



Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972

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“Theory” is ambiguous. A form of mediation between idea and reality, theory has been deployed as justification, as explanation, as tool for analysis, as propaganda, or as architecture itself. Discourse is predicated on theory.

This lecture course takes up an expanded notion of architectural theory, considering the role theoretical production has played vis-à-vis both the discipline and broader social, political, and technological conditions. Through such a lens, the course surveys a history of architectural discourse from roughly 1960 to the present. The course opens briefly with the re-theorizing of modernism that took place more or less after the fact in the early 1960s. It turns to the various theoretical challenges to modernism articulated well into the 1970s. The course considers the emergence of a self-identified postmodernism during this same period, and then takes up the rise of critical theory in the 1980s and the challenges posed to it in the 1990s. The course

concludes by focusing on selected topics from the contemporary debate in the 2000s. With a focus on key figures, texts, and debates, the course reconstructs a history of contemporary architectural discourse, highlighting the ideas and theories that have enacted or destabilized architectural thought. Students are encouraged to develop their own positions with regard to these debates, both theoretical and practical.

## Learning Objectives

This course aims to encourage students to:

1. Be able to situate and analyze cultural objects, concepts, and debates within their broader political, economic, and social contexts
2. Establish associations and comparisons between diverse historical objects, both synchronically and diachronically
3. Hone analytic and critical skills through a variety of strategies including close analysis of images and texts, written responses, and in-class discussions
4. Actively participate in and lead discussions
5. Develop original arguments and theses, with a focus on making connections across periods and disciplines

## Course Requirements

### 1. Attendance and Participation: 10%

Students are required to attend each lecture and to complete the assigned required reading before each class session. Readings will be posted on Blackboard.

### 2. Reading Responses: 15%

Students will be expected to submit a brief, 1-page commentary that responds to the required readings for the week. This should take the form of an analytical summary that briefly states and comments on the main points of each reading. Responses are to be submitted electronically on Blackboard, and are due no later than 5:00 p.m. the Sunday evening following the week's lectures. No late reading responses will be accepted.

### 3. Group Presentation: 15%

Students will be asked to participate in a group presentation on one of the student presentation days scheduled throughout the semester. Groups will present on a theme drawn from the reading that is characteristic of the decade surveyed. Presentations should connect themes to at least one architectural project not discussed in lecture. Students will sign up for a presentation day by Week 2.

### 4. Midterm Examination: 25%

### 5. Final Examination: 35%

## Course Policies

No late work will be accepted—i.e. no partial credit will be given for work that is turned in late. Being absent on a day that a quiz, exam, presentation, paper, or final is held or due can lead to a student receiving an “F” for that assignment.

The School of Architecture's attendance policy allows a student to miss the equivalent of one week of class sessions (in our case, that means two class sessions) without penalty. If additional absences are required for medical reasons or a family emergency, a pre-approved academic reason, or religious observance, the situation should be discussed, in advance if possible, with me. For each absence above this number, the final grade may be lowered by 1/3 point (i.e. from A to A- for one unexcused absence, from A- to B+ for two; from B+ to B for three, etc.).

Any student not in class after the first 10 minutes is considered to be tardy. Three tardies constitute one unexcused absence. Students who are physically present but mentally absent (whether because they are asleep or distracted by technology) will be marked as absent. Leaving class before it ends, or taking an extended bathroom or water break that lasts 1/3 of the class time or longer, will be considered an unexcused absence.

## Grading Scale

|    |              |
|----|--------------|
| A  | 95-100       |
| A- | 90-94        |
| B+ | 87-89        |
| B  | 83-86        |
| B- | 80-82        |
| C+ | 77-79        |
| C  | 73-76        |
| C- | 70-72        |
| D+ | 67-69        |
| D  | 63-66        |
| D- | 60-62        |
| F  | 59 and below |

## Course Overview

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| August 21                           | Course Introduction: "Architectural Theory"?  |
| August 23                           | Theorizing Modernity  |
| August 28                           | Play  |
| August 30                           | Authorship  |
| September 4                         | LABOR DAY: NO CLASS   |
| September 6                         | Environment   |
| <b>September 11</b>                 | <b>Student Presentations: Themes of the 1960s</b>   |
| September 13                        | Pop   |
| September 18                        | Behavior  |
| September 20                        | Autonomy  |
| September 25                        | Historicism and Multivalence  |
| <b>September 27</b>                 | <b>Student Presentations: Themes of the 1970s</b>   |
| October 2                           | Midterm Review  |
| <b>October 4</b>                    | <b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>   |
| October 9                           | Events  |
| October 11                          | Site, Place, Region   |
| October 16                          | Consumption and Late Capitalism   |
| October 18                          | Deconstruction  |
| <b>October 23</b>                   | <b>Student Presentations: Themes of the 1980s</b>   |
| October 25                          | Geometry  |
| October 30                          | Diagrams and Fields   |
| November 1                          | Control   |
| November 6                          | The Mediated Body   |
| <b>November 8</b>                   | <b>Student Presentations: Themes of the 1990s</b>   |
| November 13                         | Ornament  |
| November 15                         | The Generic   |
| November 20                         | Platforms   |
| November 22                         | Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS  |
| <b>November 27</b>                  | <b>Student Presentations: Themes of the 2000s</b>   |
| November 29                         | Conclusion and Final Review   |
|                                     |   |
| <b>December 11</b><br>8:00-10:00 am | <b>FINAL EXAM</b><br>To confirm the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at <a href="http://www.usc.edu/soc">www.usc.edu/soc</a> |

## Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

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|--------------|--|
| August 21    | <b>Introduction:</b> What do we mean by “architectural theory”?  |
| August 23    | <p><b>Prelude: Theorizing Modernity</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>           Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” (1960, rev. 1965), in <i>The New Art</i> (New York: E. P. Dutton &amp; Co., Inc., 1966): pp. 100-110</p> <p>Reyner Banham, <i>Theory and Design in the First Machine Age</i> (London: The Architectural Press, 1960): pp. 9-12; 320-330</p>   |
| August 28    | <p><b>Play</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>           Constant Nieuwenhuys, “Another City for Another Life,” <i>Internationale Situationniste</i> No. 3, December 1959, in <i>Constant: New Babylon</i> (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, 2015): pp. 162-167</p> <p>Guy Debord, “The Organization of Territory” (1967), in <i>The Society of the Spectacle</i> (Detroit: Black &amp; Red, 1970): pp. 90-96</p>  |
| August 30    | <p><b>Authorship</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>           Robert Venturi, <i>Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture</i> (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966): pp. 22-23; 30-38</p> <p>Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” (1967), in <i>Image, Music, Text</i> (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): pp. 142-148</p> <p>Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” (1969), in <i>The Foucault Reader</i> (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): pp. 101-120</p> |
| September 4  | <b>LABOR DAY: ***NO CLASS***</b>   |
| September 6  | <p><b>Environment</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>           Ian McHarg, “Man and Environment” (1963), in <i>To Heal the Earth: Selected Writings of Ian L. McHarg</i> (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2007): pp. 10-23</p> <p>Buckminster Fuller, <i>Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth</i> (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968): chs. 4 and 8</p>   |
| September 11 | <b>Themes of the 1960s: Student Presentations</b>  |

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| September 13 | <p><b>Pop</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Hans Hollein, "Alles ist Architektur," <i>Bau</i> 1/2, 1968: pp. 460-462 (plus images)</p> <p>Denise Scott Brown, "Learning from Pop," <i>Casabella</i> 359/360, 1971: pp. 15-23</p> <p>Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, <i>Learning from Las Vegas</i> (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972): pp. 3-19 (plus images)</p>  |
| September 18 | <p><b>Behavior</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Joachim Wohlwill, "The Environment is Not in the Head!" in <i>Environmental Design Research</i> Vol. 2 (Stroudsburg, PA: Dowden, Hutchinson, &amp; Ross, Inc., 1973): pp. 166-181</p> <p>Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," <i>Art &amp; Text</i> No. 11, September 1983: pp. 109-137</p>   |
| September 20 | <p><b>Autonomy</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Peter Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition," <i>Casabella</i> 359/360, November-December 1971: pp. 48-58</p> <p>Colin Rowe, Introduction to <i>Five Architects</i> (New York: Wittenborn, 1972): pp. 3-7</p>   |
| September 25 | <p><b>Historicism and Multivalence</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Robert A. M. Stern, "Gray Architecture as Post-Modernism, or, Up and Down from Orthodoxy," <i>L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui</i> 186, August-September 1976: pp. 242-245</p> <p>Charles Jencks, "Post-Modern Architecture," in <i>The Language of Post-Modern Architecture</i> (New York: Rizzoli, 1977): pp. 308-316</p> <p>Alan Colquhoun, "Historicism and the Limits of Semiology" (1972), in <i>Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism</i> (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2009): pp. 97-105</p> |
| September 27 | <b>Themes of the 1970s: Student Presentations</b>  |
| October 2    | <b>Midterm Review</b>  |
| October 5    | <b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>  |

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| October 9  | <p><b>Events</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Bernard Tschumi, <i>The Manhattan Transcripts</i> (London: Academy Editions, 1981): entire book (mostly images)</p>   |
| October 11 | <p><b>Site, Place, Region</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Edward Said, <i>Orientalism</i> (New York: Vintage Books, 1979; 2003): pp. 1-28</p> <p>Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in Hal Foster, <i>The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture</i> (New York: The New Press, 1983): pp. 16-30</p> |
| October 16 | <p><b>Consumption and Late Capitalism</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," <i>New Left Review</i> No. 146, 1984: pp. 53-92</p>   |
| October 18 | <p><b>Deconstruction</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, <i>Deconstructivist Architecture</i> (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Boston: Little, Brown, 1988): pp. 10-20</p> <p>Catherine Ingraham, "Milking Deconstruction, or Cow Was the Show?" <i>Inland Architect</i>, September/October 1988: pp. 61-65</p>                           |
| October 23 | <p><b>Themes of the 1980s: Student Presentations</b></p>   |
| October 25 | <p><b>Geometry</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Greg Lynn, "Multiplicitous and Inorganic Bodies," <i>Assemblage</i> 19, December 1992: pp. 32-49</p> <p>Greg Lynn, "Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, The Pliant, and the Supple," <i>Architectural Design</i> Vol. 63 No. 3/4, March-April 1993: pp. 8-15</p>  |
| October 30 | <p><b>Diagrams and Fields</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Toyo Ito, "Diagram Architecture," <i>El Croquis</i> 77: Kazuyo Sejima, 1996: pp. 18-24</p> <p>Stan Allen, "From Object to Field," <i>AD: Architecture After Geometry</i> Vol 67 No. 5/6, May-June 1997: pp. 24-31</p>  |



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| November 1  | <p><b>Control</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Michel Foucault, selections from “The Body of the Condemned” and “Panopticism,” in <i>Discipline and Punish</i> (New York: Vintage Books, 1975; 1995): pp. 3-7 and 195-209</p> <p>Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” <i>October</i> Vol. 59, Winter 1992: pp. 3-7</p>                                      |
| November 6  | <p><b>The Mediated Body</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Beatriz Colomina, “Intimacy and Spectacle,” <i>AAFiles</i> 20, Fall 1990: pp. 5-14</p> <p>Elizabeth Grosz, “Cyberspace, Virtuality, and the Real: Some Architectural Reflections” (1997), in <i>Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space</i> (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001): pp. 75-90</p> |
| November 8  | <b>Themes of the 1990s: Student Presentations</b>   |
| November 13 | <p><b>Ornament</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Jeffrey Kipnis, “The Cunning of Cosmetics,” <i>El Croquis</i> 84, 1997: pp. 22-29</p> <p>Farshid Moussavi and Michael Kubo, “Introduction,” <i>The Function of Ornament</i> (Barcelona: ACTAR, 2006): n.p.</p>   |
| November 15 | <p><b>The Generic</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>Rem Koolhaas, “Junkspace,” <i>October</i> 100, Spring 2002: pp. 175-190</p>   |
| November 20 | <p><b>Platforms</b></p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u><br/>David Joselit, “Formats,” in <i>After Art</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012): pp. 55-84</p> <p>Sylvia Lavin, “Too Much Information,” <i>Artforum</i> Vol. 53 No. 1, September 2014: pp. 347-353, 398</p>   |
| November 22 | <b>THANKSGIVING BREAK ***NO CLASS***</b>  |
| November 27 | <b>Themes of the 2000s: Student Presentations</b>   |
| November 29 | <b>Conclusion and Final Review</b>  |



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| December 11<br>8:00-10:00 am | <b>FINAL EXAM</b><br>To confirm the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at <a href="http://www.usc.edu/soc">www.usc.edu/soc</a> . |

## Academic Conduct

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](http://sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

## Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

## Religious Holidays

The University recognizes the diversity of our community and the potential for conflicts involving academic activities and personal religious observation. The university provides a guide to such observances for reference and suggests that any concerns about lack of attendance or inability to participate fully in the course activity be fully aired at the start of the term. As a general principle, students should be excused from class for these events if properly documented and if provisions can be made to accommodate the absence and make up the lost work. Constraints on participation that conflict with adequate participation in the course and cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the faculty and the student need to be identified prior to the drop add date for registration. After the drop add date the University and the School of Architecture shall be the sole arbiter of what constitutes appropriate attendance and participation in a given course. Any student concerned about missing class for a recognized religious holiday should bring this matter up with your instructor at the start of the semester. A list of recognized religious holidays may be found at: [http://www.usc.edu/programs/religious\\_life/calendar/](http://www.usc.edu/programs/religious_life/calendar/)

**Student Counseling Services (SCS)** - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

**Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)** - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

**Sexual Assault Resource Center**

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance** – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

**Bias Assessment Response and Support**

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

**Student Support & Advocacy** – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

**Diversity at USC**

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

**USC Emergency Information**

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

**USC Department of Public Safety** – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>