Hannah Arendt herself acknowledged architecture in an interesting discussion in a famous 1964 interview: she starts by observing that a central problem of the modern world is that nobody cares any longer what the world looks like.

INTERVIEWER: "World" understood always as the space in which politics can originate?

ARENDT: I comprehend it now in a much larger sense, as the space in which things become public, as the space in which one lives and which must look presentable. In which art appears, of course. In which all kinds of things appear.

Space is empty. Its emptiness leaves things open.

Public space is also empty, but its emptiness is deceptive; actually, it is a charged void. In public space everyday rituals are overlaid with temporary phenomena and events. The way public space is used confirms questions and changes individual and common values.

In the narrowest definition the function of public space would be to provide spaces for social interaction.

How do contemporary planners, architects, politicians, and artists currently assess the significance of public space for civic democratic developments?

Public space is constituted by design. However, it is no longer defined in the traditional manner of enclosing streets, squares and green spaces that creates public space, not only included by those interior spaces of churches that Giambattista Nolli identified in the 18th century as part of public life, not only found in the often cited arcades of the 19th century, but for a long time now already to be seen also in the traffic infrastructure, hospitals, sports stadia and shopping centers of the last century. And now the internet can be added to public space.

The question of how architecture can produce “public spaces” isn’t simply a problem of modern architecture vis-à-vis neo-liberalism but firstly of the deconstruction of the place and the home and secondly of the forces external to architecture that are interwoven in this process.

The home is no longer simply a place or a dwelling but a story, a narrative, a sense of belonging; it appears as a horizon and search for new destinations rather than a place in the past or place of origin. On the other hand, space appears not as an object but as a process: Space is the mediator between mental and social activities and is thus conceived as a social product.

What are the public spaces of modern life?
With the reconquest of public space in the Arabic world, in Eastern Europe, in Turkey, in Spain, in the USA, the political relevance of streets, squares or parks has come into everyone’s consciousness. The mass demonstrations on the streets of Leipzig and Berlin, the Boulevard El Habib Bourouiba, on Tahir Square in Cairo or on Maidan Square in Kiew, in Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul, in Zucotti Park in New York or on Florissant Avenue in Ferguson have in some cases lead to the demise of totalitarian regimes, in others to the assertion of civil rights, in short: to a global democratization of public space.

Undoubtedly, public space is a crucial characteristic of a city or town, or any polis-like community tolerant enough for freedom of expression and political opposition.

The significance and quality of public space are changed by means of new modes of uses, new means of transport and communication.

Unlike in the first Greek "politi" the public space is of course not any longer to be understood as the built architectural highlight of public life in form of an amphitheatre, temple, stoa or stadium or "mall".

Clearly, the focus is not on the architectural properties of any one building in isolation programmed for public spectacles, but rather on an ensemble of buildings as the site of civic space, or more likely, on a community as a whole as a locus of civic-architectural experience. It’s in this sense that one relates to architecture not as the aesthetic spectator of particular products of architectural virtuosity, but something closer to the relation between a citizen and his/her "polis." If the effect of an ensemble of architectural creation is not the constitution of some kind of "polis," at least ideally, then the idea of architecture as a source of "citizenship" is a hollow one.

Thus, the contest for public space and its design in modern society should be discussed on three levels: politically, economically and socio-culturally

The seminar will explore physical public spaces and phenomena of virtual public space.

1. Significant public spaces transformed by socio-cultural/political changes (world cities)
2. Selected substantive Public Space projects of the 20th century: Architecture and Landscape
3. The Impact of Artists in the Public Space
4. Recent Projects: Democracy versus Neo-liberalism and New Political Agendas for Public Space
5. Fight for Rights: The Civil Movements and Mass Events
6. Virtual Public Space: Social and political impact

COURSE ORGANISATION AND REQUIREMENTS:

Students will give two presentations in the class during the semester. Selected readings will supplement the seminar and will be discussed in the class
CLASS MEETINGS:

Tue and Thu
9:30 -11:30 am
Battle 101

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:
A chronological approach to the history and theory of Public Space helps to reveal certain permanent phenomena inherent to the development of cities and - over the course of time-redundant patterns of and reasons for change.

An encyclopedic knowledge of the history of cities and related cultural theory is a prerequisite for independent research in Urban Design; to obtain a critical opinion and to contribute to contemporary urban design debate both practically and theoretical

EVALUATION & ACADEMIC POLICY

All required work and the presentations must be submitted on time. Late work will be reviewed at the discretion of the instructor. The student’s success at developing ideas and concepts, depth of reading, depth of presentation, participation in class discussion and a demonstration of reiterative comprehensive working process are the major components of the student’s evaluation. Four unexcused absences can constitute grounds for removal from the course.

An incomplete (I) is assigned as a temporary deferment of a final grade, and is assigned at the discretion of the instructor because of legitimately unavoidable and extenuating circumstances. Attendance is mandatory and, please, be on time.

Classes will start promptly at 9:30 am. If you miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

GRADE CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES:

20% attendance
20% discussion
60% presentations (2x)
Bibliography:


Mitscherlich, Alexander *The Inhabitability of our Cities*, 1965


Sennett, Richard *The Fall of Public Man*, 1977

Harvey, David *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, Verso, 2012

Ed. Hoidn, Barbara, *Demopolis_The Right to Public Space*, 2016 Park Books

Keen, Andrew, *The Internet is not the answer*, Atlantic 2015