ANTH 112A: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE

CLASS MEETING TIMES
MW 12:45-2:15
KINSC East 309

INSTRUCTOR
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Office Hours: M 2:30-4:30
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Architecture has been a powerful technology of colonialism, economic and infrastructural development, and modern governance. It has also been an important arena for fights for social and ecological justice and for innovating diverse “traditional” ways of building and living with the land. Balancing both “top-down” and “grassroots” forms of expertise, we will explore architecture’s concern with “place-making,” as that concern addresses not only people but also animals, climates, ancestral forces, and the Earth herself. We will read and develop critical ways of talking about architecture, as both built objects and as dynamic processes for building and ordering the world.
This course has two main objectives. One is to demonstrate how to study architecture from an anthropological perspective. This demands that we think critically about the concepts that we use to talk about built environments. Are all buildings “architecture”? Is all architecture “built”? What practices of thinking, making and moving does (capital A) Architecture entail, and how does that compare to other ways of building and dwelling? Do only people make architecture? What do buildings do? We can only touch on the infinitely variable and complex answers to these questions, but we will raise them, and many others.

The other objective of this course is to use buildings and landscapes as a means of exploring “ecology” and “politics” as anthropological concepts (as well as their conjuncture, as “political ecology”). Our first task will be to expand the conception of ecology as primarily concerned with nature, to include people and their bodies, their material stuff, their passions, their machines—no less is necessary to even be able to disagree with an architect! But what happens to “politics” if we include, and really take seriously, the myriad “non-human actors” that comprise thick, living landscapes—all those animals, art forms, energies, spirits, even living buildings? Are they “political”? These are not hypothetical questions; these exclusions are integral to the history of architecture as a modern technology. But they are also integral to the many vibrant and innovative ways in which people are expanding, subverting, and remaking what counts as architecture, ecology, and politics by putting these terms in conversation with each other.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading: The lectures are intended to expound upon the readings, to explain the concepts in the texts and make them more accessible, and to situate those ideas among others in the fields of anthropology, ecology, architecture and beyond. There is a lot of reading on this syllabus; all of these texts are on Moodle but not all of them will be required. Rather, the intention is including so much is to allow for some flexibility in pursuing specific interests that emerge in the class and also for providing you with some initial resources for your final projects. We will make these decisions as the semester proceeds, so if you don’t come to class and/or you don’t read your emails, you may not know which of these texts are required reading and which are recommended. Most importantly, I expect an interactive environment, which means that I welcome—in fact, will rely on—your questions, comments, and suggestions. You must keep up with the reading. You will be lost if you don’t.

Attendance and Participation: I will record attendance. Valid absences may be excused with a note from a doctor, a coach, etc. or, in some cases, prior arrangements with me. At the very least, everyone should arrive to class with questions and/or comments on the readings already prepared. This includes days when we are watching films, which we will often precede with a lecture or follow with discussions of those films, depending on the length of the film.

Quizzes: There will be a series of five unannounced “pop” quizzes. They will be deliberately easy, “right or wrong” questions. The point is to make sure that you’re reading. If you just
read very quickly, without deeply engaging the ideas in the text, you should still pass these
quizzes. If you don’t pass the quizzes you can take that as a sign that you really need to read
more carefully. And if you are able to pass the quizzes but aren’t able to engage or speak to
the concepts in the texts, this will be apparent in other ways.

Film Response Papers: There are five feature-length films on the syllabus. You are required
to write four 1-page response papers that connect the films to the readings for that week. “1-
page” in this case means more than half a page, less than a full page, singled spaced. I will
suggest topics in class. You can draw on these responses for your final project, so it is wise
(and required!) to put some thought into them. They are all due to be posted on the Moodle by
noon on the Sunday following the film. No late submissions, no exceptions!

Also, when films are readily available online they are hyperlinked in the syllabus below. In
some cases you may be required to watch them on your own time, depending on how much
time in the classroom we give to lectures and discussions (so you may need to rent them on
line, for no more than $5 each). When I have the DVD we will watch it in class.

Final Project: Your final project in this course will consist of a paper of 7-8 pages, preceded
by an oral presentation the last day of class. That’s a pretty short final paper and I expect that
you will also put in the work for the visual component of the project. I will provide written
guidelines for the final project later in the term. You will have two options:

- **Option 1:** Choose an artifact—a building, a place, a creature, a machine—and situate it
  in two of the “units” or weeks from the course, to make these two topics speak to each
  other in a 7-8 page paper (see the subheadings for the weeks, below). Also, compile a
  portfolio of images—photos, cut-outs, drawings, plans, etc—that illustrates your paper
  (not included in the 7-8 pages). You should have these images in mind and at hand
  when conceiving and writing your paper. They should also feature centrally in your final
  presentation.

- **Option 2:** Design your own “intervention” into one of the problems or opportunities
  that the course presents. Write a 7-8 page paper about what you have made, why, and
  how you arrived at its final form. Include a portfolio (or a box) of materials that visibly
  models your idea, as well as the various inspirations and iterations through which you
  arrived at your idea. Think of your design, whatever it is, as an assemblage of concepts,
  images, and practices and your job is to bring them together in a way that is visible,
  convincing, dazzling!

Grading: Your grade will be based on a total of 100 possible points. It will be broken down as
follows:

1. Attendance and Participation.......................................................... 20%
2. Quizzes (5 x 2pts each).................................................................10%
3. Response Papers (4 x 10pts each).................................................40%
4. Final Project.................................................................................30%
Disabilities: Students who need disability-related accommodations should speak with me as soon as possible. Students should also contact the Office of Access and Disabilities Services (ADS, hc-ads@haverford.edu) to verify their eligibility for accommodations.

E-mails: I am happy to respond to emails, especially for simple matters of clarification. For more substantive matters (including grades and missed lectures), it’s better to talk in person. I am happy to set up appointment outside of my office hours if necessary. In any case, however, please do not expect a response before 48 hours (or more if I am travelling).

COURSE SCHEDULE

BUILDING AND DWELLING

Wednesday September 6
- Introductions and syllabus
- Dan Philips. Creative Architecture from Reclaimed Stuff. TED.com. (18 min.)
- TVNZ. Are you my tribe? (12 min.)

Monday September 11

Wednesday September 13

Monday September 18
- Film: Andy Goldsworthy. Rivers and Tides (94 min.)
- Start reading head for following classes! A lot!

INDIGENOUS, TRADITIONAL, VERNACLURAL

Wednesday September 20
Monday September 25
- Marcel Vellinga. “Anthropology and the Challenges of Sustainable Architecture” in Anthropology Today Vol 21 No 3 (June 2005): 3-7

Wednesday September 27
- Yi-Fu Tuan. 1977. “Body, Personal Relations, and Spatial Values” (Ch. 4) and “Architectural Space and Awareness” (Ch. 8) in Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Ron Eglash. The fractals at the heart of African designs. TED.com (17 min.)

Monday October 2

Wednesday October 4

Monday October 9
- Translating concepts and forms drawing exercise in class
**Wednesday October 11**
- Film: *Te Marae: A Journey of Discovery*

**FALL BREAK**

**MODERN ARCHITECTURE**

**Monday October 23**

**Wednesday October 25**

**Monday October 30**
- Walter Benjamin. “Paris, the capital of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writing Volume 3 1935-1938* p.32-49

**Wednesday November 1**

**Monday November 6**

**Wednesday November 8**
- Film: *Unfinished Spaces* (86 min)
ECOLOGICAL DESIGN

Monday November 13

Wednesday November 15

Monday November 20
- Michelle Murphy. “Man in a Box: Building-Machines and the Science of Comfort” (Ch. 1) and “Building Ecologies, Tobacco, and the Politics of Multiplicity” (Ch. 6) in Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty. 2006. Duke University Press

Wednesday November 22
- Film: Whare Uku: Sustainable fibre housing
- Film: Garbage Warrior

CONTROVERSY AS METHOD

Monday November 27
- Natalie Jeremijenko. The Art of the Eco-Mindshift. TED.com

Wednesday November 29
- Mapping Controversies Drawing Exercise in class

**HUMANITARIAN DESIGN**

**Monday December 4**

**Wednesday December 6**
- **Film: Citizen Architect**

**Monday December 11**
- Final Presentations

**Wednesday December 13**
- Final Presentations