

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE,  
BATTLE HALL, ROOM 117,  
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**ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM SEMINAR**  
**ARC 386M/01025, ARC 327R / 00735**  
**UT INDEPENDENT INQUIRY FLAG**

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OFFICE HOURS AS AGREED

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND SYLLABUS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Architectural criticism is as much an act of creation as architectural design. In a way, it reverses the design process by viewing the designed project, analyzing its parts and deducing the underlying intentions. The deduction of the underlying intentions is necessary especially in cases in which there is little communication from the designers with regard to their underlying intentions. With underlying intentions are meant all intentions including social and cultural ones. Frequently, architects express goals regarding cultural and ethical value systems, economic costs, technological performance, or they speak generally about the design's generating metaphors. Architectural criticism should be able to assess to which extent these aspects of value systems, costs, technological performance, generating metaphors etc. are factually realized in the designs.

Beyond this comparative assessment, architectural criticism should also uncover the unspoken, suppressed or even unintentional qualities of a design. Architectural criticism is thus concerned with the context in which intentions are effectively translated into reality or not. As such architectural criticism is concerned with the degree of truth in the realization of conceptions, intentions, propositions, or theses into objectively analyzable, factual, physical materialization. Thus, while the individual act of architectural criticism concerns itself with a singular instance of design from conception to realization, a collection of architectural criticisms reveals the ethical stance that this body of built work both constitutes as well as represents.

Architectural criticism is essential in enabling architects and the general public to evaluate architectural designs, preferably ahead of their realization. In the context of the broader debate on sustainability, buildings need to achieve a long lasting overall design quality which includes the broadest level of public acceptance as a means by which interest, care and maintenance become cultivated. Architectural criticism thus requires both a comprehensive approach to the political and physical context, design conception and material realization of a built phenomenon as well as a precise, concise, incisive analysis of these issues themselves. The seminar in architectural criticism introduces students to a method that encompasses description, analysis and evaluation. Architectural criticism, at its best, is neither exhaustive nor should it be exhausting, but an act of synthesis, thus paralleling the act of design.

The class meets twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 11:30 am or as agreed, individual "office hours" can be agreed with the instructor.

The seminar carries The University of Texas at Austin "Independent Inquiry" Flag.

# ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM

Buildings create reality. The act of building establishes physio-spatial as well as socio-cultural values. The way buildings do this can be subject to analysis and evaluation. Every component of a building can be analysed and evaluated in comparison with every other component of the building in question and in comparison with other buildings. In this way, both absolute and relative values can be discerned. Furthermore, every component of a building can be analysed and evaluated in comparison to the clients' or the architects' intentions, so far as these are either explicitly stated or otherwise deduced along, for example, forensic methods.

A descriptive and analytical method is the basis for an architectural theory, which in turn is the basis for transparent building research. The paper provides an outline of the methodology and a selection of case studies. The purpose of conducting transparent building research is to ensure that the quality of future building design and construction rises to the challenges that are posed by the climate crisis. The paper ends with an outline for architectural principles in the age of climate change based on the respect for site specificity, skilled labour and culture.

## 1 Introduction: Understanding and judging buildings

As the era of rapid and conspicuous consumption comes to an end and civilization faces the challenges of adapting its life styles to mitigate the effects of climate crisis, the opportunities for the construction of new buildings should be taken with the requisite earnestness. It is no longer acceptable to compromise the quality of building by following the conventional short-cut towards immediate gratification and ignoring the core Vitruvian tenets that a building should exhibit the qualities of *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas*, translated into contemporary terms: sustainability, adaptability and aesthetic delight.

We need to understand how buildings succeed or fail to be sustainable, adaptable and appreciated. While all buildings are superficially the same – they are all made of matter, they stand up, provide shelter, have façades, contain spaces on the inside – some buildings last longer than others, some are more flexible and adaptable than others, some are more carefully designed and assembled than others and are therefore more appreciated by users and observers.

Before buildings come into existence, it is possible to evaluate their constitutive qualities, their likely overall design quality (as defined above), their impact on society and the environment. Some of the building's aspects can be objectively assessed (e.g. life-cycle analysis), others relatively compared and others still subjectively gauged. The person undertaking this analysis of a design on paper needs to be practiced in the reading of written and drawn documents, as well as possess a well-developed sense of spatial and material imagination to compensate for the absence of real space and form.

Once realized, buildings are incontrovertible physical evidence, leading an existence distinct from spoken or written words, drawings or photographs. Therefore, regardless what critics, politicians,

clients, architects and others might claim about buildings, their real presence in a specific physical and cultural context can be analyzed and evaluated independently from such statements. Conscientious architectural research is therefore publicly transparent, scientifically analytical and independently verifiable, in short: forensic, according to the Latin origin of the word.

However, rather than investigating buildings in their pathological or criminal dimensions – some buildings indeed possess these, for example, mass housing schemes in conjunction with their occupational regimes – the goal of any research into buildings is to identify their socio-cultural ambitions, their contribution to the architectural discourse and their architectural achievements. Research should uncover a building's character of reality.<sup>1</sup> By that is meant the identification of the embodied intentions: how would the world be constituted and represented if only all buildings were designed and built along the same lines as the building under investigation? Every building expresses a world view, whether consciously or not.

At a basic, quotidian level, we need to understand buildings because we need to ensure that buildings reach an overall minimum design quality. In simple technical terms, most societies have planning regulations and building codes. At the most ambitious level, we should expect that buildings constitute and represent our social and cultural aspirations. We should strive for buildings to be appropriate for their tasks, that they accommodate normal needs while others should rise above this to celebrate communal values; some buildings need only be comfortably modest, others should inspire and become symbols of a period and a society.

However, the sad reality is, that few people are concerned with questions of architectural quality. Neither politicians, nor clients, not even the majority of so-called architects are interested in this. If they were, there would be better buildings in the world.

We need to understand buildings, because we need to design and build better buildings. We need a differentiated understanding of buildings, because we need to know when, where and how to apply our knowledge. As diverse as society is, as varied as our needs are, and as specialized as the activities in our settlements are, we need to design buildings appropriately in response to each of these conditions. That means, not every building should be an icon. We want to learn from buildings, so that we can instill in those interested in designing and building an awareness of what is appropriate, a sense of quality as well as an idea of the scope of what has been achieved and what might be possible.

## **1.1 Built Reality**

Buildings create reality; they create facts. This reality is not only spatial as well as physical, it also bears intentions and meanings. Buildings can consist of symbols, they can also be symbols themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Frey, Dagobert, "Zur Wissenschaftliche Lage der Kunstgeschichte", in *Kunstwissenschaftliche Grundfragen: Prolegomena zu einer Kunstphilosophie*, R.M. Rohrer Verlag, Vienna, 96-101.

Buildings are objects in a context, they are "figures" against a "ground". They differentiate themselves from the context and from others. The act of differentiation is spatial and physical and can be read in terms of the underlying intentions and meanings.

At the level of a building's component, a wall differentiates between two sides; further, an enclosure defines an interior and an exterior. The factual clarity of such spatial and formal divisions establishes social and cultural values. A wall between two groups of people can be used to separate these two groups. An enclosure around a group of people can both protect as well as control, even incarcerate them.

The way such walls or enclosures are constructed and the way that such constructions appear – whether the walls are made of massive materials or of different layers with an outer, visibly decorative surface – can be analysed and evaluated in relation to their actual intentions and perceived meanings.

The way that a given building constitutes intentions and meanings can be compared to the way it actually represents these intentions and meanings. However, just as in any other form of human expression, what is truly intended in an expression is not necessarily what can be observed on the face of it. For example, some architects like to describe their designs with metaphors. The terms *rue corridor* or *streets in the air* were used by architects to evoke richer associations than the reality they were able to create. The phrases were coined to blur what was built rather than to precisely describe how the designed spaces really perform. A *rue corridor* inside an apartment building is not a street, since it is neither a public space nor is it connected to a network of streets. The mismatch between an intention, stated in a phrase such as *rue corridor*, when analysed, reveals the rhetorical device,<sup>2</sup> in this case the phrase is a hyperbolic metaphor.

So, the rhetorical devices themselves, by which buildings mediate between the constitution of a physical and spatial presence and the representation of a socio-cultural context or value system, are subject to analysis. Any building analysis can be both exhaustive as well as subject to selective examination at junctures where indicative or characteristic revelations provide the key to the comprehensive understanding of the whole.

## **1.2 Buildings as primary evidence**

In the way that buildings create facts, they offer themselves to be analysed and evaluated through their prima facie composition. Understanding buildings rests on observers looking at the physical evidence before them. Built reality supersedes spoken or written discourse. Built reality is primary evidence.

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<sup>2</sup> Rhetorical figures of composition and of conception.

### **1.3 Describing and analysing buildings**

Facts require description before they can be analysed. The methodology that is presented here in outline only was developed as part of a three-year fellowship (1981-1984) within Florian Beigel's Architecture Geometry Research Unit at the former Polytechnic of North London (currently known as the London Metropolitan University). A descriptive method for building elements was led to an analytical method for the evaluation of buildings designs. This was subsequently integrated into a theory of architecture.

## **2 A theory of architecture**

The focus of this theoretical approach is to describe and value the connections between the physical manifestation of a built edifice on the one hand and its socio-cultural significance as well as its spatial and formal qualities on the other hand. Any building can therefore be described in its formal and spatial components and overall composition. In acquiring information on the building's context, both physical as well as socio-cultural, it becomes possible to deduce the building's significance, its impact on the socio-cultural context, and the contribution it makes to the larger architectural discourse.

In the preparation for the descriptive and analytical method, the largest impact was made by Paul Frankl's *System der Kunstwissenschaft*,<sup>3</sup> given its structural clarity and its comprehensive definition of art theoretical terms. The morphological variables were derived from Frankl. The concept of morphological categories was formulated independently.

### **2.1 Figure against Ground**

The factual basis of any phenomenon rests within the difference it establishes in contrast to a context. Its recognizability depends on the degree of differentiation from the context or background. Similarly, the joint between two objects or the abrupt change in direction on a surface permits a distinction to be made. In other words, articulations permit parts to be identified. Buildings are assemblies of parts and each articulation can be recognized for the syntactic and semantic meaning it contributes towards the overall statement.

### **2.2 Parts to Whole**

Buildings consist of parts that are composed into wholes, which in turn can become smaller elements of larger wholes. For example, a wall could consist of blocks, a group of walls could enclose a space. Buildings are understood by examining the material and spatial composition of parts to wholes.

### **2.3 Morphological categories of building components**

The activity of building has structured the way all societies think about its components and the resultant wholes. There are five morphological categories to the composition of buildings that are logically related by way of a hierarchical, telescopic concatenation:

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Frankl, *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft*, Rudolf Rohrer Verlag, Brünn and Leipzig, 1938.

- 1 constructional
- 2 tectonic
- 3 compartmental
- 4 configurational
- 5 contextual

Assembling elements of the constructional category renders wholes, which in turn become elements of the tectonic category, and so on.

#### **2.4 Buildings as ways of making the world**

On the basis of understanding buildings as primary evidence, the aim of any building analysis and evaluation is to further understand the building's implicit or explicit intentions and effective contributions to the making or shaping of the world. Which elements of a building adhere to convention, which parts intend to reform or advance contemporary practice? How do buildings support or contradict the status quo? To what extent do the parts of a building or does the building itself change common practice, conventional patterns of use or entire life styles? Are the designer's claims to innovation justified or is it simply just another bold but unsubstantiated assertion, if not a downright item of fake news?

#### **2.5 Architecture as a conscious act of building**

The goal of understanding buildings is to identify their ambitions and their contributions to the discourse, their achievements as part of the culture of building. In so far as buildings are recognizably making a conscious contribution to building culture, they can be considered pieces of architecture.

#### **2.6 Qualities of a building**

Qualities are compared against criteria. For example, the life expectancy of a building material is known, its interplay with other elements, when properly detailed, can ensure that a building component meets that maximum life expectancy. The long endurance – *firmitas* – of a building material and a building component can be considered to be a desirable, positive quality. The durable quality of a material or component can be measured objectively, it is an *immanent* quality. The designer's choice for a specific period of endurance can be assessed by an external observer in terms of both immanent requirements as well as subjective preferences.

Another example, the different uses that a building can accommodate over its existence is limited, but could nevertheless be relatively large in range. The fitness of use - *utilitas*, the way that spaces in a building can ideally, comfortably or merely adequately accommodate use patterns are *relative* qualities. Further, buildings possess different degrees of flexibility based on the constructional system's adaptability and the spatial typology. A building's flexibility is a quality that is also objective, inherently defined by the building's morphological constitution as well as by designers' ability to imagine change.

Similarly, the way that people feel protected in a space to the way that a building is seen to harmonize with its context, go beyond functional fitness and touch on psychological and atmospheric sensations. While shapes of spaces and forms, even resultant atmospheres can be described objectively, their evocation of beauty – *venustas* – is *subjective* and varies from individual to individual.

## **2.7 Design quality**

Given that buildings consist of different components and intentions, it is possible to evaluate the quality of each component and intention in relation to the contribution a building makes towards both the whole and to the cultural context. A building has a high level of design quality if on the one hand the compositional and intentional relationships of the parts to the components and to the whole are logically coherent, mutually reinforcing and spatially and formally integrated, and if on the other hand the building fulfils the designers' stated or implied intentions. Such intentions can be as abstract or theoretical as designers might like, no building is exempt from being analysed on its own as a built fact. The quality of a design, of a building, as a singular term is a synthetic judgment.

## **OVERVIEW OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The seminar is structured in five components of classes and assignments. In part, these overlap in time.

- 1        Introductory presentation of a theory of architecture and a methodology of criticism
- 2        Topics and Case studies exemplifying the method
- 3        Task 1: Summaries and critical commentaries
- 4        Task 2: International Students' Architecture Award
- 5        Task 3: Student seminar presentation, preparation and submission of final paper

All of the three tasks involve an analysis of value systems requiring each student to individually pursue their own research (independent inquiry), laying out a specific thesis regarding the analyzed subject with a set of reasoned and deductive statements (qualitative reasoning), synthesized in a clearly structured verbal (seminar presentations) and written discourse (writing: summaries, critical commentaries and term paper).

This is the second semester in which the seminar is participating in UT Austin's Global Virtual Exchange Initiative, with students and faculty collaborating with two other international universities. For this, students and faculty from two other schools of architecture in Argentina and Brazil are joining our seminar. The task is to propose and select winners of the International Students' Architecture Award 2021.

### **1        Introductory presentation**

The first seminar will provide an overview of the semester. There will be an outline of the three tasks and the interchange between the independent inquiry pursued by each student and the feedback from the instructor.

In preparation for the international component, the two instructors – Prof. Ruth Verde Zein, Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie from the São Paulo in Brazil and Prof. Fernando Diez, Universidad de Palermo, Buenos Aires in Argentina will introduce their themes and points of view on architectural criticism.

Within one month then, students should be primed to discuss the evaluation of architecture and how to work within the format of an international architectural jury. Furthermore, these presentations may be adopted and adapted by students of the seminar for their own subsequent critical presentations of a single building of their choice to the class.

### **2        Case studies exemplifying the method**

Fundamental topics in architectural design and in-depth case studies will be presented, the latter will be reviewing one building per seminar presentation. Each building will be presented in terms of the architect's ideas, cultural and ethical value systems. Each presentation will analyze the relation

between ideas/concepts, cultural and ethical value systems with their factually recognizable spatial and formal, compositional and material embodiment.

### **3 Task 1 : Summaries and critical commentaries**

The first task for is intended to review the way architecture is discussed in public. For this review, each student chooses two recent texts from a journal, newspaper or web site/blog. Students should gather any information on the medium in which the text has been published (readership, circulation, etc.). The first text should be an architectural criticism, the second should be a more general essay, for example on issues of the environment, sustainability, historical context, design or technical innovation, etc.

Prepare both a short summary as well as a critical response. Each of these texts should have a length of no more than one single double-spaced typewritten page (250 words). In the seminar, each student will present copies of the selected texts and speak freely about the evaluation. The short papers will be submitted to the instructor for comments.

The evaluation and criticism of each selected text should address the following questions:

- How does the author describe the building/the architecture/the issue? What are the means by which this description is undertaken? Is there an implicit/explicit descriptive/analytical system? Is the author using common metaphors?
- How does the author evaluate the subject? What is the author's value system?
- How critical is the author? Is the author repeating the designer's statements? Is the author pointing out other aspects, that relativize or even contradict the designer's statements?
- Do you agree with every reflection of the author?
- What has the author omitted or neglected?
- What would you have said in the author's place?

### **4 Task 2 : International Student Architecture Award**

As part of The University of Texas at Austin's Global Virtual Exchange COIL program, student groups from three universities will be formed to grant the International Student Architecture Award ISAA. There will be a number of working groups with students from each university, to develop a set of criteria with which they will select a long list and then a short list of candidates for the ISAA.

The students in the seminar constitute the jury. If there is an odd number, then everyone has one vote. If there is an even number, the jury decides who has a casting vote in case of a tie. Once the working groups of the student jury are set up and following the introductory methodological classes, students will be working in their individual groups as well as in their overall jury. In the preliminary phase, students will get to know each other. After the second or third session, they will elect a chair, who will run the joint meetings, and a secretary, who will prepare minutes of the conferences.

During the middle of the semester, all groups will convene online and discuss the criteria and the complete list. Following the discussions, there will be a selection process to reduce the long list to a short list. Students will document their criteria for the selection of the candidates as well as the candidates themselves.

In the second half of the semester, students will develop innovative ideas regarding the presentation of the awards. This can range from the design of an interactive web site introducing the long and short lists, to an actual online award ceremony. Invitation will be extended to the clients and architects of all selected buildings. They will prepare laudatory speeches for the online award ceremony as well as prepare the ceremony itself. They will contact the shortlisted architects and invite them to the online award ceremony. If the winners join the online ceremony, then they can be given the platform.

The timetable for the online meetings for **Task 2** are as follows:

- 02 Sep **General welcome**, introduction to the participants and the schools
  - Review of previous ISAS with former students, rules of running an award jury
  - Three short presentations of examples of architectural criticisms
  - Formation of groups, fixing of internal group meeting dates
  - Value systems: criteria for selection, criteria for award
- 09 Sep **Initial open discussions of criteria** led by Prof. Ruth Verde Zein
  - followed by the **first internal Group discussion** without instructors
- 16 Sep **Three case studies of architectural criticisms** by Prof. Fernando Diez
  - followed by the **second internal Group discussion**
- 23 Sep **An outline a methodology for an architectural criticism** by Prof. Wilfried Wang
  - First proposals of candidates for the long list,
  - followed by the **first internal Jury discussion, election of chair and secretary**
- 30 Sep **Complete presentation of criteria and candidates for the long list**
- 07 Oct **Second internal Jury discussion** to reduce the long list to a short list
- 14 Oct **Presentation of the short list**, followed by the **third internal Jury discussion**
  - to select three candidates
- 21 Oct **Discussion of award ceremony**, followed by
  - to assign the writing of laudatory speeches
  - Preparation of images for the award, contacting the finalists
- 28 Oct **Award ceremony dry run**
- 04 Nov **Award ceremony**
- 11 Nov **Debriefing**

**Ten online meetings** will be synchronous,

**five** will be independent amongst student groups and the overall jury.

## **5 Task 3: Student presentations and preparation and submission of final paper**

For the final task for the UT students, each student selects one building that she or he has visited. There is no restriction on the age of the building, however, important data such as statements by the client and the architect on the reasons for the building, its conception, are more likely to be found with more recent buildings. Each student is to prepare a seminar presentation lasting 30 min (maximum 45 images). The seminar presentations should include verbal/written description, evaluation and criticism of the selected building.

The criticism may also be in the manner of redesigning aspects of the building in question, using Photoshop, etc. as a presentation tool. The seminar's focus is on the in-depth analysis of individual pieces of architecture, ultimately allowing for the discussion to broaden to other buildings and socio-cultural issues.

Following the verbal presentation to the seminar, students will have the opportunity to develop and refine their papers in communication with the instructor. The length of the final paper should be around 12 to 16 pages (3000 to 4000 words), not including images or footnotes/endnotes.

The paper should be written and formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style.

## **1.0 A methodology of architectural Criticism**

### **1.1 Introduction: The origin of architecture**

Architecture has its origin in the division of responsibilities between the commissioning, designing, supervising and constructing of a building. Before, or in the absence of the division of responsibilities, that is, when the act of commissioning, designing and constructing are executed by a single person, there is no need to externalize any thoughts or decisions. From mind to eye to hand, all actions are contained without any communication.

As soon as there is a division in responsibilities in the process of constructing a building, decisions about the constitution and representation of that building have to be communicated between the commissioner and the executors, the latter may include a person or group of persons in charge of giving shape to the commissioner's preferences. An exchange of ideas takes place that requires premeditation and reflection of these ideas. Premeditation and reflection call for the mental act of conjecture or projection. Ideas are thought out in the mind, a design is construed ahead of the act of construction, a building is projected into another medium prior to the real, practical process of construction: an abstract or theoretical process of ordering a series of decisions regarding the preferences of the commissioner are undertaken to give shape to the latter's commission.

The larger and more complex a building is, as compared to for example a hut or house, the more likely its realization presupposes the division of responsibility so as to ensure that such a complex building may be realized in a given period of time. With size and degree of complexity of a building come aspects of its practical realization that cannot be adequately accounted for without preparation.

### **1.2 The need for architectural criticism**

If the architectural profession is honest with itself, it will acknowledge that only a small proportion of the entire building activity results in structures that are of an appropriate level of

design quality. This is true regardless where one might look.

Architectural criticism is needed so that proportion of appropriate design quality can be significantly raised, regardless whether the design quality is related to large complexes, individual buildings or work to existing structures. Architectural criticism is necessary because, if the vast majority of the urban complexes and buildings lacks the appropriate level of design quality, then these structures also lack the sympathy and care needed to ensure their long life; and thus, they are more likely to be demolished within a few decades of their completion. We can see this happening all around us to buildings of the immediate post-Second World War years. Urban design and individual buildings of an inappropriate or even poor level of design quality are a burden on society and the environment. They are the underlying cause for individual disaffection from society. They are part of the cause for the collective disruption in the fabric of socio- ecosystems. Their early and untimely demise puts a severe strain on resources such as human labor, finances and materials. Inappropriately and poorly designed urban fabric and buildings are therefore not sustainable. Architectural criticism is thus more urgently needed than ever before.

Ideally, just as urban and architectural design projects are submitted to planning and building departments for technical and legal scrutiny, every building activity should be scrutinized for its appropriate level of design quality. Better to scrutinize, criticize and improve a proposed design over and over again than to build badly once. However, there are severe constraints on the practice of effective architectural criticism. Particularly in commissioned criticism such as for professional journals or monographs, criticism is often unable to voice its real concerns. Architects or clients, whose buildings receive or are threatened to receive a poor critical evaluation, often threaten editors of journals with future retaliation, not to mention legal redress. Architectural criticism is also hampered by the false respect professionals pay to each other for fear of either becoming the recipient of poor critical evaluation oneself or involving oneself in potential libel cases. Even close colleagues shy away from giving

their honest evaluation of their friends' work for fear of upsetting them with potentially hurtful truths. It seems that the most frank architectural criticism is expressed in schools of architecture, sometimes in competition or award juries, the latter behind closed doors. All of these constraints and difficulties reduce the likelihood that a design for a new urban quarter or an individual building can attain the best possible level of design quality.

The unwillingness of many design professionals to face these facts is a cause for the lack of standing of the design profession amongst the public. It is high time that we have a more strongly regulated design profession that ensures that urban design and buildings are of the best possible level of design quality. These are central issues of professional ethics that each architectural critic has to confront and answer for herself/himself. As for any other act of criticism, the most important value that a critic has to uphold is that of an intellectual independence so as to establish an unassailable ethical position. Besides this argument, it is imperative that the design profession does not once again allow the technocrats to control the debate on sustainability, as sustainability is not achievable through technical means alone. The modern movement has shown that a one-sided reliance on economic rationalism has led to disaster in the urban design and architectural fields. For this reason, the design profession must resist the selective occupation of the issue of sustainability by technocrats and large corporations. This is only achievable if the design profession demonstrates that design quality is indivisible: that design quality is dependent on as much the aesthetic as the technical aspects. From this point of view, the need to specify what architectural criticism is, how it is constituted and that it is supported by a wide majority of the design profession, becomes a critical matter for the survival of the design profession.

### **1.3 The purposes of architectural criticism**

Architectural criticism serves a variety of purposes. These can be defined firstly in terms of a number of points of view, secondly by the different modes of understanding of the object under discussion, and thirdly by pointing

to the specific media used in the communication of the architectural criticism and in turn by identifying the audiences that are thus constituted by the specific medium.

These can be stated as follows:

From the point of view:

- the designing architect as critic
- the professional critic, that is, non-architect or at least, not actively designing architect, such as a member of a jury for a competition or award, or author of texts for blogs, journals and newspapers; or as a design teacher
- the client, the owner, the investor
- the user
- the member of the general public
- the government representatives such as politicians, members of a building consent authority, conservation department, etc.

observing the object:

- as a complete, static, autonomous object
- as an object that is part of a local, regional, global (physical) context
- as an object within a local, regional, global discourse
- as an object with a range of qualities and consisting of a number of elements which themselves are part of a physical context and/or global discourse
- as an open-ended, dynamic, changing phenomenon that is subject to transformations, adaptation, changes in use, demolition, recycling
- as a catalyst or vehicle for associative discourse

using the medium:

- of the spoken word in direct speech during academic, professional or other evaluative juries
- of the spoken word in telecommunication (radio, tv, web sites, etc.)
- of the written word in printed media (weblogs, newspapers, journals, books, etc.)
- of the built idea, that is, architectural criticism through the built fact
- addressing the criticism at the following:

- oneself as the designer
- other designers, including colleagues, students
- other clients, owners, investors
- users
- those interested in architectural criticism, including a lay public
- other politicians, public administrators, etc.

Architectural criticism can therefore be multidirectional, multivalent, if not to say diffuse. Of course, it can also be very precisely rooted in a conscious critical source, mediated through a specific design phenomenon and directed towards a precisely circumscribed recipient or audience. Given the often raised doubt about the possibility of “objective” criticism, the fact that it is possible to specify the different purposes of architectural criticism, that it is possible to identify the point of view, the way the design phenomenon is seen, in which medium the communication takes place and to whom the message is to be conveyed, seems to me to provide the analytical basis for deconstructed and therefore objective criticism.

In this connection, it is possible to categorize architectural theories. Most of the earlier architectural theories were developed by architects for the design profession (eg. Vitruvius, Alberti, Perrault, Schinkel, Guadet, van der Laan et al). In these theories, the way architecture is defined and discussed is seen from the point of view of the designing architect. The thrust of the theory is directed towards the act of design, the act of construction and the resultant’s effect, where the notion of effect is not to be understood as the more modern term of “reception”, but rather the more traditional aesthetic dimension of sensory effect.

The questions at the forefront of architectural theoreticians' considerations have traditionally been: How does design come about? What are its constituent elements? Which effects do certain compositions have?

More recently, architectural theoreticians, that is, in general non-practicing architects or art historians writing in the field of architecture as well as other writers on architecture, have also sought to establish

theories of architecture, with greater or lesser impact on actual practice. The reasons for this greater or lesser impact on actual practice lies in the diffuse nature of communication, the great number of media, the widespread dissemination of ideas and the absence of a consensus on a basis for a general architectural theory, fueled particularly by the much coveted desire by architects to maintain design freedom, or to put it more clearly, the fiercely defended right to free and individual design expression.

The fact that these two aspects – the existence of a consensus on a basis for a general architectural theory and the freedom of self-expression – are not co-dependent, does not prevent many architects or architectural students from vehemently objecting to any notion of a general architectural theory.

However, it does appear to me to be possible to deduce a general architectural theory that is able to provide the basis for a broadly comprehensible method of architectural criticism. Therefore, to lay the foundations for this method, here is a definition of what architecture is.

#### **1.4 A definition of architecture**

Architecture, as distinct from building, is consciously concerned with the material constitution and associated representation of a set of cultural, social and ethical values in forms and spaces for a specific need, a given site and culture.

The act of building, however, or more precisely put, the vernacular act of building, is concerned with the sub-conscious representation of a set of values within an unquestioned repetition of forms and spaces. These intangible values find their translation in an equivalent set of morphological qualities, including those of an aesthetic dimension. Is architecture an art or a science, a scientific art or none of these? Architecture is an autonomous form of knowledge with its own language and discourse.

By means of its material and spatial components and compositions it constitutes its own compositional logic or language. The discourse in architecture is open to universal comprehension as to its basic expression regardless of prior conscious knowledge on behalf of the observer. Thus,

architecture is closer to music in its capacity to be meaningful and to be universally understood. Beyond meaning, architecture has the ability to create reality through its own elements. Distinct from the other arts, it relies on its effectiveness and meaningfulness on its material and spatial presence, thereby establishing ambience and character.

Architecture does not need to rely on words, though these are often used to give it value; it does not need literary references, though some architects and critics seem to depend on these to claim values and qualities for a design that it may or may not possess; it does not need any other form of legitimation, though this is often dominant in the public media. There is clearly a discourse about architecture, which is in written or spoken form. That is to say, there is a linguistic aspect to architecture.

Every architectural element contains its own history of the knowledge about that element. That is to say, besides the linguistic aspect, there is an epistemological aspect to architecture, relating to all of its morphological elements. However, above all, architecture exists in its own right, it is constituted by means of its own morphological elements. Architecture is able to carry meaning primarily through these elements, although other objects have made an appearance within architecture such as cladding materials, graphics and technological components. It is this ontological dimension that gives architecture the possibility of universal comprehensibility. From this, architecture derives its credibility: material presence and constructive clarity are the ontological foundations of architecture.

### **1.5 Architectural values**

Without entering into a differentiated philosophical discussion of value, the use of the term "value" is understood as the intention, the desire or the volition behind the realization of an architectural design. I would suggest that in any given architectural design it is possible to trace values that are preferred by clients and architects.

By embracing a value, a judgment is being made, amongst others, in ethical, ideological, social, or aesthetic domains. Values themselves express what individuals see as ethically better or worse. In

architecture, the values of simplicity or honesty, the preference for either industrial production or traditional craftsmanship, the importance placed either in social accessibility or in exclusion, may pervade the one or the other design consideration: from siting to detail.

In aesthetic terms, we find the sublime and the picturesque as recurring values throughout.

### **1.6 Architectural qualities and their assessment criteria**

The way the word "quality" is used, it seems that it already stands for something exceptional, excellent. However, from a more general point of view, quality is an inherent characteristic, no more and no less. Every phenomenon has different qualities. A quality is an element in the identity of a phenomenon. It assists in defining or distinguishing a phenomenon in contrast to other phenomena. But it is not by itself already a mark of outstanding distinction: "quality time" and "quality architecture": these are by no means synonymous with appropriate or good quality. There is good and bad design quality, there are architectural elements that are more appropriate than others in terms of the underlying conception of a design, in terms of the relationship to an immediate or greater context.

The notion of quality is merely an index of a level of conceptual and compositional resolution measured against explicit criteria. The setting of these criteria can be defined from three fundamentally different points of view:

First, as observers, we may each bring our own, more or less personal set of criteria; that is the subjective perspective.

Second, we might equally set aside our own criteria, or not have any particular set of preferences, and allow our sensibilities to compare one phenomenon in the context of similar phenomena, and therefore come to an assessment as to the differences and identities that constitute the preferred version. It is like trying an unknown recipe in different versions. We might refer to this as the discursive perspective.

Third, we might fix our view on the ontological dimension of a piece of architecture and try to understand the

morphology on its own account; this we could call the immanent perspective.

By differentiating these perspectives, we are able to make explicit personal approaches and preferences, but also acknowledge the existence of an immanent and ontological aspect of architecture. Making explicit these three perspectives helps to overcome the reservation that "beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder" only, and that there can never be any common ground in the qualitative comparison of anything. Architectural designs can be assessed, can be criticized with regard to their components as well as the resulting overall effect.

### **1.7 Which architectural values and qualities?**

Which values or qualities might be sought in any single instance of architecture and how would these be best achieved?

The qualities that architecture might embody range from the determination of daily habits, social values, ethical beliefs, personal comfort, collective memories, privacy, monumentality, the sublime, flexibility, resource efficiency, durability, etc.

By embodying certain values or qualities, a building expresses a will, an intention. To a certain extent, by no means in all instances, are these values and qualities impressed upon the building's users. The process of impressing these values ranges from the active and instantaneous perception of the users to their slow, subliminal, subcutaneous absorption, the ingestion by habit.

In this way, an architectural design attains a distinctive quality or set of qualities, qualities that determine a cultural identity through the material embodiment of a discursive idea.

## **2.0 A general definition of architecture as the basis for a descriptive method**

The general definition of architecture proposed here concerns itself with the conception, intention, composition, meaning, effect, character and value of built phenomena. For this purpose, it is important to begin with the description of the visible and invisible elements of architecture, that is, it is necessary to derive a descriptive method, much as it exists for most other human communication systems. The visible elements of architecture are the spaces and forms, the invisible aspects include the quality and meaning of the individual elements as well as that of the overall composition. Therefore, here is the implication that any built phenomenon has a material and spatial presence and that it stands for something else, that is, that it embodies an intention. Thus, this definition of architecture presupposes that architecture is a form of communication, a language system. On this basis, a descriptive method is developed that consists of five axioms: the first deals with the criteria for identifying a phenomenon in the first place. the second deals with the nature and structural relations between identified elements. the third deals with the definition of elements and their relation to a whole. the fourth deals with the idea of the concatenation of a whole of one morphological category to the part of another morphological category. the fifth deals with the relations of part to the whole and content to form. The first two axioms are adaptations of Paul Frankl's work published in *Das System Kunstwissenschaft* (1938).

### **2.1 The Identifiability of a phenomenon: Identity, Differentiation, Definition**

The first axiom establishes the morphological basis that enables the identification of a phenomenon in the first place.

#### **2.1.1 The identifiability of a phenomenon**

Only through the relative isolation of a phenomenon can it be identified. Thus, a phenomenon has identity if it differs from the ground against which it is experienced (see for instance the discussion of figure-ground in

Gestalt theory). A dot in space is an instance of a figure against a ground.

#### **2.1.2 Differentiation**

Phenomena can also be identified through the act of differentiation where no dominant and subdominant phenomena are involved. Thus, the meeting of two co-planar surfaces along a visible line is an instance of the act of differentiation.

#### **2.1.3 Definition**

The observed phenomenon does not need to be sharply outlined, as described in the previous example. An gentle undulation in a plane, even though there is no rupture in the surface of the plane, can again be identifiable as a figure through its subtle definition from the ground.

## **2.2 Morphological variables**

The second axiom establishes the abstract structural relationships of phenomena to each other, described as a resultant. Five variables can be identified to adequately describe the range of abstract structural relations which figures would have vis-à-vis one another:

- definitiveness
- heterogeneity/homogeneity
- distributiveness/arrangement
- iterativeness/rhythmic seriality
- proportion/scalar relation

### **2.2.1 Definitiveness**

The degree to which figures in themselves are more or less clearly defined with regard to the ground is covered by the first axiom. Given that figures are at all defined, the first morphological variable describes the degree of definition vis-à-vis other figures and therefore the degree of clarity of the resultant structure or pattern.

### **2.2.2 Heterogeneity/homogeneity**

The figures of a structure or a pattern may not all be identical. In the case that they are, the resultant is a homogeneous abstract structure. In the case that all figures of a structure only occur once, the resultant is a heterogeneous abstract structure. Mixtures exist between these two poles.

### 2.2.3 Distributiveness/Arrangement

Figures of a structure or pattern have neighborly relationships with each other. Thus, there may be "structures" without any clear neighborly relationships at all, these structures are freely distributed. Figures can be found to be arranged in such a way that they always have two neighbors, one on either side, these structures are closed series. An open series is one in which two figures only have one neighbor, namely the first and the last in the series.

Structures or Patterns in which with at least one figure is in the neighborhood of three other figures are grouped. These groups can be open, if the other three figures do not form a series themselves, or closed, if they form a series.

### 2.2.4 Iterativeness/Rhythmic Seriality

Structures and patterns consisting of different figures may constitute recurring sub-patterns, which in turn establish an orderly description that is independent of the variety of figures that constitutes the sub-pattern or the overall pattern. Thus, a pattern "a b a b a" is identical in its iterativeness or rhythmic seriality to "abc yx abc xy abc".

### 2.2.5 Proportion/Scalar Relation

Without defining absolute dimensions, figures within a structure or pattern may stand in scalar relation to each other. Figure "x" is a proportional factor of "y".

## 2.3 Morphological elements

The third axiom relates concepts and their labels to an abstract geometric typology of forms and spaces. The abstract geometric types are the point, line, plane, cube. These basic types find their equivalents in each of the five morphological categories.

While of course the relationships between a formal or spatial element, its concept and its label, cannot be pinned down with absolute precision, research shows that there are domains of certainty that allow forms and spaces to be more clearly associated with their concepts and labels (ills.). These relationships are relatively straight forward, if not to say banal. However, the graphic representation serves as a reminder, that forms and spaces, concepts and words ought to be used carefully and with precision.

On this analytical basis, it is possible to establish a thesaurus of elements, relating their cognitive labels to their geometric-proportional definitions.

Inasmuch geometric axioms begin with points, lines, planes and volumes, the abstract geometric transposition to the realm of building gives the equivalents as the block, the bar, the slab and the cube. From this, a range of phenomena in the realm of building can be defined in abstract geometric terms.

## 2.4 Morphological categories

The descriptive method and its precise application is the foundation for a close and accurate analysis of designed phenomena. Obviously, it is insufficient to merely describe individual elements. Of fundamental importance in architecture is the interrelationship of different elements, elements of different orders of magnitude and further, relationships to phenomena and value systems outside the architectural phenomenon itself. Based on the constitution of a built phenomenon itself, there is a constituent relationship between an element and its constituting parts.

The fourth axiom adopts the notion of part to whole to the phenomena of building. The notion of part to whole, the concatenation of elements of a lower category to elements of a higher category:

- constructional
- tectonic
- compartmental
- configurational
- contextual

Using the notion of part to whole, of parts forming other wholes, it is possible to understand the conceptual structuring of the phenomenon of building into five morphological categories. From construction, tectonic, compartmental, configurational to contextual, each category contains elements, that are constituted from elements from previous categories (with the exception of the category of construction).

Given this, there are interpolating relationships between elements of the same order and those of a higher morphological category. For example, by placing bricks together – elements of the constructional morphological category – it is possible to form

an element of the next morphological category, namely that of a tectonic category such as a wall (ill.). In turn, placing a number of walls together, it is possible to create an enclosure, or a compartment.

Each morphological category interfaces with social, iconographic, scientific, economic, material, aesthetic domains of reality. Thus, for instance, the constructional category engages issues of social organization, economy, statics, and building physiology.

Taking the use of bricks in a building allows an understanding of the knowledge required in its production, transport and laying; the origins of the clay and its excavation and thus the economic and legal dimensions to the process of extraction; the human and energy resources necessary to produce, deliver and assemble the bricks, means of production; the building physiological performance of bricks, their levels of toxicity and their ability to be recycled; the sensuous dimension of bricks, etc.

This constructional element can be compared across time and space with any other constructional material such as limestone blocks, titanium sheeting, Corten panels, triple glazing panels, etc. Each use of a material allows an architectural critical statement to be made, given the understanding of the context and the points of view of the evaluation criteria.

In the morphological category of construction, for example, existing research on resource flows as relating to energy and emissions can be easily integrated, as can be standard economic models of construction cost.

In the morphological category of compartments the analysis of abstract planimetric relationships in terms of topological adjacencies and their social values which they embed can be carried out (Hillier & Hanson, 1984).

In short, the differentiation of building phenomena into these five morphological categories initially provides for the clear inclusive structuring of other, existing particular analytical models or future research and ultimately allows for the review of the various operative analytical criteria.

## 2.5 Relations as rhetorical figures

The fifth axiom relates compositional figures and conceptual figures to rhetorical figures (figures of diction and figures of thought). The notions of form to content and part to whole. The theory, imitation and practice of rhetoric sets out terms by which to understand the art of communication. Rhetorical analysis structures communicative phenomena into the character of discourse (eg. solemn/stately, matter-of-fact, relaxed) leading to the notion of character of reality (see Dagobert Frey, "Realitätscharakter" (Engl. character of reality)) the consistency of discourse (eg. appropriate choice of elements within the composition, conscious or unconscious errors in composition - i.e. compositional figures such as "shabby chic" (see for instance *Ad C. Herennium*) for instance: duplication, repetition, inversion, suppression, substitution, elimination conceptual figures, for instance metaphor, metonymy, onomatopoeia, synecdoche, allegory.

While not every term used in rhetorical analysis is applicable to the field of building, there are many rhetorical figures which shed clarifying light on the question of the judicious choice of ideas, communicative elements and their appropriate composition.

In this regard, it is of interest to look more closely at the relationship of parts to a whole. Such compositional relationships are comparable to some rhetorical devices. For example, looking at the stone column with flutes at the Temple of Hatshepsut, Deir-el-Bahari, we can identify the components of the shaft, the individual drums of varying heights. The procurement of stones, whether during the times of the Egyptian Pharaohs or ancient Greeks, probably did not allow for pieces of identical volume. Thus, their heights vary. The faceting of the drums and thus of the column shaft or even more so the carving of flutes reduce the visual impact of the irregular occurrence of horizontal joints. Each shaft appears uniform, of a single shape. Thus, one could speak of the individual constituting elements of the shaft, each drum, being suppressed in their presence at the benefit of the tectonic form of the column shaft. The rhetorical act is that of suppression of the part in favor of the whole.

Similarly, in more recent times, the use of a single material or color for an entire building is often intended to strengthen the visual presence of the whole, while occasionally allowing the constituting parts to remain visible, even if these are very small indeed (Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein). Color, Joint lines, the flush set glazing, the presence of the constituting components may altogether be selected and detailed in such a way as to maximize the presence of the resultant whole, and conversely, require the minimization of the presence of the parts. In this sense, the rhetorical act requires a maximum effort at creating what is otherwise known as minimalism.

This relationship between visible – the maximized presence of the whole – and invisible aspects of the architecture – the effort that has been expended on the building's design – is equally open to architectural criticism and analysis.

### **3.0 Architectural criticism**

While any form of analysis can be thorough, complete and exhaustive (in both senses of the word), with practice and experience come increased precision with regard to the identification of key issues in a design. Practice and experience allow the architectural critic to establish a data base, an instrument, so to speak, with which to probe a design in question. However, this may not always lead to satisfactory conclusions.

Returning to the issue of architectural qualities and their assessment criteria, three points of view were identified, that each gave rise to their own assessment criteria: the subjective, the discursive and the immanent. Practice and experience may sharpen the architectural critic's mind, but they should not prevent the critic from superficially glancing at a design in question; that would leave out the immanent dimension.

As there are developments in other fields, so there are new architectural concepts and intentions which may find an unusual set of forms and spaces at a smaller or larger scale of realization. Altogether, a design may offer unfamiliar elements for analysis and criticism, thereby calling for more precise interrogation of the visible and invisible elements of an architecture.

### **3.1 Inductive understanding**

Some of the possible outcomes of the in-depth investigation of the architectural object itself might be the anticipation, the presaging, the sensing of a distinct idea of a compositional order. At the simplest level, such anticipation happens when one stands in a space, whose extent cannot be fully seen, but following sources of light, acoustics or the spatial envelope over a visual barrier, as in Baroque churches. The eye follows the curves of the surfaces, notices indirect light sources, adds one set of observed phenomena to another and conjectures into the void further suspected, anticipated, presaged envelopes, structures and forms. Here the senses follow inductive reasoning. At best, the result is an understanding of the built phenomenon in one's mind that closely models the actuality and even establishes the intentions, or the ideation behind the building's design.

### **3.2 Deductive understanding**

Conversely, there is the reverse process of analysis or reasoning: after having visited and/or used a building, having studied its spatial and formal composition, its underlying conception may have become clear to the critical observer. Without necessarily having noticed every detail, the broad gestures in a piece of architecture have become obvious, allowing a process of deductive reasoning to take place. Thus, for example, the Villa Müller in Prague by Adolf Loos reveals itself as an overlapping of a tri-partite, static, Palladian syntax with a dynamic, rotational, spatial movement à la Loos. The Villa Müller thus stands as the culmination of a research in bourgeois central European domestic architecture. Or, another example, the Alvar Aalto's Cultural Centre in Wolfsburg can be understood as a facility to accompany an individual's artistic and cultural development from the days as a young child attending public readings to adult education classes, including the exploration of the fine arts, the latter as the apogee of Aalto's understanding of civilization's highest point of development. Both the Villa Müller and Wolfsburg's Cultural Centre can therefore be thoroughly analyzed and criticized without an exhaustive investigation into every single detail, even though that would also be an educational experience.

### **3.3 Synthetic criticism**

The practical reality of architectural criticism sees a combination of all of these aforementioned points of view and paths of reasoning. Each of us will always maintain something of a personal, subjective position. And then, some of us find it easier to act as neutral observers of phenomena. The discursive point of view, the dispassionate or Kantian disinterested approach to criticism is more readily taken with advanced age and experience, not to speak of disillusionment. What does appear to be lacking a lot of the times in architectural criticism is the close and thorough look at an architectural design itself. Most architectural critics find the personal experience of a building to be indispensable. Many things become visible that in the images and drawings remain hidden or unexpressed. What appears simple and even banal in some two-dimensional drawings in reality might turn

out as a rich, complex three-dimensional statement. The opposite is equally true. In the course of these visits and in the process of looking at other documents, reading or listening to other people's statements, a complete understanding of a building may not have been reached, but one might follow inductive reasoning to pose questions that lead further to the rendering of a complete picture. Finally, when the critic believes to be close to an understanding, a thesis is posed about the piece of architecture in question, thereby setting off a series of dialectic or deductive reasoning that may ultimately culminate in a synthetic understanding of the work of architecture.

One might say that a critic has grasped as much as is humanly possible when the world view the architect designed through the building is understood in the same way by

the critic. In other words, the architectural design becomes a means by which the world as it is and as it is intended can be apprehended and comprehended. This understanding, apprehension and comprehension does not mean that the critic shares the same world view of the architect, but shows that the critic has perceived the architectural work as a materialized, spatialized conception.

Architectural criticism may then begin: from the design, its meaning to its contribution to the social and cultural reality, architectural criticism will evaluate how an architectural design achieves material, formal and spatial integrity, how it achieves unity between conception and realization, how values and qualities are established, and how, in the final analysis, the design seeks to establish a world view.

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### Essays

- 1 Thomas Fisher "The Death and Life of Great Architectural Criticism", in:  
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- 2 Paul Goldberger 14th Annual Vincent Scully Prize Lecture:  
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## SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Generally, seminars on **Tuesday are for UT students**, most of the seminars on **Thursdays are with international students** and focused on the International Students' Architecture Award.

- 26 Aug Thu Seminar 1: Introduction and overview to the seminar: structure and contents.
- Task 1:** Summaries and Critical Commentaries  
Possible media for review:
- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Architectural Review</i>    | London                        |
| <i>ARCHIS</i>                  | Amsterdam                     |
| <i>a&amp;t</i>                 | Vitoria-Gasteiz               |
| <i>Baumeister</i>              | Munich                        |
| <i>Bauwelt</i>                 | Berlin                        |
| <i>Blueprint</i>               | London                        |
| <i>Casabella</i>               | Milan                         |
| <i>DOMUS</i>                   | Milan                         |
| <i>Metropolis</i>              | www.metropolismag.com         |
| <i>New York Times</i>          | New York                      |
| <i>Vice Versa Magazine</i>     | www.viceversamagazine.com     |
| <i>World Architecture News</i> | www.worldarchitecturenews.com |
- Select one architectural criticism and one theoretical text, ideally from a recent publication.
- Summarize each text. Each summary should be no longer than one page.  
Describe, analyze and criticize each text on another single page.  
Prepare a 10-minute seminar presentation of your review.
- Discussion on Tasks 2 and Task 3:  
Task 2: International Students' Architecture Award  
Task 3: a building criticism, seminar presentation and paper.  
Reading assignment in preparation for next meeting.
- 31 Aug Tue Seminar 2: What is criticism?  
Open discussion
- 02 Sep Thu Seminar 3: **General welcome:** introduction to the participants and the schools  
Review of previous ISAA with former students, rules of running an award jury  
**Three short architectural criticisms** by each instructor  
Discussion of value systems, methodologies, selection criteria  
Formation of student groups, confirmation of internal group meeting dates
- 07 Sep Tue Seminar 4: Case Study: E.1027 by Eileen Gray  
3 Student presentations of text summaries and criticisms
- 09 Sep Thu Seminar 5: **Initial open discussion of criteria** led by Prof. Ruth Verde Zein  
followed by the **first internal group discussion** without instructors
- 14 Sep Tue Seminar 6: Topic: Minimal and Minimalist Architecture  
3 Student presentations of text summaries and criticisms
- 16 Sep Thu Seminar 7: **Three case studies of architectural criticism** by Prof. Fernando Diez  
followed by the **second internal group discussion** without instructors
- 21 Sep Tue Seminar 8: Case Study: St. Petri Church by Sigurd Lewerentz  
3 Student presentations of text summaries and criticisms
- 23 Sep Thu Seminar 9: **A methodology for an architectural criticism** by Prof. Wilfried Wang

First proposal of candidates for the long list,  
followed by the **first internal jury discussion, election of chair and secretary**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 28 Sep Tue | Seminar 10: Topic: The Sublime and the Picturesque in Architecture<br>Discussion of students' choices of buildings for Task 3                                     |
| 30 Sep Thu | Seminar 11: <b>Complete presentation of criteria and candidates for the long list</b>   |
| 05 Oct Tue | Seminar 12: Case Study: Al Borde, Quito   |
| 07 Oct Thu | Seminar 13: <b>Second internal jury discussion</b><br>without instructors to reduce the long list to a short list   |
| 12 Oct Tue | Seminar 14: Case Study: TE'd'A arquitectes, Mallorca<br>Initial submissions of students' choices of buildings for Task 3  |
| 14 Oct Thu | Seminar 15: <b>Presentation of the short list</b> , followed by the<br><b>Third internal jury discussion</b> to select three candidates, contacting the finalists |
| 19 Oct Tue | Seminar 16: Topic: Diversity and Authorship<br>Draft structures of papers of students' choices of buildings for Task 3  |
| 21 Oct Thu | Seminar 17: <b>Discussion of award ceremony</b> , to assign the writing of laudatory<br>speeches, preparation of images for the award                             |
| 26 Oct Tue | Seminar 18: Topic: Architectural criticism and the starchitecture system<br>Draft structures of papers of students' choices of buildings for Task 3               |
| 28 Oct Thu | Seminar 19: <b>Award ceremony dry run</b>   |
| 02 Nov Tue | Seminar 20: Topic: Architecture, sustainability and culture<br>Draft structures of papers of students' choices of buildings for Task 3                            |
| 04 Nov Thu | Seminar 21: <b>Award ceremony</b>   |
| 09 Nov Tue | Seminar 22: Building Criticisms I:<br>2 students' presentations of building criticisms  |
| 11 Nov Thu | Seminar 23: <b>Debriefing</b>   |
| 16 Nov Tue | Seminar 24: Building Criticisms II:<br>2 students' presentations of building criticisms   |
| 18 Nov Thu | Seminar 25: Building Criticisms III:<br>2 students' presentations of building criticisms  |
| 30 Nov Tue | Seminar 26: Building Criticism IV:<br>2 students' presentations of building criticisms  |
| 02 Dec Thu | Seminar 27: Wrap up   |
| 13 Dec Mon | 12 noon Submission of Final Term Papers   |

## Appendix UT Austin, School of Architecture Seminar Course Policies

### UT Austin Center for the Skills & Experience Flag: Independent Inquiry

This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage students in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing each with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to the specific major. Students should therefore expect a substantial portion of the grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of the work.

### Classroom Policies: Course Outline

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website at <https://utexas.instructure.com>. Check this site regularly and use it to ask questions about the course schedule.

Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion and if circumstances require. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced (although I will do my best to ensure that you receive the changes with as much advanced notice as possible).

Hybrid course format: Course sessions that will be conducted via Zoom and not in our classroom will be marked accordingly. You will find links to all Zoom sessions listed in our Canvas course site by clicking on the "Zoom" link in the navigation sidebar. As we will make extensive use of the Zoom breakout rooms for small group discussion, please be prepared to participate in all Zoom sessions in the same way that you would in our face-to-face classes: come prepared and actively engage in conversations.

Please make it a habit to check your Canvas e-mail on a regular basis (at least once a day) for any updates or changes to upcoming class sessions.

### Grading for this Course

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so:

Appendix: UT Austin, School of Architecture and Seminar Course Policies

Class participation	25%
Assignments	25%
Mid-term presentation	20%
Final presentation	30%

### Grading Policies

As I hope you can see, flexibility is built into the assignments to support your success in this course. If you miss a smaller assignment or don't do as well on your earlier journal entries, your grade will not be impacted significantly. Consequently, the final grades are firm, and no additional curve is available.

### Grade Percentage

A	>94%
A-	>90%
B+	>87%
B	>84%
B-	>80%
C+	>77%
C	>74%
C-	>70%
D	>65%
F	<65%

### Statement on Learning Success

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT. Many are listed on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

### Late work

Late work will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Generally, except in the case of an excused absence, work submitted after an assigned deadline will not be eligible for full credit. Please communicate with me if you are having problems keeping to the schedule. It is

better to talk through problems than ignore them.

### **Absences**

If you are absent on the day that your team meets, you are responsible for providing your team with the necessary information to compensate for your absence. It is crucial to keep in communication with your team members; you are responsible for letting both us and your team know if you cannot make it to a class.

### **Excused Absence**

The only absences that will be considered excused are for religious holidays or extenuating circumstances due to an emergency. If you plan to miss class due to observance of a religious holiday, please let us know at least two weeks in advance. You will not be penalized for this absence, although you will still be responsible for any work you will miss on that day if applicable. Check with us for details or arrangements.

If you have to be absent, use your resources wisely. Ask your team and other classmates to get a run-down and notes on any lessons you miss. If you find there are topics that we covered while you were gone that raise questions, you may come by during office hours or schedule a meeting to discuss. Email specific questions you have in advance so that we can make the most of our time. "What did I miss?" is not specific enough.

### **Q Drop Policy**

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you will need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, that typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see:

<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

### **Personal Pronouns**

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they

have added a "preferred name" with the Gender and Sexuality Center (<http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/>). I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc.). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records.

### **University Resources for Students**

Services for Students with Disabilities

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions.

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. For more information, visit <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

### **Counseling and Mental Health Center**

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. <http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html>

**Undergraduate Writing Center:**

<http://uwc.utexas.edu/Libraries>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/ITS>

<http://www.utexas.edu/its/Student>

**Emergency Services:**

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

**COVID-19 Update: "Keep Learning"****Resources**

This course may be offered in a format to which you are unaccustomed. If you are looking for ideas and strategies to help you feel more comfortable participating in our class, please explore the resources available here: <http://onestop.utexas.edu/keep-learning/>

**The Sanger Learning Center**

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

**BeVocal**

BeVocal is a university-wide initiative to promote the idea that individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm. At UT Austin all Longhorns have the power to intervene and reduce harm. To learn more about BeVocal and how you can help to build a culture of care on campus, go to: <https://wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal>.

**University Safety Information**

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)

**Title IX Reporting**

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

- Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
- Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
- Investigate and discipline violations of the university's relevant policies. (<https://titleix.utexas.edu/relevant-policies>)

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who

witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported.

I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee.

If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email [advocate@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:advocate@austin.utexas.edu). For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu>, contact the Title IX Office via e-mail at [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

### **Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512- 471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

### **University Policies**

#### **Academic Integrity**

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT. Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic

Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php>

### **Class Recordings**

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

### **Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited**

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating.

It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

### **COVID-19 Updates: Fall 2021 Semester**

While we will post information related to the contemporary situation on campus, you are encouraged to stay up-to-date on the latest news as related to the student experience: <https://coronavirus.utexas.edu/students>

### **Safety and Class Participation/Masks**

For every face-to-face class experience, we will all need to make some adjustments in order to benefit from in-person classroom interactions in a safe and healthy manner. Our best protections against spreading COVID-19 on campus are masks (defined as cloth face coverings) and staying home if you are showing symptoms. Therefore, for the benefit of everyone, this means that all students are required to follow two important rules:

- Every student must wear a cloth face covering properly in class and in all campus buildings at all times.
- Every student must engage in documented daily symptom screening.
- This means that each class day in which on campus activities occur, students must upload certification from the symptom tracking app and confirm that they completed their symptom screening for that day to Canvas.
- Students should not upload the results of that screening, just the certificate that they completed it. If the symptom tracking app recommends that the student isolate rather than coming to class, then students must not return to class until cleared by a medical professional.
- If a student is not wearing a cloth face covering properly in the classroom (or any UT building), that student must leave the classroom (and building).
- If the student refuses to wear a cloth face covering, class will be dismissed for the remainder of the period, and the student will be subject to disciplinary action as set forth in the university's Institutional Rules/General Conduct 11-404(a)(3).
- Students who have a condition that precludes the wearing of a cloth face covering must follow the procedures for obtaining an accommodation.  
(<https://orientation.utexas.edu/students-with-disabilities>)

WW 11 July 2021