

Fall 2024

Arch 583-113: Critical Theories in Architecture

Peter Dumbadze

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arch 583 ST Syllabus

Critical Theories in Architecture
Fall 2024
Dumbadze

Arch 583 - ST: Critical Theories in Architecture Fall 2024

**In-Person Course, Central King Building, Room 219
Mondays, 6:00pm-8:50pm
New Jersey Institute of Technology**

Instructor

Peter Dumbadze, AIA NCARB

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Course Description

In 1984, the architectural theorist K. Michael Hays wrote the essay, “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form”, in which he lays the groundwork for what has become known as the Critical Project in Architecture. A synthesization of Marxist historical materialism and the formalist strategies espoused by the academy, the Critical Project sought to create a path in which Architecture could actively engage in historical dialogues while exploring how space could physically manifest. However, in only a decade, a new project spearheaded by Sarah Whiting and Robert Somol that instead of being retrospective in nature was projective followed in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, by an architectural theory that has scattered across a diversity of intellectual movements.

This seminar will look at the formation and dissolution of Hays’s Critical Project and what trajectories architectural theory may take in a post-2024 world. Through critical analysis of disciplinary and adjacent texts, we will develop a narrative that explores the evolution of architectural theory and what uses it has to the architectural discipline.

Pedagogical Objectives

This seminar aims to build a collective understanding of how architectural theory has developed in the time of Critical Theory. Using architectural and cultural history as the course’s backdrop, students will situate canonical texts within larger frameworks, constructing narratives that will shed light on where architectural theory may go. Students will learn to critically engage with texts through writing, class discussions, and presentations.

Readings

All readings, unless otherwise noted, will be available on the course’s Canvas page.

Seminar Meeting Times

This seminar meets on Monday evenings from 6:00pm-8:50pm in Central King Building, Room 219. Unless arranged in advance, students must be in attendance for the duration of the class time.

Attendance

Participation is central to this course and it is expected that students will participate in all discussions. All excused absences (medical, family emergency, religious, etc) must either be arranged in advance with the professors or cleared with the Dean of Students within a timely manner.

Office Hours

Students may arrange to meet by appointment with the instructor in person on Mondays from 11:00am-12:00pm or virtually by appointment at another, agreed-upon time.

Assignments

Readings Responses:	22.5% of Grade
Class Participation:	22.5% of Grade
Reading Discussion Presentation:	20.0% of Grade
Final Paper:	35.0% of Grade

All Reading Responses are to be uploaded to Canvas prior to start of class at 6:00pm. All late submissions will be deducted one point for each day (excluding weekends and Institute-recognized holidays). All work is to be archived onto Kepler at the end of the semester.

For every class, one to two students will lead that week's reading discussion. They will prepare questions and a presentation relating the reading to historic works in architecture and history. All other students, except for those who are leading that class's discussion, are required to complete the reading response prior to the start of class.

NAAB Criteria & Shared Values

The National Architectural Accrediting Board accredits NJIT's architecture program. The NAAB has Program Criteria, Student Criteria, & Shared Values of the Discipline and the Profession that must be covered by any architectural curriculum to attain their approval.

This course satisfies the following Shared Values:

Shared Values of the Discipline and Profession

Design: Architects design better, safer, more equitable, resilient, and sustainable built environments. Design thinking and integrated design solutions are hallmarks of architecture education, the discipline, and the profession.

Environmental Stewardship and Professional Responsibility: Architects are responsible for the impact of their work on the natural world and on public health, safety, and welfare. As professionals and designers of the built environment, we embrace these responsibilities and act ethically to accomplish them.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Architects commit to equity and inclusion in the environments we design, the policies we adopt, the words we speak, the actions we take, and the respectful learning, teaching, and working environments we create. Architects seek fairness, diversity, and social justice in the profession and in society and support a range of pathways for students seeking access to an architecture education.

Knowledge and Innovation: Architects create and disseminate knowledge focused on design and the built environment in response to ever-changing conditions. New knowledge advances architecture as a cultural force, drives innovation, and prompts the continuous improvement of the discipline.

Leadership, Collaboration, and Community Engagement: Architects practice design as a collaborative, inclusive, creative, and empathetic enterprise with other disciplines, the communities we serve, and the clients for whom we work.

Lifelong Learning: Architects value educational breadth and depth, including a thor-

ough understanding of the discipline's body of knowledge, histories and theories, and architecture's role in cultural, social, environmental, economic, and built contexts. The practice of architecture demands lifelong learning, which is a shared responsibility between academic and practice settings.

Learning and Teaching Culture Policy

In addition to the overarching values and ethics of the university, the New Jersey School of Architecture (NJSoA) is dedicated to optimism, diversity and solidarity, professional conduct, constructive evaluation and instruction, collaborative community, health and wellbeing, time management and school-life-work balance, respectful stewardship and space management, and well-rounded enrichment. The pedagogy of architecture and design is as complex as it is rewarding, and as dynamically evolving as the people who learn and teach it. This understanding resides at the core of the NJSoA Learning and Teaching Culture Policy:

<https://design.njit.edu/learning-and-teaching-culture-policy>

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

NJIT Undergraduate grading scale:

A	4.0 Superior
B+	3.5 Excellent
B	3.0 Very Good
C+	2.5 Good
C	2.0 Acceptable
D	1.0 Minimum
F	0.0 Inadequate

Incompletes are only granted in the event of a documented medical or family emergency, and must be approved by the instructor and administration.

NJIT has a policy of issuing mid-term warnings for students who are not performing at a satisfactory level. Any student issued a warning will be required to have a conference with the instructor to evaluate satisfactory completion of the work for the remainder of the semester. At any point during the semester students can arrange to meet with the instructor to inquire how their performance of the assignments is progressing and how they may improve. Final grades may be discussed in person at the end of the semester by student or instructor request.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity and honesty are of paramount importance. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. The NJIT Honor Code will be upheld, and any violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students. All students are responsible for upholding the integrity of NJIT by reporting any violation of academic integrity to the Office of the Dean of Students. The identity of the student filing the report will remain anonymous. All students are expected to adhere to:

The University Code on Academic Integrity: <https://www.njit.edu/dos/academic-integrity>

The Code of Student Conduct: <https://www.njit.edu/dos/policies/conductcode/index.php>

HCAD librarian Maya Gervits has assembled excellent resources for a students use on using images, citing, and plagiarism: <https://researchguides.njit.edu/c.php?g=671665&p=4727920>

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Students are not to use artificial intelligence software or websites for work related to this class. All work for this class must be original and all source material must be properly cited. Students found to have used artificial intelligence for any assignment will be referred immediately to the Dean of Students.

Course Schedule (If any readings are updated/revised, the instructor will inform students)

Week One, September 9th

Course Introduction

Required Reading

Mary McLeod, "Theory and Practice," *A + U* No. 370-372 (Jul-Sep 2001), 15-18.

K. Michael Hays, "Reflections on the State of Theory," *A + U* No. 367-369 (Apr-Jun 2001), 7-10.

Stan Allen, "Working," *Hunch* No. 11, pages 116-121

Background Reading

Stuart Sim and Borin Van Loon, *Introducing Critical Theory: A Graphic Guide*, London: Icon Books Limited, 2009

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response about where you think architectural theory currently stands.

Week Two, September 16th

Establishing Critical Theory

Required Reading

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, 217-51, New York: Schocken, 1968

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, 253-64, New York: Schocken, 1968

Background Reading

Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, Chapters 3, 5, and 8

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response about how Benjamin's ideas regarding film are applicable to architecture.

Week Three, September 23rd

Translation

Required Reading

Robin Evans, "Translation from Drawing to Building," In *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, edited by Janet Evans, 54-91, London: Architectural Association Publications, 2011.

Marshall McLuhan, "Media Hot and Cold," in *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*, 1964, 22-32

Background Reading

TBD

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response about what you identify as the dis/connection between drawing and building

Week Four, September 30th

Kitsch, Brilliance, Satire, or Parody

Required Reading

Robert Venturi, "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture: Selections from a Forthcoming Book" in *Perspecta* 9-10 (1965): pages 17-56.

Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939) from *Art and Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1961, pages 3-21.

Background Reading

Lee Ann Custer, "Teaching Complexity and Contradiction at the University of Pennsylvania, 1961-65," In *Complexity and Contradiction at Fifty: On Robert Venturi's "Gentle Manifesto"*, edited by Martino Stierli and David B. Brownlee, pages 30-47. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2019.

Mary McLeod, "Venturi's Acknowledgments: The Complexities of Influence." In *Complexity and Contradiction at Fifty: On Robert Venturi's "Gentle Manifesto"*, edited by Martino Stierli and David B. Brownlee, pages 50-75, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2019.

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response as to how Venturi uses historical references in his architecture.

Week Five, October 7th

Dueling Ideologies, Part 1

Required Reading

Colin Rowe, "Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," in *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972, pages 1-27.

Background Reading

Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, Chapters 7 and 11

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response on how Rowe positions his argument.

Week Six, October 14th

Dueling Ideologies, Part 2

Required Reading

Manfredo Tafuri, "Architecture and Its Double: Semiology and Formalism," in *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976, pages 150-181.

Background Reading

Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, Chapters 7 and 11

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response about how Rowe and Tafuri differ in their approach to architecture.

Week Seven, October 21st

PoMo FoMo

Required Reading

Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), 111-125.
Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology," in *Oppositions Reader*, ed. K. Michael Hays, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998, 13-16.

Background Reading

TBD

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response as to how Jameson views capitalism's influence on culture.

Week Eight, October 28th

The Birth of the Critical Project in Architecture

Required Reading

K. Michael Hayes, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form." *Perspecta* 21, 1984, pages 14-29

Michael Baldwin, Charles Harrison, and Mel Ramsden, "Art History, Art Criticism and Explanation", in *Art History and Its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, Eric Fernie, New York: Phaidon Press, 2006, pages 259-280

Background Reading

Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, Chapters 8 and 12

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response about how Hays conceptualizes the Critical Project in Architecture.

Week Nine, November 4th

Reaganing

Required Reading

Mary McLeod, "Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism." *Assemblage*, no. 8, 1989, pages 23-59

Background Reading

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pages 5-38

John P Diggins, *Up From Communism: Conservative Odysseys in American Intellectual Development*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response on how McLeod views Neoconservatism's impact on architecture's development in the 1980s.

Week Ten, November 11th

Semiotics

Required Reading

Stan Allen, "Trace Elements," in *Tracing Eisenman*, ed. by Cynthia Davidson, New York: Rizzoli, 2006, 49-65

Background Reading

Charles Sanders Peirce's "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" in the *Philosophy of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler, New York: Dover Publications, 1955, pages 98-119

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response on how Allen applies Peircean semiotics to architecture.

Week Eleven, November 18th

Keeping It Local

Required Readings

Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in the *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA, 1983): 16-30

Stan Allen, "Field Conditions." In *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City*, edited by Mark Lamster, 90-103, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999

Background Reading

TBD

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response on how Frampton and Allen view site as influence upon architecture.

Week Twelve, November 25th

Projective Futures

Required Readings

Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting. "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism." *Perspecta* 33 (2002): 72–77

Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace," *October* 100 (2002): 175–90.

Background Viewing

Rem Koolhaas: A Kind of Architect, Directed by Min Tesch and Markus Heidingsfelder. Oscilloscope Pictures, 2008. <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/rem-koolhaas-a-kind-of-architect>.

Charlie Rose, "The Power of Architecture," aired November 8, 1996, on PBS, <https://charlierose.com/videos/23649>

Reading Response

Write a 250 word response as to how Somol, Whiting, and Koolhaas are beginning to turn away from the Critical Project in Architecture.

Week Thirteen, December 2nd

In The Year 2000...

Required Reading

John McMorrough, "Ru(m)inations: The Haunts of Contemporary Architecture." *Perspecta* 40 (2008): 164–69

Mark Jarzombek, "Critical or Post-Critical?" *Architectural Theory Review: Journal of the Department of Architecture, the University of Sydney*, 2002 Apr., v.7, n.1, pp.149-151

Sylvia Lavin, "The Newest 'New' Criticism," *Log*, 2004 Fall, n.3, pp.79-80

Background Reading

TBD

Reading Response

Write a 1,500 to 2,000 word paper describing where you believe architectural theory is heading in the next ten years. Paper due December 16th. A handout detailing paper requirements will be handed out at this time.

Week Fourteen, December 9th**Millennials Enter Stage Left****Required Reading**

Selections from *Architecture Is All Over*, edited by Esther Choi and Marrikka Trotter, New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2017

Background Reading

TBD

Reading Response

Work on Final Paper due December 16th

Week Fifteen, December 16th**What Does the Crystal Ball Reveal?****Reading Response**

Final Paper to be submitted by 9:00pm to Canvas

Disclaimer

Students, whether on or off campus, attending class, participating in field trips, engaged in model making or any other academic activity are responsible for their own safety and well-being. Faculty, teachers and guest critics accept no responsibility, directly or implied, for the safety, health, actions or inactions of any student or group of students regardless of their age or circumstance.

Registering for this course, accessing any course material or attending any meeting of the course in person or remotely, confirms your acceptance of all the "Rights and Conditions" listed above.

The instructors reserve the right to change assignment due dates as needed. All date revisions will be announced to the students prior to change.