

CITY 254 (Fall 2026)
HISTORY OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE
Old Library 224
Tuesday & Thursday, 10:10-11:30am

Instructor: M.C. Overholt (she/her)

Email: moverholt@brynmawr.edu

Student drop-in hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1–2pm (Old Library 220) or by appointment (Zoom)



Azurest South, Petersburg, Virginia, 1939. Designed by Amaza Lee Meredith, an African American lesbian architect. Credit: Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This survey introduces students to a broad range of architectural practices from the twentieth century, tracing the emergence of the avant-garde in the 1910s and 1920s through the diverse architectural movements, political projects, and social transformations that culminated in postmodernism. Rather than treating modern architecture as a linear history of formal innovation, we will situate architectural production within the major geopolitical and social transformations of the period, including the World Wars and Cold War, decolonization and the formation of new nation-states, and global countercultures and social movements. Along the way, we will consider the architectural implications of Black radicalism, feminism, queer liberation, disability justice, environmentalism, and renewed interest in vernacular and popular cultures. Following a global approach, the course asks how these histories might complicate conventional narratives of modernism

and its aftermath. This course follows the content of CITY 253, which focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century global architecture, but CITY 253 is not a prerequisite.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the development of architecture in relation to global social, cultural, political, and economic phenomena, including the rise of capitalism, colonialism, and fascism, on one hand, and liberative counter-movements, on the other.
- To acquaint students with a global set of architectural case studies. While these case studies do not represent the complete history of modern architecture, they serve as a gateway into more research and inquiry on countless other buildings and cities.
- To build visual analytical skills—i.e. the ability to “read” an image—by placing architectural drawings, photographs, models, etc. within their broader social, cultural, political, and economic context.
- To develop critical writing and presentation skills that empower students to not only recount facts about a building but also offer *their own analysis* (that, in turn, acknowledges their own particular worldview).
- To consider the ways that architectural history is alive in the present. How do the buildings you inhabit shape your life? The life of your community? Or of other communities?

STUDENT DROP-IN HOURS:

Student drop-in hours are times for you to ask clarification or follow-up questions, dig deeper into something that excited you during class, talk through nascent ideas for how to tackle assignments, discuss areas where you might be struggling, learn more about my work, and more. There is no educationally-related interest, question, or concern too big or too small for student drop-in hours!

To keep things simple, I ask that you sign up for my drop-in hours using the printed sheet on my office door. You can sign up in advance or simply drop by during drop-in hours to see if a slot is available. If you are unable to make my drop-in hours and would like to meet, please email me and we will find another time.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES:

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. Students can email accessservices@brynmawr.edu to make an appointment with the Access Services office to begin this confidential process. Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with me, the instructor, as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations for disabilities are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

Any student who has a disability-related need to tape record this class must first speak with the Access Services office and to me, the instructor. Because of laws within the State of Pennsylvania, class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

Class Participation & Attendance 10%

Attendance at lectures is required. Students may miss two classes without penalty; additional absences may affect the participation portion of the final grade. Participation also includes active listening and engagement in in-class discussion and activities.

Group Class Presentation 10%

Students will be divided into small groups, with each group assigned a designated case study from the syllabus. Each group will present one case study (listed on the syllabus as "student case study") and connect it to the corresponding course reading. Presentations will last around 10-15 minutes and will be submitted to the professor for review a week before the presentation (preferably using Google Slides or Powerpoint). Students are encouraged to get creative—relaying information about the case study, but also experimenting with your own analysis (annotated images, drawings, and other media welcome!). You may also include related case studies (buildings, artworks, etc) if they help to advance your analysis. Group presentations yield group grades: all members of a group will receive the same grade. I expect groups to work collaboratively and divide the work evenly among members.

Midterm Exam 20%

This exam focuses on weeks 1 through 5. The exam will ask students to answer two short answer questions (2–3 paragraphs). Knowledge of the key projects, required readings, and broader course themes will be tested. Students will be provided with a group of possible exam questions and a finalized list of key building projects a week in advance, so they will have time to prepare. Exams will be administered on Moodle. Students can select any 1.5 hour period in the day during which they would like to take the timed exam.

Final Exam 30%

This exam focuses on weeks 7 through 14. The exam will ask students to answer one short answer question (2–3 paragraphs) and one long answer question (5–6 paragraphs). Knowledge of the key projects, required readings, and broader course themes will be tested. Students will be provided with a group of possible exam questions a week in advance, so they will have time to prepare.

Writing Assignment 30%

"History in the Present"

Inspired by the concept of "archival ferment" and recent approaches to architectural history such as [PLATFORM](#), students will write a short think piece (5–7 pages, double-spaced) highlighting a building or case study from architectural history and exploring how it might illuminate, complicate, or speak to a contemporary issue.

All writing assignments will be described in assignment sheets (see "Assignments" section of Moodle)

PART I. Journal Entry	5%
PART II. Bibliography	5%
PART III. Short Essay	20%

FINAL GRADES

A	4.0	94-100%
A-	3.7	90-93%
B+	3.3	87-89%
B	3.0	83-86%
B-	2.7	80-82%
C+	2.3	77-79%
C	2.0	73-76%
C-	1.7	70-72%
D+	1.3	67-69%
D	1.0	60-66%
F	0.0	<60%

HONOR CODE / ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I regard plagiarism as a very serious matter. In this class, plagiarism consists of work taken partially or entirely from an uncited source (online content, a peer, a published article, etc.) and assumed as your own. If I have reasons to suspect plagiarizing, I will ask that you report yourself to the Bryn Mawr Honor Board. See the [Bryn Mawr Honor Code and Honor Board Hearing Process](#) in the Student Handbook for more information.

STATEMENT ON AI

The use of ChatGPT and other AI technologies are strictly prohibited in this class, following the Bryn Mawr College Honor Code (IV. Policies, 2. Other Academic work, subsection "f"). This includes your incremental writing assignments or your group presentations. A key goal of this course is to help you sharpen your critical, visual, and historical analytical skills. AI chatbots like ChatGPT circumvent this process, preventing you from gaining confidence as a learner and researcher. Data centers that power AI are also environmentally hazardous. According to research completed at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (published 2024), a single Google data center consumed an average of 550,000 gallons of water per day. As we study histories of extraction and environmental degradation wrought by modernization and the building sector in this course, it is critical that we understand our own role in these ongoing processes.

WEEK 1

What's "Modern" about Modern Architecture?: Canonical Narratives, Minority Histories, and Subaltern Pasts

September 1 & 3

Canonical histories of modern architecture have often been written as teleological narratives of technical progress and innovation that yield increasingly "civilized" cultures. This problematic metanarrative also has a geography, positioning Europe—and increasingly the United States in the twentieth century—as the temporally and culturally advanced source of supposedly "modern" technologies, forms, materials, and pedagogies that then, through colonial and cultural intermediaries, spread across the globe. **The history of architecture in the twentieth century, as we will explore it together, exposes this framing as a myth.** Following Dipesh Chakrabarty's distinction between "minority histories" and "subaltern pasts," in our introductory sessions we will consider global architectural history not simply as a project of expanding the canon, but as an opportunity to rethink how architectural history might be narrated otherwise. What might emerge when we begin from multiple, overlapping, and contested modernities rather than a single path toward the future? Finally, we will think with the concept of "archival ferment" and consider how architectural history might illuminate, complicate, or intervene in the concerns of the present.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, September 1

- *No reading due in advance of the first class*

Thursday, September 3

- Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000) chapter 4. "Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts," 97–113.
- Esra Akcan, "Postcolonial Theories of Architecture," in *A Critical History of Contemporary Architecture*, edited by Elie G. Haddad and David Rifkind (Routledge, 2016).

WEEK 2

Avant-Gardes, Manifestoes, Modern Cultures

September 8 & 10

The 1910s and '20s witnessed profound transformations in architectural and artistic culture across Latin America. This week, we will begin with contemporaneous movements such as Estridentismo in Mexico and Anthropophagia in Brazil, examining how artists and architects developed new ways of thinking about modernity, national identity, popular culture, and political revolution. We will then turn to the ideas of the Escuela del Sur and Taller Torres García in Uruguay, which likewise challenged inherited cultural hierarchies and proposed new frameworks for modern art and architecture rooted in the Americas. Finally, we will place these developments in dialogue with European avant-garde movements, including Italian Futurism and the work of figures like Adolf Loos, Antonio Sant'Elia, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Rather than treating these European movements as the origin of an international avant-garde, we will consider multiple, contemporaneous formations of architectural and artistic radicalism—and the distinct political and cultural contexts from which they emerged.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, September 8

- "José Vasconcelos inaugurates in Mexico City the headquarters of the Secretaría de Educación Pública," in *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia*, Luis Carranza and Fernando Lara, eds. (University of Texas Press, 2014).
- "Flávio de Carvalho, 'City of the Naked Man,'" (1930) in *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia*, Luis Carranza and Fernando Lara, eds. (University of Texas Press, 2014).

Thursday, September 10

- Antonio Sant'Elia & Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Futurist Architecture" (1914), in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971), 34-37.
- Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime" (1908), in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971), 19-24.
- [OPTIONAL] Jimena Canales and Andrew Herscher, "Criminal Skins: Tattoos and Modern Architecture in the Work of Adolf Loos," *Architectural History*, vol. 48 (2005): 235-256.

Key Projects:

- Antonio Sant'Elia, Città Nuova (unbuilt), 1914
- Adolf Loos, Goldman & Salatsch Building ("Looshaus"), Vienna, 1909-1911
- Adolf Loos, Villa Müller, Prague, 1928-1930
- Federico Méndez Rivas (with murals by Diego Rivera), Ministry of Education, Mexico City, 1921 (formerly: Luis Benítez, Convento de Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación [Convent of Our Lady of the Incarnation], 1639)
- Flávio de Carvalho, Eficácia (Efficiency) proposal for a new government palace, São Paulo, 1927 (unbuilt).
Flávio de Carvalho's "City of the Naked Man," 1930
- Joaquín Torres-García, Cosmic Monument, Montevideo (Uruguay), 1938.

WEEK 3

Revolutionary Consciousness, Revolutionary Education

September 15 & 17

In the 1910s and '20s, the Soviet avant-garde movement responded to the Russian Revolution, proposing new artistic and architectural schemes that would mirror the nation's Marxist values. In this session, we will explore a number of these proposals—from housing to workers clubs—as well as investigate the design pedagogy of the radical school Vkhutemas. We will ask: how did early Soviet proposals challenge pre-existing notions about the organization of social reproductive labor, gender roles, and even leisure? Next we will examine another early modern school of architecture, Germany's famous Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius (later run by Hannes Meyer and Mies van der Rohe). We will consider the evolution of Bauhaus pedagogy, from its earlier emphasis on craft to its later investment in functionalism and rationalism. Finally, we will consider the Bauhaus' international influence, highlighting its adoption and refashioning in the Chinese context, before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, September 15

- El Lissitzky, excerpts from *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution* (1930). (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press: 1970).
- [OPTIONAL] Natalia Adaskina, "Constructivist Fabrics and Dress Design," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, vol. 5 (Summer, 1987): 144-159.

Thursday, September 17

- Walter Gropius, "Programme of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar" (1919), in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads, 49-53.
- Walter Gropius, "Principles of Bauhaus Production" (1926), in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads, 95-97.
- [OPTIONAL] Zhang Chunyan, "The Spread of the Bauhaus in China," *Bauhaus Imaginista* (digital). Access here: <https://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org/articles/735/the-spread-of-the-bauhaus-in-china?0>

Key Projects:

- Vladimir Tatlin, Monument to the Third International (unbuilt), 1919–20
- El Lissitzky, *Wolkenbügel* (Horizontal Skyscraper, unbuilt), 1924
- Moisei Ginzburg, Narkomfin Housing Project, Moscow, 1928-1930
- Walter Gropius, Adolf Meyer, and Bauhaus students, Sommerfeld House, Berlin, 1920–1921.
- Walter Gropius & Adolf Meyer, the Bauhaus, Dessau, 1925-1926
- Gunta Stölzl and Anni Albers, textiles produced at the Bauhaus, 1920s
- Huang Yulin, Wen Yuan Building at Tongji University, China, 1953

Student Case Study (Tuesday, September 15):

Varvara Stepanova and Lyubov Popova, textile designs, *prozodezhda* ("production clothing") and set design, 1920s (Reference: Natalia Adaskina, "Constructivist Fabrics and Dress Design.")

WEEK 4

Designing in Concrete: Experiments in Domesticity

September 22 & 24

In the 1920s and '30s, the single-family home became a major site of spatial experimentation and innovation through which architects developed, and responded to, new ideas about modern domestic life. In this week, we will examine a group of modern houses hailing from France, the Netherlands, Japan, Mexico, and the United States, among other locales. We will consider how reinforced concrete, first used at the scale of the single-family home in Europe, became a new standard in domestic construction all over the world. Architects in non-European contexts, while using reinforced concrete and often responding to Le Corbusier's "Five Points," refashioned the emerging "international style" to meet regional, climatic, and specific cultural needs. In the hands of women like Amaza Lee Meredith and Eileen Gray—both of whom offer important histories of queer domesticity—modernism also signified other, non-normative forms of domesticity and kinship.

Assignment Due: "History in the Present" Writing Assignment, Journal Entry, due Friday September 25 at 5pm EST (Moodle)

Required Reading:

Tuesday, September 22

- Le Corbusier, "Five Points towards a New Architecture" (1926), *Programs and Manifestos on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads, 99-101.

Thursday, September 24

- Katarina Bonnevier, "A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027," in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar (London & New York: Routledge, 2005)
- Jacqueline Taylor, "[Amaza Lee Meredith](https://pioneeringwomen.bwaf.org/amaza-lee-meredith/)," *Pioneering Women of American Architecture*. <https://pioneeringwomen.bwaf.org/amaza-lee-meredith/>.

Key Projects:

- Le Corbusier: Maison Dom-ino, 1914 (unbuilt); L'Esprit Nouveau Pavillon, Paris, 1925; Villa Savoye, Poissy-sur-Seine, France, 1928-1933; The Contemporary City, unbuilt, 1922
- Gerrit Rietveld and Truus Schröder, Schröder House, Utrecht, 1924
- Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, E 1027, Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, 1926-1929
- Sutemi Horiguchi, Soshokyo House (Double-Bell House), Tokyo, 1927
- Juan O'Gorman, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo house-studio, Mexico City, 1929-1931

Student Case Study (Thursday, September 24):

Amaza Lee Meredith, Azurest South, Petersburg, VA, 1939 (Reference: Jacqueline Taylor's text and [Dear Mazie](#), curated by Amber Esseiva)

WEEK 5

Housing in Translation: Social Housing, Segregation, and the Modern Welfare State

September 29 & October 1

Modern architecture transformed not only the single-family home but also large-scale approaches to social housing. This week we will examine the emergence of social housing as a central arena for architectural experimentation. We will consider how architects, planners, and governments used standardized dwellings, new construction technologies, collective amenities, green space, and urban planning to imagine new forms of domestic and social life. Moving between Germany, Japan, Turkey, and the United States during the New Deal era, we will ask how modern housing projects responded to—and helped produce—particular ideas about citizenship, community, and the modern city. At the same time, we will attend to the exclusions embedded within these projects, considering how race, class, gender, and nationality shaped who could inhabit the modern housing landscape and on what terms.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, September 29

- Karel Teige, *The Minimum Dwelling* (Nejmenší byt), 1932. Chapter 2: "The Housing Crisis," 32–41.
- Esra Akcan, "New Housing: Ideal Life" in *Architecture in Translation: Germany, Turkey, and the Modern House* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 76–92.
- [OPTIONAL] Joseph Heathcott, "[The House that Anti-Fascism Built: The Hofs of Red Vienna](#)," *Platform*, September 27, 2021.

Thursday, October 1

- Charles L. Davis II, "When Public Housing Was White: William Lescaze and the Americanization of the International Style," in *Building Character: The Racial Politics of Modern Architectural Style* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 203–236.

Key Projects:

- Bruno Taut, Siedlung Britz (Horseshoe Settlement), Berlin, 1925–1927
- Dōjunkai collective housing, Tokyo, Japan, 1926–34
- Hermann Jansen, Bahcelievler Housing Cooperative, Ankara, Turkey, 1936
- Frank Lloyd Wright, Broadacre City (unbuilt proposal for the U.S.), 1935
- Hilyard Robinson, Langston Terrace Dwellings, Washington, D.C., 1935–8
- William Lescaze, Williamsburg Houses, Brooklyn, New York, 1936–8

Student Case Study (Tuesday, September 29):

Karl Ehn, Karl-Marx-Hof, Vienna, 1927–1930 (Reference: Joseph Heathcott, "[The House that Anti-Fascism Built: The Hofs of Red Vienna](#)," *Platform*, September 27, 2021).

WEEK 6

Architects at War

October 6 & 8

World War II transformed the conditions under which architects practiced, as architecture became increasingly entangled with militarization, propaganda, industrial production, and the destruction and reconstruction of cities. Drawing on Jean-Louis Cohen's account of architects "going to war," we will consider how architectural expertise was mobilized by competing political regimes and military systems, from monumental projects that embodied state power to new forms of prefabricated and deployable construction. We will also examine the destruction of cities during the war and the architectural visions that emerged in response to it, asking how architects imagined the city before, during, and after catastrophe.

Assignment due: MIDTERM EXAM, due Thursday, October 8 by 11:59PM (on Moodle)

Required Reading:

- Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architects in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War* (Canadian Centre for Architecture & Yale University Press, 2011). Chapter 2. "Architects and Cities Go Off to War," pp. 20–53.
- [Optional] Hyunjung Cho, "Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and the Making of Japanese Postwar Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 66, no. 1 (2012), 72–83.

Key Projects:

- Boris Iofan, Vladimir Shchuko, and Vladimir Helfreich, Palace of the Soviets (unbuilt), 1934–1937
- Giuseppe Terragni, Casa del Fascio, Como, 1932–1936
- R. Buckminster Fuller, Dymaxion Deployment Units (DDUs), 1940–5
- Kenzo Tange, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum, Hiroshima, Japan, 1949–1955

FALL BREAK - NO CLASS

October 10–18

No readings or work assigned this week. Take a breather!

WEEK 7

Decolonization and Development: Building "Tropical Architecture"

October 20 & 22

Following World War II, the global architectural landscape was transformed by both the intensification of Cold War geopolitics and the decolonization of Africa and Asia. This week examines how architecture participated in these shifting political and geographic relations. We will trace the emergence of "tropical architecture" as a field of European architectural discourse and practice, considering how modernist ideas about climate, technology, and thermal comfort were adapted to colonial contexts. We will also examine how anxieties about race, environment, and Western notions of modernity shaped these experiments. Building from the ongoing MoMA exhibition *Architects of Liberation: Modernism in West Africa*, we will then turn to architects designing for newly independent nations and consider how they appropriated, transformed, and contested inherited architectural models and positioned those nations on a global stage.

Assignment Due: "History in the Present" Writing Assignment, Bibliography, due Friday October 23 at 5pm EST (Moodle)

Required Reading:

Tuesday, October 20

- Hannah le Roux, "The networks of tropical architecture," *The Journal of Architecture* 8, no. 3 (2003): 337–354.
- [OPTIONAL] Jiat-Hwee Chang, "Thermal comfort and climatic design in the tropics: an historical critique," *The Journal of Architecture* 21, no. 8 (2016): 1171–1202.

Thursday, October 22

- Selections from *Architects of Liberation: Modernism in West Africa*, edited by Martino Stierli, Ikem Stanley Okoye, and Mallory Cohen (Museum of Modern Art, 2026).

Key Projects:

- Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, Mfantsipim School, Ghana, c. 1947
- Kenneth Scott, The Scott House, Accra, Ghana, 1961
- Rinaldo Olivieri, La Pyramide, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 1968–73.
- Demas Nwoko, New Culture Studio and Residence (1967) and Dominican Institute and Chapel (1970–1975), Ibadan, Nigeria
- Cheikh Ngom, Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO), Dakar, Sénégal, 1975–9
- Jean Léon, Lycée Mamie Adjoua (primary school), Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, c. 1978

Student Case Study (Thursday, October 22):

Max Bond (with Ghana National Construction Corporation), Bolgatanga Library, Ghana, 1967

WEEK 8

Craft, Regionalism, and the Making of Postcolonial Representation

October 27 & 29

Building on our discussion of decolonization, postcolonial nationbuilding, and architectural representation in West Africa, this week we will turn to Southeast Asia and the Middle East to consider how architects constructed new architectural identities through the reclamation of local craft and formal experimentation. We will begin in Sri Lanka with Minnette de Silva and Geoffrey Bawa, considering how their respective work brought local and historical approaches into dialogue with contemporary architectural ideas cultivated through political advocacy and international exchange. We will then turn to Egypt and Iraq, examining both Hassan Fathy's New Gournia project, and its mudbrick construction techniques, as well as Rifat Chadirji's search for a contemporary language for Iraqi architecture. Across these cases, we will ask how "tradition" itself was constructed, reclaimed, and transformed as an instrument of postcolonial nation-building.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, October 27

- Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, *Minnette de Silva: Intersections* (MACK, 2024).
 - The whole book is only 96 pages, and most are just images. Please skim the whole book and pay closer attention to the key projects! It is available for purchase at the bookstore, on course reserve, or as an [ebook](#) online.
- [OPTIONAL] Shirley Shurya, "Place, Flows and Transformations: Bawa in Bali," and Jyoti Dhar, "The Lore of Lununganga" in *Geoffrey Bawa: Drawing from the Archives*, edited by Shayari de Silva (Lars Müller, 2023).

Thursday, October 29 **[Asynchronous class, lecture will be recorded]**

- Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), selections from Chapter 2, "Man, Society, and Technology," pp. 37–45.
- Nasser Rabbat, "Rifat al-Chadirji (1926–2020): Designing a transhistorical Iraq," *Journal of Contemporary Iraq & the Arab World* 15 (Mar 2021): 255–62.

Key Projects:

- Minnette de Silva, Pieris House, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1952–56
- Le Corbusier et al., Chandigarh, India, 1951–66
- Laurie Baker, Indian Coffee House, Thiruvananthapuram (in Kerala), India, 1958
- Geoffrey Bawa, Ena de Silva House, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1960–62
- Hassan Fathy, New Gournia Village, Egypt, 1946–52
- Rifat Chadirji, Federation of Industries, Baghdad, 1966

Student Case Study (Tuesday, October 27):

Geoffrey Bawa, Batujimbar Pavilions, Sanur (Bali), Indonesia, 1972–5 [Reference: Shirley Shurya, "Place, Flows and Transformations: Bawa in Bali," edited by Shayari de Silva (Lars Müller, 2023).

WEEK 9

Designing for the Masses: Population Anxieties, Cold War Tensions, and Suburbs

November 3 & 5

The postwar decades brought with them anxieties about population growth, urbanization, and the future of domestic life. Across the globe, architects and planners imagined new models for spatially organizing everyday life in response to rapidly changing cities and societies. In Japan, the Metabolists envisioned architecture as an adaptable framework for an expanding metropolis. In India, housing programs sought to address the needs of growing urban populations. At the same time, these visions of the future were shaped by Cold War geopolitics and competing ideas about modernity. In the United States, the suburban house became a powerful instrument for producing racialized forms of domestic life, while elsewhere—including Iran—Western models of domestic architecture were translated and contested. How did architecture respond to—and help produce—the anxieties of a rapidly changing world?

Required Reading:

Tuesday, November 3

- Shivani Shedde, "Small Family-Housed Nation," in *Sick Architecture*, eds. Beatriz Colomina with Nick Axel, Guillermo S. Arsuaga, and E-Flux Architecture (MIT Press, 2025), 26–37.
- Arata Isozaki, "Invisible City" (1966) in *Architecture Culture 1943–1968: A Documentary Anthology*, edited by Joan Ockman (Rizzoli, 1993), 402–7.

Thursday, November 5

- Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America*, Ch. 1 "The Ordinary Postwar House."
- [OPTIONAL] Pamela Karimi, "Dwelling, Dispute, and the Space of Modern Iran," in *Governing by Design: Architecture, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Aggregate Architectural History Collective (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

Key Projects:

- William J. Levitt, Levittown, PA, 1951–1958
- Kiyonori Kikutake, Marine City, Tokyo, Japan, 1958–60
- Victor Gruen, Southdale Center, Edina, Minnesota (1956)
- Victor Gruen and Abdol-Aziz Farmanfarmaian Associates, Tehran Master Plan, Iran (1965)
- Model housing proposals from *A Collection of Designs for Houses for Low Income Groups* (New Delhi: Government of India, National Buildings Organisation and UN Regional Housing Centre), 1966

Student Case Study (Tuesday, November 3):

Kisho Kurokawa, Nakagin Capsule Tower, Tokyo, Japan, 1970–72

WEEK 10

Beyond the Iron Curtain: National Styles, Global Exchanges, and Brutalist Modernity

November 10 & 12

Looking beyond the Cold War dichotomy of “East” and “West,” this week examines how socialist and postcolonial states across Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America imagined new forms of collective life, development, and international solidarity through architecture. We will begin in Eastern Europe, considering Yugoslavia’s distinctive socialist project and its architectural exchanges beyond the Soviet bloc. We will then turn to the People’s Republic of China, examining Mao-era architectural culture and China’s growing network of construction aid across Asia and Africa. The Non-Aligned Movement provides another framework for understanding these exchanges among newly independent states and socialist countries. Finally, we will turn to Brazil, where architects associated with the Paulista School and Lina Bo Bardi drew on Marxist ideas to rethink the relationships among architecture, labor, and collective life. Across these cases, we will trace how architectural knowledge traveled through socialist and anti-colonial networks.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, November 10

- Łukasz Stanek, “Gift, Credit, Barter: Architectural Mobilities in Global Socialism,” *e-flux Architecture* (2020).
- Ke Song, “Political Ideology and the Production of Architectural Theories in Mao’s China (1949–1976),” *Architectural Histories* 6, no. 1 (2018): 1–15.

Thursday, November 12

- Richard J. Williams, *Brazil: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), Chapter 4, “The Aesthetics of Poverty,” pp. 111–137.

Key Projects:

- Vjenceslav Richter, Yugoslav Pavilion, Brussels Expo, 1958
- Paulo Mendes da Rocha, Masetti House, São Paulo, 1960–70
- Third Design Institute of the Ministry of Railway, TAZARA Terminus, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1976
- Mihajlo Mitrović, Western City Gate, Belgrade, 1977–79
- Lina Bo Bardi, SESC Pompéia, São Paulo, Brazil, 1977–86
- Liang Sicheng, Lin Huiyin, and Chen Zhide, Monument to the People’s Heroes, Beijing, China, 1949–58

Student Case Study (Thursday, November 12):

Lina Bo Bardi with Marcelo Ferraz and Marcelo Suzuki, Casa do Benin, Salvador (Bahia), Brazil, 1987–88

WEEK 11. The “Death of Modernism”: Environmental Design, Participatory Planning, and Community Autonomy

November 17 & 19

In 1977, architect and postmodernist Charles Jencks famously declared that modernism died on July 15, 1972, with the demolition of St. Louis’s Pruitt-Igoe housing complex. To Jencks and many of his contemporaries, the failure of the social housing project could be attributed to modernism’s overemphasis on rationalism, abstraction, and mass production—all increasingly out of step with the humanist, “user”-focused ethos of 1960s environmental design. This week and next, we will complicate that narrative, drawing on authors such as Katharine Bristol and the documentary *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* to consider the roles that racial discrimination, disinvestment, and state-mandated abandonment played in Pruitt-Igoe’s demise. Centering the experiences of Pruitt-Igoe’s Black residents alongside the work of architects and planners seeking new relationships with the communities they served (or were members of), we will examine the emergence of participatory and advocacy practices that challenged not only what architecture should look like, but who should have the authority to shape the built environment.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, November 17

- Katharine Bristol, “The Pruitt-Igoe Myth,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 3 (1991): 163–171.
- [OPTIONAL] Candace Borders, “Toward a Method of Black Feminist Refusal in the St. Louis Rent Strike of 1969,” in *In the Daylight of Our Existence: Architecture and the Promise of Queer Theory*, ed. S.E. Eisterer (Zurich, gta Verlag, 2025).

Thursday, November 19

- Harry Quintana and Charles Jones, “Black Commune in Focus,” *Perspecta* 12 (1969): 39–42.
 - This primary source by Black architect and planner Harry Quintana contains racist language, including an anti-Black racial slur, in his discussion of racism within the architectural profession and academy. We will read the text in its historical context and consider how Quintana uses his experience of racialization to challenge conventional assumptions about architecture, planning, and the built environment.
- Rebecca Choi, “Soul and T-Square: An Architectural Articulation of Reparations for Watts,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 77, no. 1 (2023), 28–33.

Key Projects:

- Louis Kahn, Mill Creek Redevelopment Area Plan and Mill Creek Homes, Philadelphia, 1948–55
- Hellmuth, Yamasaki & Leinweber, Pruitt-Igoe Public Housing, St. Louis, Missouri, 1950–1955
- Lawrence and Anna Halprin, Experiments in Environment, San Francisco, Sea Ranch, Mount Tamalpais, 1966–71
- J. Max Bond Jr. and Architect’s Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH), East Harlem Triangle Plan, 1968
- Sulton-Campbell and Associates, Shaw Junior High School, Washington, D.C., c. 1969–77

WEEK 12: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*

November 24

In this class we will watch sections of *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (2011) a documentary film exploring the history of the modernist Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex in St. Louis Missouri. Interviewing residents of Pruitt-Igoe, the film provides a more complex analysis of the project's utopian beginnings and eventual failure, exposing issues of government neglect and racial and gender-based discrimination.

Assignment Due: "History in the Present" Writing Assignment (final article), due Wednesday, November 25 at 5pm EST (Moodle)

No reading this week.

WEEK 13

Architectural Countercultures: Environmentalism, Feminism, and Disability Activism

December 1 & 3

Architectural countercultures emerged in the 1960s and '70s as architects, activists, and communities challenged the assumptions, institutions, and forms of expertise that governed the built environment. This week examines three overlapping projects of architectural refusal and reinvention: environmentalist experiments that sought alternatives to industrialized building; disability activists who challenged ableist models of architectural design; and lesbian feminists who developed new pedagogies and institutions outside the discipline's patriarchal schools and firms. We will consider how countercultural designers experimented not only with alternative forms, materials, and technologies, but also with alternative sources of architectural knowledge—from vernacular and non-Western building traditions to embodied experience, collective practice, and personal desire. Through Drop City, the disability rights movement in Berkeley, and Phyllis Birkby's "fantasy environments," we will ask what it might mean to unlearn architecture—and who gets to imagine what comes next.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, December 1

- Bernard Rudofsky, "Preface" to *Architecture without Architects: An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (Museum of Modern Art and Doubleday & Company, 1964).
- Felicity D. Scott, *Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics After Modernism* (MIT Press, 2007). Chapter 6. "Revolutionaries or Dropouts," pp. 151–184.

Thursday, December 3

- Ignacio Galan, "Unlearning Ableism: Design, Knowledge, Contested Models, and the Experience of Disability in 1970s Berkeley," *Journal of Design History* 36, no. 1 (2022), 73–92.
- M.C. Overholt, "Noel Phyllis Birkby," *Pioneering Women of American Architecture*. Access at: <https://pioneeringwomen.bwaf.org/noel-phyllis-birkby>.

Key Projects:

- Peter Rabbit, Al Giddings, Richard Kallweit, et al., Drop City, Trinidad, Colorado, 1965–1973.
- Center for Independent Living, Berkeley, 1972–
- Ant Farm, House of the Century, Angleton, Texas, 1972
- Phyllis Birkby (and Leslie Kanes Weisman), "Fantasy Environment" project, 1973–76
- Women's School of Planning and Architecture, (multiple locations, U.S.) 1975–1981

WEEK 14

Postmodernities?: Historicism, Pastiche, Speculation, and Big Oil

December 8 & 10

Postmodernism emerged not as a single movement but through competing responses to the perceived exhaustion of modernism: from Venturi and Scott Brown's embrace of the everyday and popular culture, to historicist experiments with memory, symbolism, and language. At the same time, as Fredric Jameson argues, postmodernity was inseparable from the cultural logic of late capitalism, as architecture became increasingly entangled with real estate speculation. In Mexico, however, the turn toward history posed a different question: what did it mean to become "postmodern" within an architectural culture already deeply engaged with Indigenous, colonial, and national pasts? Moving from Philadelphia and Mexico City to Houston, Venice, Caracas, and Córdoba, we will consider these competing postmodernities—and ask whether architecture's rebellion against modernism ultimately found itself bowing to the corporation, the developer, and Big Oil.

Required Reading:

Tuesday, December 8

- Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas," *The Architectural Forum* 128, no. 2 (March 1968), 36–43.
- Luis Carranza and Fernando Lara, "Mexican Postmodernism," in *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia*, Luis Carranza and Fernando Lara, eds. (University of Texas Press, 2014), 281–6.

Thursday, December 10

- Fredric Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (excerpt on Westin Bonaventure Hotel), from *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1991), 38–45.
- Sara Stephens, "Speculative," *ARPA Journal*, no. 5 (May 2018): <https://arpajournal.net/speculative/>.

Key Projects:

- Robert Venturi and John Rauch, Guild House, Philadelphia, 1961–4
- Ricardo Legorreta, Hotel Camino Real, Mexico City, 1968
- Philip Johnson and John Burgee (Johnson & Burgee Architects), with Enrique Gómez, Carlos Eduardo Gómez, and Jorge Landi, Centro Banaven (Cubo Negro), Caracas, 1974–8
- Augustin Hernández, Heroico Colegio Militar, Mexico City, 1972–6
- Charles Moore, Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1978
- Aldo Rossi, *Teatro del Mondo*, Venice, 1979–80
- Miguel Ángel Roca, Plaza Italia and Glada de Armas, Córdoba, Argentina, 1980