

AR-534

Domestic space in the 20th century

Aureli Pier Vittorio

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	MA1, MA3	Obl.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	3
Session	Winter
Semester	Fall
Exam	Oral
Workload	90h
Weeks	12
Hours	2 weekly
Lecture	2 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

This course is part of a three-year trajectory dedicated to a comprehensive history of domestic space and its relationship with urban form, from prehistory to Neoliberalism.

Content

Look Back in Anger

The Difficult History of Housing in the 20th Century

The course will revisit the difficult history of housing and that of the policies that regulate its production. The main assumption is that at different levels, types and policies are geared to the construction of a specific subjectivity of the inhabitant, whose reproduction is expected to be compatible with capitalist production. This is evident in the history of suburban homes, whose political and economic project was naturalized by the pastoral 'ordinariness' of this type of development. Another instance in which it is possible to see the relationship between type, subjectivity and policy at work is in the rise and fall of single-person homes, whose presence in many industrial cities was challenged by both state and market in order to promote more docile ways of dwelling.

And yet, the 20th century saw a radical process of decommodification of domestic space in the West, because states invested in the building of massive quantities of housing. Already in the second half of the 1800s there were attempts to design and build affordable housing advanced by philanthropic associations, but until the end of the century governments remained reluctant towards the financing of housing programs because building homes to rent at low cost was considered an implicit attack to private property, one of the fundamental pillars of the modern nation state, and especially of liberal democracies.

Only at the beginning of the 20th century, under the pressure of class struggle, and especially in the aftermath of World War I, states put forward policies that allowed the building of housing which for at least sixty years remained the staple domestic space in many cities around the world. Yet, with the exception of socialist states, many governments continued to encourage market housing, whose relevance escalated with the demise of the welfare state starting in the 1980s. Since then, real estate has become (again) one of the primary economic forces, and today many cities live under a 'real estate dictatorship'. Countering this situation there have been many attempts to overcome the market's 'straightjacket' by forming no-profit housing cooperatives or promoting community land trusts, but without supporting legislation these attempts to decommodify housing cannot scale up and reach the proportions required by our current housing crisis.

The course will cover all these historical passages by presenting specific case studies and discussing how the architecture of domestic space, even in its most ordinary elements, is a 'Rosetta stone' of the many conflicts and contradictions embedded in capitalist society.

Course sessions**Session 1**

12/09/2024

1st Lecture

Capital and Land: the political economy of housing

2nd Lecture

The 'Garden City' and the 'Garden Suburb'

Session 2

26/09/2024

3rd Lecture

Familiar horror: the rise of the suburban home

4th lecture

Beyond the family: the rise and fall of single living

Session 3

17/10/2024

5th Lecture

Difficult beginnings: social housing in France, England and Germany

6th Lecture

Expropriating the expropriators: housing in Holland and Vienna

Session 4

07/11/2024

7th Lecture

From Capitalist crisis to Socialism: housing in Weimar Germany and USSR

8th lecture

Difficult compromises: public housing in United States

Session 5

21/11/2024

9th lecture

At a very large-scale: postwar housing in France and Italy

10th Lecture

Inglorious bastards: a concise history of the 'urban villa'

Session 6th

05/12/2024

11th lecture

Exchange value: the demise of the welfare state and commodification of housing

12th lecture

Commoning domestic space: the rise of cooperative housing

Assistants: Marson Korbi

Learning Outcomes

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

- Interpret in a critical manner the concepts developed during the course
- Argue the relations between domestic space, typology, gender and class relationships
- Develop a reflection on the relationship between historical conditions and architecture

Expected student activities

Personal work during the semester, reading of texts, personal study of a theme to be concretized into a paper of approximately **3.000 words**.

Assessment methods

The main goal of the course is to encourage students to read as much as they can. Therefore, the main factor in the evaluation will be the student's capacity to assemble and read a relevant body of texts.

40% **Specificity** of the theme and **reading** relevant bibliography

40% **Writing** of the paper, especially referencing and **footnoting**

20% Clear oral exposition

Supervision

Assistants	Yes
Others	Marson Korbi

Resources

Moodle Link

- <https://go.epfl.ch/AR-534>