

History of Modern Architecture
ARTH 315-001 / HIST 388-002 / HIST 389-003
Syllabus

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Virtual office hours by appointment

Spring 2022
TR 3-4:15pm
Nguyen Engineering Building 1103

Course overview

This course will trace the history of modern architecture in the Western world from the mid-19th century to the present. We will explore this history through key movements such as Art Nouveau, Futurism, Modernism, and Post-Modernism; influential architectural designers and theorists, from Louis Sullivan to Le Corbusier; and enduring issues such as gender, class, race, and technology. We will look closely at major modern monuments, while also placing these and other vernacular architectural developments within their changing urban contexts. Our aim will be to gain a more nuanced understanding of the modern built environment alongside evolving political, social, and cultural currents.

Course requirements

Grade breakdown:

Class participation 25%
Case study presentation and paper 25%
Midterm 25%
Final exam 25%

1. *Class participation:* This course will be comprised of both lectures and discussions. You are expected to come to each class prepared with thoughts and questions on the day's reading assignment. I may occasionally give unannounced reading quizzes to check that you are keeping up with the course material.
2. *Case study presentation and paper:* You will each prepare a case study on a work of modern architecture corresponding to one of the class themes, culminating in a 15-minute class presentation and a 1500-2000-word paper on your analysis (due 2 weeks after your presentation). These presentations and papers will be staggered throughout the semester, so that your project will coincide with the week when we are studying the related movement or development. Case study suggestions are provided in the Weekly Schedule below, but you are welcome to make a different selection based on your interests.
3. *Midterm* (Thursday 3/10): The midterm will comprise slide identifications, comparisons, and essay questions on topics covered during the first half of the semester.
4. *Final exam* (Thursday 5/12, 1:30-4:15pm): The final exam will consist of slide identifications, comparisons, and essay questions on topics covered during the second half of the semester.

Reading assignments

The following required book is available for purchase at the University bookstore:

- Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971)

For those who would like the additional guidance of a textbook, I recommend the following:

- William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (London: Phaidon, 1996)

Additional reading assignments for each week, comprising both primary and secondary texts, will be made available online through Blackboard.

Course policies

- *Academic integrity:* The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>). Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or Chicago format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.
- *Course communication:* Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.
- *Attendance and conduct:* You are expected to attend and participate in every class session. For justifiable absences (such as illness or other emergencies), you may be asked to provide official documentation. You should e-mail me in advance if you know of an upcoming conflict. Repeated absences will impact your participation grade. Please always be respectful of your classmates and professor in your speech and conduct.
- *Technology policy:* Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher). Cell phones and other communicative devices must be switched off or put on silent (not vibrate) mode during class hours. Laptops/tablets may be used solely for note-taking purposes, and not for e-mailing, internet browsing, or using social media. I may occasionally check that you are complying with this policy, and in the case that it is not respected, I reserve the right to prohibit laptop/tablet use for the remainder of the course.
- *Late assignments:* For written work, lateness will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example, A to A-) for every 24-hour period beyond the deadline. If you have extenuating circumstances, you should always get in touch with me directly.
- *Special accommodations:* If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Weekly schedule

Unit 1: Inventing the Modern, 1850-1914

Week 1 Introduction

T 1/25 Introduction to modern architecture

R 1/27 Nineteenth-century historicism

- Heinrich Hubsch, "In What Style Should We Build?" (1828), p.64-85

Week 2 The Modern Metropolis

T 2/1 Industrialization and the modern city

- David van Zanten, "The Quartier de l'Opéra," in *Building Paris* (1994)

R 2/3 The World's Fairs

- Zeynep Çelik, "Islamic Quarters in Western Cities," in *Displaying the Orient* (1992)

Week 3 Nature Re-visited

T 2/8 Art nouveau

- Conrads, p.13
- Debora Silverman, "Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness: African Lineages of Belgian Modernism, Part I," *West 86th* 18:2 (2011)

R 2/10 Antoni Gaudi

- George R. Collins, "Antonio Gaudi: Structure and Form," *Perspecta* 8 (1963): 63-90

Case study options:

- Victor Horta, Hotel Eetvelde, 1895-1901
- Charles Rennie Mackintosh, House for an Art Lover, 1901
- Antoni Gaudi, Casa Batlló, 1904-6

Week 4 Industry and Ornament

T 2/15 Vienna Secession and the Vienna Workshop

- Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture*, excerpt

R 2/17 Adolf Loos and the problem of ornament

- Conrads, p.19-24

Case study options:

- Josef Hoffmann, Palais Stoclet, 1905-11
- Adolf Loos, Villa Müller, 1928-30

Week 5 Responses to Mechanization

T 2/22 Deutscher Werkbund

- Robin Schuldenfrei, "Consumption: Peter Behrens at the AEG and the Luxury of Technology," in *Luxury and Modernism: Architecture and the Object in Germany, 1900-1933* (2018)

R 2/24 Expressionism before WWI

- Conrads, p.26-31

Case study options:

- H.P. Berlage, Amsterdam Stock Exchange (Beurs van Berlage), 1896-1903

Week 6 The Chicago School

T 3/1 The skyscraper

- Louis Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered" (1896)

R 3/3 Frank Lloyd Wright

- Conrads, p.124-125
- Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Home in a Prairie Town," *Ladies' Home Journal* (1901)

Case study options:

- Daniel Burnham, Flatiron Building, 1902
- Frank Lloyd Wright, Larkin Building, 1904
- Frank Lloyd Wright, Pope-Leighey House (Alexandria, VA), 1941

Week 7 Imagining the future

T 3/8 Italian Futurism

- Conrads, p.34-38

R 3/10 Midterm

Week 8 Spring Break

Unit 2: High Modernism, 1918-1950

Week 9 Reactions after war

T 3/22 Postwar Expressionism

- Conrads, p.54-55
- Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (1944), 61-76

R 3/24 De Stijl

- Alice Friedman, "Family Matters," in *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (1998)

Case study options:

- Eric Mendelsohn, Einstein Tower, Potsdam, 1920

Week 10 Bauhaus

T 3/29 Bauhaus

- Conrads, p.49-53
- Bauhaus Reviewed 1919-1933 – oral history excerpts

R 3/31 Mies van der Rohe

- Alice Friedman, "People Who Live in Glass Houses," in *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (1998)

Case study options:

- Mies van der Rohe, Tugendhat House, 1930
- Walter Gropius, Gropius House, 1938

Week 11 International Style

T 4/5 Le Corbusier

- Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture* (1923), excerpts
- Conrads, p.99-101

R 4/7 Modernism and gender

- Caroline Constant, “E.1027: The Nonheroic Modernism of Eileen Gray,” *JSAH* 53:3 (1994)

Case study options:

- Le Corbusier, Villa Stein, 1927
- Richard Neutra, Lovell Health House, 1929

Week 12 Architecture and Politics

T 4/12 Constructivism

- Conrads, p.56

R 4/14 The architecture of fascism

- Lucy Maulsby, “Case del fascio and the Making of Modern Italy,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20:5 (2015)

Case study options:

- Konstantin Melnikov, Rusakov Workers’ Club, 1927-29
- Giuseppe Terragni, Novocomum, 1929

Unit 3: Late to Post-Modernism, 1950-present

Week 13 City and Dwelling

T 4/19 The garden city

- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), excerpt

R 4/21 Post-War housing

- Timothy Hyde, “Irritation,” in *Ugliness and Judgment* (2019)

Case study options:

- Welwyn Garden City, 1920
- Minoru Yamasaki, Pruitt Igoe low-cost housing, 1950-4

Week 14 Global Modernism

T 4/26 Brasilia

- Matheus Gorovitz, “Unidade de Vizinhança: Brasilia’s ‘Neighborhood Unit’” (2005)

R 4/28 Louis Kahn

- Conrads, p.169-170
- Kathleen James-Chakraborty, “Louis Kahn in Ahmedabad and Dhaka,” *Architecture Beyond Europe* 4 (2013)

Case study options:

- Le Corbusier, Chandigarh master plan, 1950-51
- Louis Kahn, Phillips Exeter Academy Library, 1965-72
- Eero Saarinen, TWA Terminal, JFK Airport, 1956-62

Week 15 Post-Modernism to the present

T 5/3 Post-Modernism to the present

- Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1977), excerpt

R 5/5 Some trends in contemporary architecture

Case study options:

- Robert Venturi, Lieb House, 1967
- Philip Johnson, American Telephone and Telegraph Building, 1979