MCC-UE 1030-001
Architecture as Media
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
New York University

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone. “But which is the stone that supports the bridge?” Kublai Khan asks. “The bridge is not supported by one stone or another,” Marco answers, “but by the line of the arch that they form.” Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: “Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me.” Polo answers: “Without stones there is no arch.”

– Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

Course Description
This class reads architecture and the built environment through the lenses of media, communication, and culture. The course takes seriously the proposition that spaces communicate meaningfully and that learning to read spatial productions leads to better understanding how material and technological designs are in sustained conversation with the social over time. Through analyses of a range of spaces – from Gothic Cathedrals to suburban shopping malls to homes, factories, skyscrapers and digital cities – students will acquire a vocabulary for relating representations and practices, symbols and structures, and for identifying the ideological and aesthetic positions that produce settings for everyday life.

Course Texts
* All required course readings are available through Blackboard.
* If you are interested in extending your knowledge of architectural history I’d recommend purchase of Siegfried Giedon’s Space, Time, and Architecture.

Expectations and Assessment
(1) Readings are to be completed before class. Class meetings center on in-depth discussion of concepts from the texts. Weekly meetings are our opportunity to work through texts as a community and the prerequisite for high-quality discussion is that
everyone reads material ahead of time. Come to class prepared for discussion.

(2) Engaged participation. I will be looking for knowledge-building contributions that show not only that you are trying to understand the readings but also that help contribute to your peers’ understandings. A pre-requisite for active and intelligent participation in discussions is prompt and regular attendance to all classes. Notify me in advance if you are going to miss a class.

(3) Essay writing. Writing in this course is designed as an exercise to help craft synthetic argumentation skills through specific cases. With this in mind there will be two options to complete work for the class, each which fulfills the negotiation of this tension. Option one is to complete a series of four, three-page papers (dates specified below). These papers will engage with a prompt given by me and designed to get to a place of thinking across the specificities of the texts through unifying concepts. The second option is to write a single twelve-page paper to be handed in at the end of the semester. This paper will represent original work and will read an architecture as media. Details to follow.

(4) Grading policy

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
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<td>Four papers</td>
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<td>Paper 1</td>
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<td>Paper 2</td>
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<td>Paper 3</td>
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<td>One research paper</td>
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(5) As members of the NYU community you are expected to uphold the standards of Academic Integrity [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity). Failure to do so will result in an automatic failure on the assignment and harsher actions, if warranted.

(6) Students with special needs should be in contact with me at the beginning of the semester so that we can insur accomodations. Moreover where appropriate students should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, 240 Greene Street, [http://www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

**Class Schedule**

Week 1 – Introduction and First Example
- Monday, January 23: Class Overview

Week 2 – Architecture as Communication and Seeing Like A State

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Week 3 -- Maps of the Terrain, or Empire and Imagination

Week 4 – Immanence and Transcendence

Week 5 – Sacred Spaces I
Monday, February 20: UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY
Wednesday, February 22: **Field Assignment 1: Sacred Spaces**
  - Field Assignment A: The Cathedral
  - Field Assignment B: The Protestant Church

Week 6 – Sacred Spaces II.

Week 7 – Machine Age Material Imaginaries

**MARCH 12 - 18 SPRING BREAK NO CLASS**

Week 8 – Urban and Pedestrian
Monday, March 19: Benjamin, W. *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century* and Barthes, R., *Upon Leaving the Theater*. **PAPER 2 DUE**
Wednesday, March 21: **Field Assignment 2: Windows**
Week 9 – A View of One's Own: Windows in the Home
Monday, March 26: Colomina, B. *Window.*

**Week 10 – The Aesthetics of Mobility and Privatization**

**Week 11 – Computing, or Information Architecture**

**Week 12 -- Interactive Occupations**
Wednesday, April 18: Kandel on #OCCUPYWALLSTREET, notes from the field.  
**PAPER 3 DUE**

**Week 13 -- Virtual Environments**
Monday, April 23: **Field Assignment 3: Place, Performed**

**Week 14 -- Future Directions in Materiality**

**PAPER 4/ FINAL PAPER DUE 5/7**