Two Hundred Words

This is an advanced seminar course exploring a range of current architectural investigations, as manifest in specific built work and texts. It begins with a set of contemporary buildings and texts, and aims at generating a critical dialogue within the class.

The course intends to develop analytical and critical skills via discussion and concise writing venues: short trenchant responses to the specific buildings and texts. The class will examine one building each week. Students will come to class prepared with a response of 200 words and 1 critical image. Writing is expected to be a response to the material put forth, not explanations of any given building or text. These responses are intended to generate conversation in class, and participation in this critical dialogue is expected. A final presentation will take place on the last class of the semester with an exhibition of posters generated by each member of the class. In this final exercise, each student will provide a text of 1000 words and a pertinent image that expands on each individual’s interest. Intended as a provocation rather than a response, it is expected that this final exercise will require more effort than the previous weeks’ writings.

The objective of this course is not only to expose students to a relevant body of writing and built work, but to also develop skills in relating critical investigations to their physical embodiment. The intention of the course is to afford the framework by which students might begin to position their own architectural ambitions.

Particular attention will be paid to the realm of material manifestation as a critical juncture in the formulation of architecture. In the concern for the materials of building and the manners of construction the architect commits speculation to action: attempts to convert intention into palpable reality. It is here that architecture is most fully and deliberately engaged with the world and here that architecture initiates the world's response in turn. It seems clear, however, from even casual observation that while this subject matter may be vital it is oftentimes treated as a marginal concern. This course begins with the assumption that this denial of Architecture's material potential seriously undermines architecture's value in society and raises fundamental questions about the legitimacy of our profession more generally. Students will explore these concerns through their responses and class dialogue.