resources: *Theory and Context Short Film Series* ([web.ku.edu/~theory](http://web.ku.edu/~theory)). *The Digital Storytelling Cookbook* ([www.storycenter.org/cookbook.pdf](http://www.storycenter.org/cookbook.pdf)). *Center for Digital Storytelling* ([www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org)). *Australian Centre for the Moving Image* ([www.acmi.net.au/digitalstorytelling.aspx](http://www.acmi.net.au/digitalstorytelling.aspx)). *Georgetown's Digital Commons* ([digitalcommons.georgetown.edu/projects/digitalstories](http://digitalcommons.georgetown.edu/projects/digitalstories)).]

**Part 1: Subject.** Teams will conduct preliminary research and select the subject matter for the project. During the selection process, keep in mind that at least 25% of the final content must consist of original work (i.e. photographs, video, sketches, drawings, diagrams, text, and/or analog or digital animations created by team members). It is advised that your team make a well-informed decision at this early stage.

**Part 2: Script.** Teams will submit a script of the project, complete with a 250-word (maximum) brief statement describing the intention of the story, a list of sources (may reference academic/professional journals, books, newspapers, the internet, etc.; note: you may not rely solely on the internet), and a 'scene' by 'scene' storyboard. You may find it helpful to think about your story from the perspective of a research project. What is it about your topic you want to learn more about or to understand in more depth? What do you think people should know about this person/work? You might consider one or more of the following: free-writing (taking your initial ideas and "running with them"), intro sequence (starting with an anecdote, single object, song, or image that synthesizes your message); theoretical proposition (starting with the framework in which you want to encounter the work); or an expository approach (starting as if you were going to begin a traditional essay).

**Part 3: Story.** The project is to be a multimedia narrative - combining music, sound, narration, imagery (moving and/or still), drawings, diagrams, computer renderings or animations - which **interprets the architect's theoretical position related to the work you have chosen** and best represents his/her thinking. The media comprising the story may be original or drawn from other sources (a minimum of 25% original content is required; original content will be more heavily weighted). The films may be personal narrations which move outward towards larger theoretical or contextual issues, allegories, mini-documentaries, etc. The digital story is meant to be a penetrating and deep analysis rather than an exhaustive and wide one. Celebrate the unique insights of your team while balancing insights gained through scholarly research. Do not forget to **completely and properly cite (or "credit") your sources** at the end of your digital story (in a commonly accepted format). Failure to properly cite your sources may result in a poor evaluation. The Media lab in 10 Budig Hall has everything you need in addition to technical assistance. User-friendly video-editing software is readily available on either the Mac OS platform (iMovie) or the PC platform (Microsoft Movie Maker). You can check out digital cameras from Architecture Computing Services.

**Part 4: Reflection.** Each member of the team will individually submit a 350-400 word (maximum) reflection paper (formatted using 1.5 spacing on an 8½" x 11" page size). The reflection paper will contain your thoughts on the team's decision-making process, what you contributed, why your group included what they included and why they left some things out. This is your chance to reflect on your learning during the project. Strong papers will relate experiences back to readings and will provide proper citations.

The work will be assessed largely based on the following criteria:

- How effective is the story in arguing its message and how well do choices of music, script, narrative style, and imagery **communicate the message**?
- How well does the piece **illuminate the relationship** between the object of study and larger social, historical or theoretical issues in architecture?
- How well does the chosen theoretical construct **shape the argument**?
- How well does the film help the audience **understand theoretical concepts used in architecture**?
- Does the film open an **avenue to new questions** or **inspire further exploration** of the topic by its viewers?

## Course Structure and Weekly Readings

Weekly readings will be drawn either from the required text or from additional sources. Class lectures, images, and videos are intended to compliment the readings. It is imperative that you prepare for each class period by reading the assigned materials in advance. An effort will be made to ensure that time at the end of each period will be set aside for questions/discussions related to the topics assigned. [Required Text: **Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture** by Kate Nesbitt. Additional Texts: *Programmes and Manifestoes on 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Architecture* by Ulrich Conrads. *Architectural Theory: Volume I* by Harry Francis Mallgrave. *Architecture Culture 1943-1968* by Joan Ockman. *Constructing a New Agenda* by A. Krista Sykes. Texts marked [BB] will be uploaded to Blackboard at least one week in advance.]

### Part I: From Origins to Modernism

#### Theme One: Architecture and Origins.

##### Why Theory?

**Origins of Architecture.** [BB] Vitruvius, *excerpts from Books 1- 4 of De Architectura (On Architecture)*

#### Theme Two: Architecture and the Suprasensory.

**The Suprasensory Referent.** [BB] *Old Testament*, from *I Kings* and *The Book of Ezekiel*; Palladio, from *The Four Books of Architecture*; Alberti, from *De re Aedificatoria*

**The Rise of Pure Reason.** Descartes, from *Discourse on the Method*; Perrault, *Preface to the Ordonnance of the Five Kinds of Columns*

#### Theme Three: Architecture and the Rise of Modernism.

**The Essence of Architecture.** [BB] Laugier, from *Essay on Architecture*; Semper, from *Four Elements of Architecture*

**The Rise of Modernism.** [BB] Loos, *Ornament and Crime*; Muthesius and Van de Velde, *Werkbund Theses and Antitheses*; Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*; Mies van der Rohe, *Industrialized Building* and *On Form in Architecture*

#### Theme Four: Short Film Series Introduction.

**Software Tutorial**

**EXAM I**

### Part II: From Modernism to Post-Modernism

#### Theme Five: Architecture and the Modern Mentality.

**An Organic Modernism.** [BB] Ockman, *Introduction to Architecture Culture*; Wright, *In the Nature of Materials*

**Modernism Reaffirmed.** [BB] Le Corbusier, *Ineffable Space*; CIAM 6, *Reaffirmation of the Aims of CIAM*; Oud, *Mr. Oud Replies*; Mies van der Rohe, *With Infinite Slowness Arises the Great Form*

#### Theme Six: Architecture and the Post-Modern Plurality.

**Return to History.** Colquhoun, *Three Kinds of Historicism*

**Post-Modernism Emerging.** Venturi, from *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*; Eisenman, *Post-Functionalism*; Graves, *A Case for Figurative Architecture*

#### Theme Seven: Architecture and Politics.

**Politics.** [BB] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*

**EXAM II**

### Part III: Urbanism, Language, and Form

#### Theme Eight: Architecture and the City.

**Architecture and the City.** Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*; Koolhaas, *Postscript: Introduction for New Research and Toward the Contemporary City*

#### Theme Nine: Architecture and Language.

**Structuralism, Analogy, and Typology.** Broadbent, *A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs*; Rossi, *An Analogical Architecture*; Moneo, *On Typology* [BB]

**Poststructuralism.** Tschumi, *Architecture and Limits I-III*

**Project: Script Submissions Due**

#### Theme Ten: Architecture and Form.

**Generative Theory.** [BB] Grabow, from *Christopher Alexander: The Search for a New Paradigm*

**Morphology.** [BB] Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*

**EXAM III**

### Part IV: Making, Phenomena, and Place

#### Theme Eleven: Architecture and Making.

**Tectonics.** Gregotti, *The Exercise of Detailing*; Frascari, *The Tell-the-Tale Detail*

#### Theme Twelve: Architecture and Phenomena.

**Phenomenology of Being.** Ando, *Toward New Horizons in Architecture*; Norberg-Schulz, *The Phenomenology of Place*

**Phenomenology of Perception.** Holl, *Questions of Perception* [BB]; Pallasmaa, *An Architecture of the Seven Senses* [BB]; Pallasmaa, *The Geometry of Feeling*

#### Theme Thirteen: Architecture and Regionalism.

**Critical Regionalism.** Frampton, *Prospects for a Critical Regionalism*

**EXAM IV**

### Part V: Ethics and the Virtual

#### Theme Fourteen: Architecture and the Virtual.

**The Virtual World.** Author Name, *Name of Article* [BB]

#### Theme Fifteen: Architecture and Ethics.

**Ethics.** Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*; Mockbee, *Rural Studio* [BB]

**Environmentalism.** [BB] McDonough and Braungart, *From Principles to Practices*; Murcutt, *Raised to Observe*

**Project: Short Film Submissions Due**

#### Theme Sixteen: Short Film Series.

**Short Film Series, Part I.**

**Short Film Series, Part II.**

**Project: Reflection Paper Submissions Due**

**EXAM V**

**Final Exam:** Make-up final exams will not be given either before or after the scheduled date.

**Course Policies.** The policies for this course are intended to facilitate focused learning. Attendance is required; more than three absences may result in a letter grade deduction. In addition, you are expected to arrive promptly at the designated time and place for the full duration of the session. Use of cell phones, computers, and other electronic media are not allowed during class. Despite limitations based on class size and structure, the course will attempt to establish an active discourse. You will be asked to form and maintain small study groups throughout the semester - ideally, allowing discussions to expand beyond the classroom. There will be weekly forums on Blackboard for this purpose. To ensure the health and energy of the university, students should take proper precautions regarding illnesses to limit their effects on the individuals' health, the class, and the university in general. For more information, refer to the *KU Pandemic Response Plan* at [www.pandemic.ku.edu](http://www.pandemic.ku.edu).

**Course Evaluation.** A = 100% - 93%; A- = 92% - 90%; B+ = 89% - 87%; B = 86% - 83%; B- = 82% - 80%; C+ = 79% - 77%; C = 76% - 73%; C- = 72% - 70%; D+ = 69% - 67%; D = 66% - 63%; D- = 62% - 60%; F = 59% ↓

**Intellectual Property.** Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and/or review sessions - without the consent of the instructor - is prohibited.

**NAAB Criteria.** The National Architectural Accreditation Board accredits professional-degree seeking schools as they complete basic requirements. The Student Performance Criteria for Arch 630 includes 'ability' in the following areas: Speaking and Writing Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, and Research Skills; and 'understanding' in the following areas: Western Traditions, Non-Western Traditions, and National/Regional Traditions. Consult the following link for details: [www.saud.ku.edu/gen/SAUD\\_generated\\_pages/Accreditation\\_of\\_professional\\_Architecture\\_Programs\\_m1053.html](http://www.saud.ku.edu/gen/SAUD_generated_pages/Accreditation_of_professional_Architecture_Programs_m1053.html)

**Students with Disabilities.** The KU Office of Disability Resources (DR), 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620, coordinates accommodations and services for all eligible students with disabilities. If you have a disability contact DR as soon as possible. Information about their services can be found at [www.disability.ku.edu](http://www.disability.ku.edu). Please also contact the instructor privately in regard to your needs in this course.

**Religious Holidays.** Anyone in the course who intends to observe a religious holiday that conflicts with the course schedule or requirements should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss alternate arrangements.

**Academic Misconduct.** "Academic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; plagiarizing of another's work; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human and animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research." When academic misconduct is alleged, the clear university policies and procedures expressed in the academic misconduct section of the student handbook, available at [www.studenthandbook.ku.edu](http://www.studenthandbook.ku.edu) will be followed. The University of Kansas is committed to programs and activities that are free of racial, sexual or ethnic discrimination. For assistance or information on policies, please contact the University Ombuds Office at [www.ku.edu/ombuds](http://www.ku.edu/ombuds) or the Department of Human Resources & Equal Opportunity at [www.hreo.ku.edu](http://www.hreo.ku.edu).