

AR-226

History of Architecture V/VI

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Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	BA4	Obl.
HES - AR	E	Obl.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	4
Session	Summer
Semester	Spring
Exam	Oral
Workload	120h
Weeks	12
Hours	4 weekly
Courses	4 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

This is a survey course on the history of architecture of the twentieth century.

Content

In the twentieth century, radical social, political, economic, environmental, and technological shifts challenged existing social contracts--offering new potentials for exercising dominance as well as paths toward liberation. These historical transformations were reified in--and shaped by--new spatial arrangements. This course will chart a map of these transformations as they intersected with the production of the objects most specific to the discipline of architecture: buildings. Despite their material solidity, buildings are both things and ideas. Therefore, to understand the radical shifts of the twentieth century, we will focus not only on buildings but also on the ways in which thinking about buildings changed. In order to consider buildings as simultaneously concrete objects and conceptual constructs, the course will focus on the notion of *typology*. Prevalent in architectural discourse since the late eighteenth century, *typology* and *type* often sought to reconcile the material particularity of buildings with broader conceptual, historical, and geographic forces. Moreover, the idea of *type* often enabled the discipline of architecture to react to seismic historical shifts while maintaining a certain degree of professional, intellectual, and aesthetic autonomy. Aiming to understand these transformations, this course will take changing and competing definitions of typology as a means to historicize architecture in relation to modernity in the twentieth century.

This course surveys a period marked by the emergence of numerous projects of world governance, the global effects of two world wars, the implementation of socialist and welfare programs at a national scale, the exponential acceleration of climate crisis, and the dismantling of colonial empires (though not always their legacies). This focus will lead away from narratives based on the work of singular architects and will rather emphasize an understanding of architecture as a broad cultural practice. Unsettling the familiarity of the term "modern architecture," every week we will revise the relationship between modernism and modernity by considering processes, geographies, and subjects often excluded from those categories. Instead of simply incorporating hitherto excluded case studies into the modernist canon, the class will offer a critical history of the canon itself. How did architecture partake in constructing and consolidating power differentials such as those based on race, gender, and class? Similarly, we will address episodes of liberation, criticism, and resistance associated with architecture throughout the twentieth century. In contemporary times determined by rampant populism, acritical and techno-deterministic discourses, an ever-growing gulf of social inequality, and a severe ecological crisis, constructing a historical consciousness around the status of the built artifact is more important today than ever before.

Session topics are the following:

- 23.2.2023 Introduction: On Type and History
- 2.3.2023 Housing / Society

- 9.3.2023 Tower / Empire
- 16.3.2023 School / Experiment
- 23.3.2023 House / Domesticity
- 30.3.2023 Factory / Labour
- 6.4.2023 Broadcasting House / Entertainment
- 20.4.2023 Skyscraper / Management
- 27.4.2023 Museum / Internationalism
- 4.5.2023 Laboratory / Research
- 11.5.2023 Market / Market

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Identify Sources
- Defend Ideas
- Elaborate Texts
- Construct a Historical Consciousness

Teaching methods

In weekly two-hours lectures, we will review the history of one building type relative to broader historical processes. In so doing, the very notion of *typology* will be problematised and potentially redefined. In addition, the class offers a hybrid teaching method in which lectures are combined with reading discussions. These are considered fundamental components of the learning process. After each lecture, the class will meet in smaller groups to collectively discuss primary and secondary sources related to the topic of the lecture.

Expected student activities

Completion of the reading assignments and active participation in discussions are expected from every student.

Assessment methods

The assessment of the course is cumulative and takes place in three stages. The first consists of the evaluation of student participation in weekly reading discussions. Out of the ten sessions, students will have the chance to delete their two lowest evaluations--allowing room for mistakes, risks, and absences. The second consists of a written paper. By mid-term, all the students in the class are asked to submit the name of one building that will be the focus of their semester research together with 100 words explaining their selection. The course will offer a list of case studies, and students are welcome to choose from within or outside the list. The selection of the case study needs to be approved by the instructors. Based on a semester-long research project, students will submit, by the end of the term, a 2.000-word text (maximum), two visual sources, and a bibliography on their selected case study. Students will submit this information according to a provided template. The third component of the evaluation consists of an oral exam based on their own research, which will take place at the end of the term.

Grading rubric:

Participation in weekly reading discussions (40%)

Written Paper (40%)

Oral Exam (20%)

Resources

Moodle Link

- <https://go.epfl.ch/AR-226>