OBJECTIVES:

The seminar intends to provide a panoramic view of major issues in contemporary architectural and urban theory during the three decades leading up to the present. Since contemporary architectural discourse is distinguished by its dialogue with other disciplines and their respective projects, this seminar provides the historical and theoretical background necessary for its contextualization and discussion, by juxtaposing architectural projects and text with paradigmatic texts that have defined the cultural field at large, and have often chosen architecture and urbanism as their privileged objects of analysis.

The course intends to provide the practice-oriented architect with a stage for critical discussion of the contemporary challenges and forces facing the profession, such as the proliferation of digital technologies, the social and political impact of globalization and rapid urbanization, and an arena for exploring the various strategies and positions to address these processes.

The course is structured into four sections, Discourse, Technology, and Urbanism

The first section, Discourse, explores the ways in which architecture, as a discipline, has repeatedly questioned its limits, modes of reasoning, its relation to other disciplines and to the social world. This process of self-introspection is examined through its interdisciplinary points of reference to philosophy and critical theory, and through the compulsive rewriting of its modernist past. It pivots around a debate between two dominant outlooks that demarcate the field, the “critical” and the “pragmatic”.

The Technology section explores the relationship between architecture and technology. The aim of the section is to raise questions such as how technology alters the ways in which we come to know and act upon the world, how it impacts social relations, patterns of urbanization conceptions of the self, and what possibilities and challenges it poses to architecture.

Urbanism examines the attempt to reconstruct the discipline after the collapse of modernist planning ideology, following the resurgence of the city as the locus of cultural and economic innovation. It explores the themes of public space, the debates over globalization, and the theme of the “global city”.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required texts

Most readings are available online at the Snell Library website through digital databases such as JSTOR, Project Muse or through specific E-journal websites. Readings which are not available online are available on Blackboard in PDF format. For your convenience, all the course readings are posted on Blackboard. Please bring a printed copy of the readings to class. It is recommended to collect the readings in a folder.
Grades and course credit will be based on the following requirements:

- 20% Reading presentation
- 20% Project presentation
- 20% Weekly responses
- 40% Term paper

Class Participation: Regular on-time attendance, with no more than 3 late attendances or 3 absences to fulfill credit requirement. Participation encompasses two main tasks:

1. One-page printed response due at start of the first class of each week (usually on Monday). No late or emailed submissions accepted. Ten (10) responses are required throughout the semester. Responses should reflect upon the main theme of the week, by engaging the required readings for both sessions. A response paper is not a summary, nor an expression of one’s personal liking or disliking of the readings—rather it should make an argument concerning the broader theme.

2. Participation in class discussion. For a seminar to function for the mutual benefit and pleasure of all, students must come prepared to discuss the specific texts, and be willing to voice their thoughts and to respond to the discourse of their fellows.

Reading Presentation: Students are required to present a reading and lead the class discussion. Readings to be presented are marked with an *. The assignment involves preparing additional background material and handouts relevant to the text.

Class Presentation: Students are required to prepare a single, five to ten minutes presentation of an architectural project suggested by the syllabus, to be discussed through the conceptual terms developed by the readings. Students are advised to schedule a meeting during office hours to discuss their presentations and familiarize themselves with the relevant literature.

Term paper: The topic of the essay must be relevant to the themes explored in the course, and the discussion must rely upon the theories encountered in the readings. The scope of the essay is 3000-3,500 words. The essay should follow the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines. Students are encouraged to design the graphic layout of the essay, including embedded images, to match the prevailing models of architectural publications. As one of the aims of the class is to develop academic research and writing skills, students are encouraged to sign up for a meeting during office hours to discuss their research and receive timely feedback on their drafts.

Academic Integrity: All members of the Northeastern community are expected to maintain complete honesty in all academic work, presenting only that which is their own work in tests and assignments. Copying or paraphrasing the words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgment is considered as plagiarism, defined as “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one’s own in any academic exercise without providing proper citation.” On how to properly attribute the work of others, contact your professor, or visit http://www.lib.neu.edu/online_research/help/avoiding_plagiarism/

NAAB STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

The work that students produce toward their degree granted by the School of Architecture is the property of the School of Architecture. The complete course work from selected students shall be collected by the School for each course taught for the National Architecture Accreditation Board [NAAB] documentation. Students are encouraged to document their work for their personal portfolio if it is requested by the School for the NAAB, but the work must be submitted to the professor no later than one week after final exams week. This course meets the following NAAB Student Performance Criteria to the extent designated:

12.1: Speaking and Writing Skills Understanding
12.2: Critical Thinking Skills Understanding
12.4: Research Skills Understanding
12.8: Western Traditions Understanding
12.10: National and Regional Traditions Ability
12.11: Use of Precedents Understanding
WEEK 1
9/9/08 Mapping the field

WEEK 2
CRITICAL DISCOURSE
9/14 Ideology, critique, technique
Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique” (1917), first six paragraphs and concluding paragraph.
http://www.vahidnab.com/defam.htm

9/16 CRITICALITY AND ARCHITECTURE

WEEK 3
POST-CRITICALITY
9/21 ARCHITECTURAL PRAGMATISM
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/852/852-h/852-h.htm#2HCH0005

9/23 POST CRITICAL
Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting “Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism,” Perspecta 33, (2002) [JSTOR]

Class presentations:
OMA: EuraLille (1994): See Rem Koolhaas, SMLXL

WEEK 4
ARCHITECTURE IN THE EXPANDED FIELD
9/28 FIELDS, FOLDS AND EVENTS I
* Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” October 8 (Spring 1979) [JSTOR]
Peter Eisenman, “Unfolding Events”, in Zone 6: Incorporations (Zone, 1992) pp. 423-426
Bernard Tschumi, “Spaces and events,” Architecture and Disjunction (MIT 1996), pp. 139-152

9/30 FIELDS, FOLDS AND EVENTS II
http://www.arch.ttu.edu/people/faculty/mussotter_mh20/AllenS_FieldConditions.pdf
James Corner, Not Unlike Life Itself: Landscape Strategy Now, Harvard Design Magazine 21 (Fall 2004)

Class presentations:

Week 5
ARCHITECTURE AS SPECTACLE
10/5 ARCHITECTURE AND POPULAR CULTURE

10/7 ARCHITECTURE AND THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Class presentations:
Rem Koolhaas, Prada store, New York
WEEK 6  ARCHITECTURE AND MEMORY
10/12  Columbus Day, no classes.
10/14  HISTORY AND MEMORY
Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, Representations no. 26 (Spring 1989), pp.7-10 [JSTOR]
Adrian Forty, “Memory,” in Words and Buildings; a Vocabulary of Modern Architecture (Thames & Hudson, 2000) [CR]

Class Presentations:

WEEK 7  ARCHITECTURE AND ITS OTHERS
10/19  SPACE AND THE OTHER
Simone de Beauvoir, excerpts from “Introduction: Woman as Other,” in The Second Sex.
http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm
* Edward Said, Orientalism (Vintage, 1978), pp. 31-49
Joint Screening: The Battle of Algiers

10/21  OTHER SPACES
Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” Diacritics 16:1 (Spring 1986). [JSTOR]

Class Presentations:

WEEK 8  QUESTIONING TECHNOLOGY
10/26  TECHNOLOGY AND PROGRESS
Laurie Anderson, “Big Science”, in Big Science (Warner Bros.,1982)
Leo Marx, “Does Improved Technology Mean Progress?” Technology Review (January 1987) [Ejournal]
* Paul Virilio and Silvie Lotrigier, Pure War (Semiotext, 1998), pp. 21-30, 71-78

10/28  TECHNOLOGY AND EXPERIENCE
Reyner Banham, “A Home is not a House,” Art in America (April 1965) http://international-festival.org/node/28910

Class presentations:
Peter Zumthor: The Vals Spa and the Kunsthaus Bregenz

WEEK 9  ARCHITECTURE AS TECHNOLOGY OF POWER
11/2  ARCHITECTURE AND POWER
http://foucault.info/documents/disciplineAndPunish/foucault.disciplineAndPunish.panOpticism.html

Class presentations:
The Montessori classroom, see Maria Montessori, The Montessori Method (Schocken, 1964)

11/4  JOINT LECTURE: ROY KOZLOVSKY, ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS: POWER AT PLAY
Roy Kozlovsky, “Adventure Playground and Postwar Reconstruction,” Designing Modern Childhoods (Rutgers, 2008)
*Preliminary abstract and annotated bibliography for term paper due.

WEEK 10  TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN
11/9 VIRTUALITY
http://www.ihedate.com/generated/objects/documents//SEM1_PICON_PRAXIS.pdf

Class presentations

11/11 VETERAN’S DAY, NO CLASSES.

WEEK 11 URBANISM
11/16 CRITIQUE OF MODERN URBANISM

11/18 NEO-RENEWAL

Class presentations
Seaport District redevelopment, Boston.

WEEK 12 CITY AND DEMOCRACY
11/23 THE END OF PUBLIC SPACE?
* Michael Sorkin, Variations of a Theme Park; The New American City and the End of Public Space (Noonday, 1992), pp. xi-xv
Wired special issue “Koolworld” (June 11, 2003), read “Best Laid Plan” and “Join the Club.” [handout]

Class Presentations

11/25 Thanksgiving—no class

WEEK 13 CITY AND GLOBALIZATION
11/30 GLOBALIZATION
Marx and Engels Manifesto of the Communist Party, excerpts [handout].
“Dueling Globalizations; a debate between Thomas Friedman and Ignacio Ramonet,” Foreign Policy 116 (Fall 1999), pp. 110-127

12/2 THE GLOBAL CITY
Mike Davis, “Planet of Slums”, New Left Review 26 (3/4: 2004), pp. 5-6, 12-20, 30-34. [Ejournal]

Class Presentations:
Bangalore. See Rahul Mehrotra, “Bangalore: Dysfunctional Boom Town.” Harvard Design Magazine (Spring 2007)

WEEK 14 CONCLUSION
12/7 ARCHITECTURE + ECOLOGY

12/9 JOINT LECTURE: CHRISTINA CRAWFORD, RECENT WORK IN DUBAI

*Term papers due. Please submit both a hard copy and a digital file of your essay via e-mail.