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 Information
Professor: Erica Robles
Class Meetings: Wednesdays 7.15 - 9.25
Location: Silver 504

Contact Information
Email: erica.robles@nyu.edu
Office: 239 Greene St., 7th Floor, Rm. 725
Office Hours: Thursdays 2.00 - 3.00 and by appointment

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 materials
Most course materials are available on Blackboard in pdf format. There are, however, a few full-length books we’ll be reading and these can be purchased from any fine Internet purveyors of books. These works include:

Edwards, Paul. The closed world: Computers and the politics of discourse in Cold War America
Friedberg, Anne. Window shopping: Cinema and the postmodern.
Giedon, Siegfried. Space, time, and architecture.
Martin, Reinhold. The organizational complex.
Venturi, R., Brown, D.S., Izenour, S. Learning from Las Vegas: The forgotten symbolism of architectural form.


**Expectations and Assessments**

Full engagement in conversation. Be prepared for and fully present in classroom discussions. This is valuable time for us to work together as an intellectual community. Knowledge-building contributions make a fundamental difference to the possibilities for learning in the course. A discussion board will be available online, via Blackboard, as an alternative mode of engagement.

One paper. This paper is an opportunity to render new thoughts as original work. We should be in conversation in advance about the argument, and, if pertinent, the case. I’ll expect a maximum of 20 pages. Due May 11. (50%)¹

Students with special needs should be in contact with me at the beginning of the semester so that we can insure accommodations. 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).

**The Schedule**

Week 1: Wednesday, January 26 -- Introductions

Week 2: Wednesday, February 2 -- Structures as Communications


Week 3: Wednesday, February 9 -- **Class cancelled.**

*You are encouraged to come to the BRIC Rotunda gallery for a panel discussion on the neo-nomads exhibit and to read ahead.*

Week 4: Wednesday, February 16 -- Seeing Like a State


Week 5: Wednesday, February 23 Surveillance and Containment


¹ As members of the Steinhardt 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).
Week 6: Wednesday, March 2 – Monuments and Media Events: Organizing Remembrance and Forgetting

- Dayan and Katz. Contests, conquests, and coronations.

Week 7: March 9 Architectures for Worship : Cosmology and the Sublime


MARCH 14 - 19 SPRING BREAK NO CLASS -- READ AND WRITE

Week 8: Wednesday, March 23 -- Material Imaginaries in the Machine Age


Week 9: Wednesday, March 30 – Architectures of Calculation


Week 10: Wednesday, March 30 – Scripted Spaces

- Friedberg, A. *Window shopping: Cinema and the postmodern.*

*NB: Guest speaker, so April dates may shift*

Week 11: Wednesday, April 6 – A View of One's Own: Mediating Domesticity

Week 12: April 13 -- Cybernetics: Architecture as Conversation

Week 13: April 20 -- Guest Speaker: Molly Wright-Steenson on Cedric Price and the Fun Palace:
Cybernetic theory and the architecture of performance.
   Readings TBD
   • Medina, E. *Designing Freedom, Regulating a Nation: Socialist Cybernetics in Allende's Chile*

Week 14: Wednesday, May 4 – Postmodern aesthetics and space-less place

Wednesday May 11 – Last day of class. Paper Due.
   • Mitchell, W. The Revenge of Place. *This Is Not Architecture*, 45-53