

Dalhousie University - School of Architecture

ARCH 4113.03: Architectural Theory and Interpretation

Winter 2023 - Course Outline

Classes: Monday, 11:30 am–1:00 pm - Room HA19
Thursday, 2:30–3:50 or 4:10–5:30 pm - three seminar rooms (see p. 9)

Instructor: Steve Parcell parcell@dal.ca

Office hours: e-mail parcell@dal.ca to arrange a time

Assistants: Seminar groups A and D: Normann Baumann nbau@dal.ca
Seminar groups B and E: Courtney McCracken courtney.mccracken@dal.ca
Seminar groups C and F: Victoria Payne victoria.payne@dal.ca

Formats: lectures, seminars, reviews

Restriction: Year 4 BEDS students

Brightspace: dal.brightspace.com/d2l/home/248483

Academic Information

Calendar Description

This course studies primary sources in architectural theory, situated in their cultural context and compared to our local situation. It examines modern architectural terms, concepts, and roles, along with their historical equivalents. It also provides a basic theoretical framework and references for considering humanities-related topics in architectural design projects.

Additional Course Description

This course presumes that architecture is not a timeless, universal discipline. Throughout history and around the world, it has been open to different concepts and occasionally new paradigms. This has prompted different ways of thinking about things we often take for granted, including:

- architect, builder, client, and public
- substance, form, and space
- program and site
- tradition, education, authorship, and practice

This course examines these concepts. As a theory course, it is intended not for scholars but for practitioners. It is grounded in what architects think and do while working. It deepens our understanding of concepts that were introduced during previous courses, especially in Design.

The course has a dual focus that could be characterized as "think globally, act locally." On one hand, it studies theoretical writings from other places and times. On the other hand, it considers a building project here and now. Through interpretation, it juxtaposes these two situations, using techniques such as:

- projecting familiar keywords into unfamiliar situations
- interpreting written sources graphically as images and diagrams
- imagining remote writer-architects operating here and now

Learning Objectives

After completing the course, each student should:

- understand the meanings and references of modern architectural keywords
- be aware of some of their historical equivalents
- understand two major theoretical books in architecture or allied disciplines
- be aware of other major theoretical books

- develop abilities in analyzing intentions, content, and contexts of a theoretical book
- understand how to interpret written intentions in an architectural design project
- develop abilities in writing and rhetorical argument

Rationale for the Course

This course builds on previous BEDS courses, including three in history/theory. It complements other B5 courses involving the design of a comprehensive design project. It deepens students' knowledge of architectural intentions and anticipates specialized humanities courses in the MArch program, including those that extend interpretation into criticism. It also anticipates MArch thesis.

Course Components

Textbook

Forty, Adrian. 2012. *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*. London: Thames and Hudson; approx. \$40 from online bookstores.

Lectures and Quizzes

The lectures complement the textbook and the seminars. Some lectures align with the seminar topic for that week; some do not. Lecture slides will be posted on Brightspace after each class. There will be two short-answer quizzes: on Lectures 1–4 and Lectures 5–7, based mainly on items in the lecture slides.

Seminars

Seminars occur weekly throughout the term. Six groups of 10 students discuss weekly readings. Some are from the textbook; some are posted on Brightspace.

Projects

In Project 1: Book Analysis, groups of four students study one important book in architectural theory. The group describes its context, analyzes its structure and content, interprets its implications for design, and identifies the major keywords of the book.

In Project 2: Open Letter, each student reads another book in architectural theory and interprets its implications for an architectural project borrowed from B5 Design. This is a variation on a typical academic essay: writing, diagramming, and drawing, with a public audience in mind.

Projects from this course are to be included in the B5 process portfolio. Group work must credit all members of the group.

Expenses

The course requires one purchase: the textbook. The two books for Projects 1 and 2 are available as shared reference copies from the Sexton Library, via inter-library loan, and/or with electronic access from online sources, so additional purchases should not be necessary. All project submissions are digital, so there should be no printing expenses.

Week	Lectures	Seminars	Projects
1	intro, 1		1
2			
3	2		1
4	3	1	1
5		2	2a
6	4	3	2a
7			
8	5	4	2a
9	6	5	2a
10	7	6	2b
11		7	2b
12		8	2b
13			

Class Schedule

Wk	Monday (Room HA19)	Thursday (seminar locations, except **)
1	Jan. 9 Intro lecture	Jan. 12 2:30–4:00, Lecture 1: HA19 ** Batammaliba House
2	<i>(no classes - Professional Practice Week)</i>	
3	Jan. 23 11:30–1:00 Lecture 2: Substance and form	Jan. 26 2:30–4:00 <i>(no class; optional tutorial for Project 1)</i>
4	Jan. 30 11:30–1:00 Lecture 3: <i>Technē</i> and Mechanical Art	Feb. 2 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 1: Form
5	Feb. 6 11:30–1:00 Review of Project 1; intro to Project 2	Feb. 9 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 2: Function
6	Feb. 13 11:30–1:00 Lecture 4: <i>Disegno</i> and Fine Art; quiz on Lectures 1–4	Feb. 16 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 3: Order, structure
7	<i>(no classes - winter break)</i>	
8	Feb. 27 11:30–1:00 Lecture 5: Base Drawings and Rhetorical Writing	Mar. 2 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 4: User, flexibility
9	Mar. 6 11:30–1:00 Lecture 6: Presence and Representation	Mar. 9 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 5: Design, type
10	Mar. 13 11:30–1:00 Lecture 7: Architectural Education; quiz on Lectures 5–7	Mar. 16 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 6: Space
11	Mar. 20 11:30–1:00 <i>(no class; optional tutorial for Project 2b)</i>	Mar. 23 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 7: History, memory
12	Mar. 27 <i>(no class)</i>	Mar. 30 2:30–3:50/ 4:10–5:30 Seminar 8: Nature
13	Apr. 3 SLEQ; review of Project 2	Apr. 6 <i>(no class)</i>

The B5 Theory due dates have been coordinated with the due dates in other B5 courses. For this three-credit-hour course, an average of 9 hours per week throughout the term is expected for all course-related activities, including classes, for a total of about 108 hours. If most students are spending substantially more time, please notify me. Several classes (in Weeks 3, 11, and 12) have no scheduled activities, so that students have extra time to work on projects.

Due Dates and Late Submissions

Deductions for late submissions encourage time management and maintain fairness among students.

Due date		Assignments and quizzes	Is a late assignment accepted?	If so, what is the deduction per weekday?*	Is there a final deadline for a late submission?	What happens after that?
Jan. 12	5:30 pm	Book preferences form for Proj. 1	no			books are assigned randomly
Jan. 12	5:30 pm	Seminar leader schedule	yes	n/a	Jan. 16, 9:30 am	leaders are assigned randomly
Feb. 1	11:30 am	Seminar 1 notes	no			receives 0%
Feb. 2	2:30 pm	Project 1: Book Analysis	yes	3%	Feb. 6, 9:30 am	receives 0%
Feb. 8	11:30 am	Seminar 2 notes	no			receives 0%
Feb. 9	2:30 pm	Book preferences form for Proj. 2	no			books are assigned randomly
Feb. 13	1:00 pm	Quiz on Lectures 1–4	yes, but only with SDA	n/a		receives 0%
Feb. 15	11:30 am	Seminar 3 notes	no			receives 0%
Mar. 1	11:30 am	Seminar 4 notes	no			receives 0%
Mar. 8	11:30 am	Seminar 5 notes	no			receives 0%
Mar. 9	2:30 pm	Project 2a: Letter Outline	yes	3%	March 16, 2:30 pm	receives 0%
Mar. 13	1:00 pm	Quiz on Lectures 5–7	yes, but only with SDA	n/a		receives 0%
Mar. 15	11:30 am	Seminar 6 notes	no			receives 0%
Mar. 22	11:30 am	Seminar 7 notes	no			receives 0%
Mar. 29	11:30 am	Seminar 8 notes	no			receives 0%
Mar. 30	2:30 pm	Project 2b: Open Letter	yes	3%	April 6, 2:30 pm	receives 0%

Each **seminar leader's report** is due a week after the seminar: on Thursday at 2:30 p.m.

* For example, if an assignment is evaluated at 75% before applying a 3%-per-weekday deduction, it would receive 72% for being 1–24 hours late; 69% for 25–48 hours late; etc.

Note: The following University or School policies take precedence over course-specific policies:

- No late assignments are accepted after the last day of weekly classes (the Friday before review week).
- With a Student Declaration of Absence (maximum two per course), an assignment may be submitted up to three weekdays late without penalty. For the SDA form and instructions, go to tinyurl.com/dalhousie-sda.
- With a medical note submitted to the School office, a course assignment (including a final assignment) may be submitted more than three weekdays late without penalty. The number of weekdays depends on how long you were absent and unable to work, as indicated in the medical note. If more than one course is affected, consult with the Undergraduate Coordinator to set a new schedule of due dates.
- A student with an accessibility plan that allows for deadline extensions does not need to submit an SDA.

Writing and Drawing

Citing Sources

For all citations, including publications and buildings/projects, please use Chicago Manual of Style's author-date style. For examples, go to:

- Chicago Manual quick guide: tinyurl.com/quick-author-date
- Chicago Manual full guide: tinyurl.com/full-author-date

To avoid the risk of plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, please refer to the university's regulations:

- Academic Integrity: tinyurl.com/dal-academic-integrity

Plagiarism software will not be used to check written projects, as the assignment formats are uncommon.

Additional Support for Writing and Drawing

- The School's "Writing" page includes links for types, elements, and processes of writing: tinyurl.com/dal-arch-writing
- Dalhousie University has a Writing Centre Resource Guide for all stages of writing: dal.ca/libguides.com/writingcentre
- Group seminars and individual tutorials are available from Dalhousie's Writing Centre: tinyurl.com/dal-writing
- The School's Representation website includes diverse examples of architectural drawings: tinyurl.com/dal-arch-rep

Assessment

Components

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| • Quizzes on lectures | individual | 4% | assessed by instructor |
| • Seminar participation | individual | 16% | assessed by teaching assistant |
| • Seminar leader's report | individual | 10% | assessed by teaching assistant |
| • Project 1 Book analysis | group of 4 | 20% | assessed by instructor |
| • Project 2a Letter outline | individual | 10% | assessed by instructor |
| • Project 2b Open letter | individual | 40% | assessed by instructor |

The topics discussed in the course should help each student write a thoughtful design statement for B5 Design; however, this is not part of the Theory and Interpretation course. The Theory instructor has prepared guidelines for B5 Design statements and may join the Design instructors if students' statements are discussed in Design classes during the term.

Project Weights, Criteria, and Standards

Project	Weight	Criteria	Standards	
Quizzes on lectures				
	2%	Quiz on Lectures 1–4	see University Grade Standards on page 7	
	2%	Quiz on Lectures 5–7		
Seminar participation				
	3%	Seminar notes that respond well to the questions:		
		all 8 seminars	3%	
		7 seminars	2%	
		6 seminars	1%	
		5 seminars or less	0%	
	3%	Attendance at seminars:		
		all 8 seminars	3%	
		7 seminars	2%	
		6 seminars	1%	
	10%	Contribution to seminars:		
preparation for the seminar; understanding of the readings; thoughtful responses to seminar questions; constructive participation; clear oral expression			see University Grade Standards on page 7	
Seminar leader's report				
	4%	thorough understanding of the readings	see University Grade Standards; and Evaluation section on page 10	
	4%	thoughtful analysis of the discussion		
	2%	clear and literate writing		
Project 1: Book Analysis (group grade, except as noted)				
	10%	thoughtful analysis of the book	see University Grade Standards; and Evaluation section on page 13	
	4%	effective research into the book's contexts		
	4%	clear writing, images, and layout		
	2%	thoughtful comments in critical summary (individual grade)		
Project 2a: Letter Outline				
	5%	thoughtful base drawings	see University Grade Standards	
	5%	thoughtful interpretation of the book in words		
Project 2b: Open Letter				
	10%	resonance between book and base drawings	see University Grade Standards	
	20%	thoughtful interpretation of the book in writing and illustrations, presented persuasively		
	5%	clear, concise, and vivid writing, with attention to grammar, spelling, diction, and citations		
	5%	thoughtful comments in ghost-writer's report		

University Grade Standards (Undergraduate)

Grade	Grade Point	Percent	Definition	
A+	4.30	90–100	Excellent	Considerable evidence of original thinking; demonstrated outstanding capacity to analyze and synthesize; outstanding grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
A	4.00	85–89		
A–	3.70	80–84		
B+	3.30	77–79	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
B	3.00	73–76		
B–	2.70	70–72		
C+	2.30	65–69	Satisfactory	Evidence of some understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems; benefitting from one's university experience.
C	2.00	60–64		
C–	1.70	55–59		
D	1.00	50–54	Marginal pass	Evidence of minimally acceptable familiarity with subject matter, critical and analytical skills.
F	0.00	0–49	Inadequate	Insufficient evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.
INC	0.00		Incomplete	
W	neutral		Withdrew after deadline	
ILL	neutral		Compassionate reasons, illness	

Interim Standing

Seminar grade components will appear on Brightspace throughout the term. (Note: To overcome Brightspace limitations, "100%" means yes, and "0%" means no.)

After Projects 1, 2a, and 2b, each student or group will receive an evaluation sheet.

By mid-term, each student will receive a grade for Project 1: Book Analysis. Some students also will receive a grade for the seminar leader's report, depending on their place in the seminar schedule.

Calculation of Final Grades

Grades for assignment components will be converted to their mid-point percentage, multiplied by their proportional weight, added, then converted to a final letter grade for the course.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is expected, especially for students who are planning to continue into the MArch program. Attendance is also a component of the grade for the seminars.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Faculty of Architecture and Planning is committed to recognizing and addressing racism, sexism, xenophobia and other forms of oppression within academia and the professions of architecture and planning. We, the faculty, are working to address issues of historic normalization of oppressive politics, segregation, and community disempowerment, which continues within our disciplines today.

University Policies and Resources

This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate. See the School's "Academic Regulations" page (tinyurl.com/dal-arch-regulations) for links to university policies and resources:

- Academic integrity
- Accessibility
- Code of student conduct
- Culture of respect
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Student declaration of absence
- Recognition of Mi'kmaq territory
- Work safety
- Services available to students, including writing support
- Fair dealing guidelines (copyright)
- Dalhousie University Library

ARCH 4113.03: Architectural Theory and Interpretation

Winter 2023 - Assignment Outline

Seminars

Description

The seminars discuss meanings, origins, and applications of keywords in architectural theory. The same keywords may be used for design statements in B5 Design.

Organization

Groups

The class is divided into groups of about ten students, each with a teaching assistant:

- Group A Normann Baumann Thursday, 2:30–3:50 Room HB1
- Group B Courtney McCracken Thursday, 2:30–3:50 Room HD4
- Group C Victoria Payne Thursday, 2:30–3:50 Room HD2E
- Group D Normann Baumann Thursday, 4:10–5:30 Room HB1
- Group E Courtney McCracken Thursday, 4:10–5:30 Room HD4
- Group F Victoria Payne Thursday, 4:10–5:30 Room HD2E

The seminar group lists are posted on Brightspace.

Seminar Leaders

One student from each group will serve as leader each week. (With ten students per group and eight seminars, two seminars will have two leaders, each writing a separate seminar leader's report.) For each group to assign leaders, please download the form from [Content > Seminars](#), fill it in, and upload it.

Readings

The main readings are from the textbook: Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings*. Each week, a complementary item (primary source, article, or building project) is posted in [Content > Seminars](#).

Date	Seminar	Textbook	Complementary item on Brightspace
Feb. 2	1	"Form" (149–72)	Plato, <i>Republic</i> 7:514a–520a
Feb. 9	2	"Function" (174–95)	Louis Sullivan, excerpt from <i>Kindergarten Chats</i>
Feb. 16	3	"Order" (240–8) "Structure" (276–85)	Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, excerpt from "Architecture"
March 2	4	"User" (312–15) "Flexibility" (142–8)	Herman Hertzberger, "Polyvalence"
March 9	5	"Design" (136–41) "Type" (304–11)	Steven Holl, excerpt from <i>Rural and Urban House Types in North America</i>
March 16	6	"Space" (256–75)	Camillo Sitte, plans from <i>L'art de bâtir les villes</i>
March 23	7	"History" (196–205) "Memory" (206–19)	J. H. Van den Berg, excerpt from <i>The Changing Nature of Man</i>
March 30	8	"Nature" (220–39)	Rachel Carson, excerpt from <i>Silent Spring</i>

In case a seminar class is canceled due to a winter storm, the rest of the seminars (and their due dates) will be moved a week later, ending on Thursday, April 6.

Process

Before the seminar, everyone:

- reads both readings for that week
- downloads the Seminar [X] Questions form from [Content > Seminars](#)
- responds to four of the eight questions in a total of 250 words (the seminar leader responds to all eight questions in 500 words)
- uploads the form by 11:30 a.m. on the Wednesday before the seminar, for review by the TA and the seminar leader

During the seminar:

- everyone brings their seminar notes
- everyone discusses their responses to the seminar questions, prompted by the seminar leader
- the seminar leader records the main points from the discussion (and may record the seminar for reference, with permission from the participants)
- the TA takes attendance, supervises the seminar, and evaluates everyone's contribution

After the seminar, the leader:

- downloads a Seminar Leader's Report form from [Content > Seminars](#)
- prepares a report (500–750 words) that analyzes an intense part of the discussion that was sparked by one or two contentious questions
- uploads the report as a Word file to [Assignments > Seminar Leader's Report](#) by 2:30 p.m. on the Thursday following the seminar



Osani circle game, Zaire; from *Connecting Dotz*, www.connectingdotz.com/circle-game/ (2017)

Evaluation of Seminar Leader's Report

An excellent report would have these qualities:

- thorough understanding of the readings (author's intentions; references; relative importance of ideas; similarities and differences among examples; ability to paraphrase ideas)
- thoughtful analysis of the seminar (understanding of the seminar questions; a focused study of one or two contentious topics; well composed, not just a list of points; description of any opposing opinions)
- clear and literate writing (500–750 words; clear, concise, and well organized; attention to grammar, diction, spelling, and citations)

Project 1: Book Analysis

Description

Each group of four students studies a book that is an important source in architectural theory. The group describes the book and the author (what's "behind" the work). It also recognizes the intended audience, describes the book's historical and disciplinary context, and adds marginal illustrations alongside the text (what's "around" the work). A large-format presentation will show these findings to the rest of the class, including the students who will extend this study into Project 2 (what's "in front of" the work).

Books

Anthony, Kathryn. 2001. *Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession*.

Bacon, Edmund. 1976. *Design of Cities*.

Baird, George. 1995. *The Space of Appearance*.

Blundell Jones, Peter. 2016. *Architecture and Ritual: How Buildings Shape Society*.

Bonneuil, Christophe, and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. 2016. *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*. Trans. David Fernbach.

Ingold, Tim. 2013. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, and Architecture*.

Jacobs, Jane. 1992. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Kiddle, Rebecca, Luugigyoo Patrick Stewart, and Kevin O'Brien, eds. 2022. *Our Voices: Indigeneity and Architecture*.

Koolhaas, Rem. 1978. *Delirious New York*.

McDonough, William, and Michael Braungart. 2002. *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*.

McHarg, Ian. 1992. *Design With Nature*.

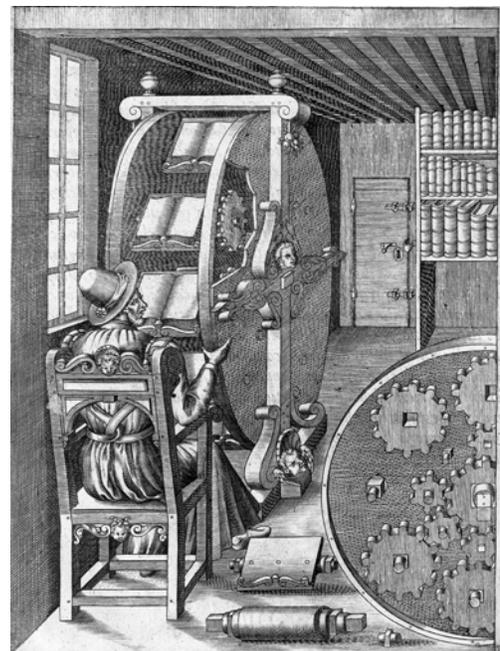
Metzger, Christoph. 2018. *Building for Dementia*.

Rossi, Aldo. 1982. *The Architecture of the City*. Trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman.

Tschumi, Bernard. 1996. *Architecture and Disjunction*.

Wilkins, Craig L. 2016. *Diversity Among Architects: From Margin to Center*.

Yaneva, Albena. 2017. *Five Ways to Make Architecture Political: An Introduction to the Politics of Design Practice*.



Agostino Ramelli, Book wheel, from *Le diverse et artificiose machine del Capitano Agostino Ramelli* (1588)

Organization

Group Formation and Book Allocation

Book introductions and a Book Preferences form are posted in [Content > Project 1: Book Analysis](#). Please form a group of four (not necessarily within your studio or seminar group), e-mail the list to me (to help others form groups), rank your book preferences from 1 to 10, and upload the form. Unique first choices will be assigned first. Multiple choices then will be assigned by lottery. The groups and books will be posted in [Content > Project 1: Book Analysis](#). Later, if two groups wish to trade books, please notify me. (Note: Your book in Project 1 will not be an option in Project 2.)

Book Sources

Please refer to the chart and instructions in [Content > Project 1: Book Analysis > Book Sources](#). Additional copies are available through Document Delivery, Bookfinder.com, etc. Book copies for all members should be acquired during Week 2 (Professional Practice Week).

Process

After reading the book, please proceed with five steps: items 1–4 are done by the group; item 5 is done by each student. In addition to studying the book, please search for secondary sources (e.g., articles in JStor, <https://www.jstor.org>, or Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, <https://tinyurl.com/dal-avery>) that discuss the book, its context, and its reception. As always, record and cite your sources.

For any general questions that arise, brief question periods for the whole class will be scheduled on Mondays, before the weekly lecture. Groups with specific questions can schedule a separate meeting with the instructor.

1. Describe the book

- type of book (e.g., history, philosophy, instruction, fiction)
- by whom it was written, when, where, and in which language
- format(s) in the book: text, diagrams, illustrations, etc.

2. Describe the author's context

- a brief biography of the author
- academic, professional, and cultural circumstances in which the book was written
- any other books (earlier or later) by the author
- any other notable works (buildings, etc.) by the author

3. Analyze the book's content

- abstract that summarizes the subject and argument of the book (100 words)
- limits within which the book operates: geographic location, historical period
- intended audience: e.g., scholars, practitioners, government, general public
- academic discipline(s) in which the book is situated
- overall structure of the book and the organization of chapters
- major topics that recur throughout the book
- subject keywords: from the Forty textbook and/or other sources
- types of sources it cites in examples, notes, and references
- illustrations (if any) and how they are used in relation to the text
- what the author advocates and why
- what the author opposes and why
- rhetorical techniques that the book uses (e.g., logical arguments, scientific proofs, empathetic stories, metaphorical analogies, leading examples, ethical appeals)
- subsequent writers or architects who were influenced by the book or who criticized it

Please include an annotated reference list of other publications that were useful for understanding the book. The annotations (1–2 sentences each) should describe what was useful.

4. Interpret implications for architectural practice

- images that came to mind when reading (noted in small sketches, alongside excerpts)
- scales (1:1 to 1:10,000) and projections (plan, perspective, animation, etc.) it evokes
- roles in architectural process it evokes (researcher, designer, builder, inhabitant, etc.)

(If any design work by the author is included in the book, please disregard it for this project.)

5. Write a critical summary

Each group member is asked to write a 250-word critical summary that comments on your individual experience during this project, including insights you gained, difficulties you encountered, and what you might do differently next time.

Formats

Items 1–4 (group)

- one or more pages, 24" x 36" landscape format, min. 150 ppi (3600 x 5400 pixels), black font on white background, min. 11-point; PDF. The layout within this format is optional. Please identify the book, list the names of your group members, and include large headings for the four parts: 1. book; 2. author's context; 3. content; 4. implications for architectural practice.
- sample file name: 4113-1-jacobs-analysis.pdf

Item 5 (individual)

- min. 250 words, 8.5" x 11", black font on white background; PDF
- sample file name: 4113-1-jacobs-summary-yoursurname.pdf

Submission and Presentation

Please upload the files to [Assignments > Project 1: Book Analysis](#).

Items 1–4 will be shared for presentation by the group and discussion by the class. Later, they will be posted on Brightspace for reference by other students during the next project.

Evaluation of Project 1

An excellent project would have these qualities:

- thoughtful analysis of the book (thorough, well-balanced study; understanding of the whole book and its parts; relative importance of ideas; ability to paraphrase ideas)
- effective research into the book's contexts (author; author's circumstances; intended audience; reception and influence; related books, buildings, etc.; insights from other sources)
- clear writing, images, and layout (concise and well organized; emphasis on important items; attention to graphics, grammar, diction, spelling, and citation)
- thoughtful comments in critical summary

ARCH 4113.03: Architectural Theory and Interpretation

Winter 2023 - Assignment Outline

Project 2: Open Letter

Description

This project brings together two different sources: a book in architectural theory (from Project 1) and a building project (Museum of Halifax Art and Culture, borrowed from B5 Design). As an interpretation project, it considers the dynamics of both sources. It also recognizes the student as an active interpreter between book and building, imagining how the author of this book would approach the design of a museum at Barrington Street and George Street in Halifax in 2023.

This project is a variation on a persuasive essay. (For tips on writing a persuasive essay, see "Essay" at tinyurl.com/dal-arch-writing.) Compared to a typical academic essay, it uses a different format but shares most of its components (evidence, connections, arguments, etc.), as well as the primary intention of an essay (derived from the French word *essayer*, to try).

Books

This project uses the books that were studied in Project 1, except that students cannot study the same book again. Please download the form from [Content > Project 2: Open Letter > Book Preferences for Project 2 \(form\)](#), rank your preferences from 1 to 10, and upload it to [Assignments > Book Preferences for Project 2](#). Up to eight students can work with each book. The list of groups and books will be posted in [Content > Project 2: Open Letter](#). Later, if you wish to trade books with another student, please notify me.

Process

1. Browse the book

This initial reading should take no more than an hour. This will provide a general, disinterested introduction to the book. Read the contents page and the introduction, sample some paragraphs in the chapters, look at any illustrations, browse the notes and index, scan the references, and read the back cover and the author's biography.

2. Look at Project 1 by the group that studied this book

PDFs of Project 1 will be posted in [Content > Project 2: Open Letter > Book Analysis projects from Project 1](#). Compare your initial understanding of the book to this deeper and broader study.

3. Read the book more slowly and interpret it through the building project from B5 Design

Imagine that you and the author of the book are starting the design project from the beginning, using the basic program and site from B5 Design, but guided by the book's intentions. This time, read the whole book in a different way: not just by listening to the author's voice, but by imagining the building project in the margins. Ask the book (and implicitly its author) how it might approach a different situation: the design of this museum in downtown Halifax in 2023. Imagine meeting with the author at the beginning of the project, when the program and site are being studied, intentions are being formulated, and initial design moves are being considered. (Please disregard the design projects that are already underway in B5 Design, including your own, as this is a separate project.) By now, you will have understood the basic program and site, so you needn't refer closely to the B5 Design course outline.

As you come across passages in the book that resonate with facets of the building project, make a note of them. You might look for:

- building characteristics that the book emphasizes: form, substance, structure, space, etc.
- dwelling characteristics that the book emphasizes: senses, social activity, etc.
- situating characteristics that the book emphasizes: history, memory, nature, urbanity, etc.
- roles it emphasizes: e.g., architect, engineer, builder, client, user, public, historian
- ideas or practices it advocates
- ideas or practices it opposes
- rhetorical techniques it uses: e.g., logical arguments, scientific proofs, empathetic stories, metaphorical analogies, leading examples, ethical appeals
- statements that seem anachronistic to us in 2023



Construction worker, from *Showhouse*, www.showhouse.co.uk (2017)

4. Make base drawings

As you read the book in this interpretive way, please make small sketches and diagrams whenever a written excerpt makes you think of the building project. From these sketches, develop three different base drawings for the project that align with the intentions in the book. As base drawings, they should set the stage for subsequent design moves, without actually making those moves. (Examples will be shown in Lecture 5.) Each of your base drawings could represent elements such as:

- site elements that would be important to the author of the book (e.g., street elevations, urban massing, materials)
- program elements that would be important to the author (e.g., inhabitants, activities, routes, views, memories)
- building elements that would be important to the author (e.g., materials, builders, construction process)

Each base drawing should have representation characteristics that support its intentions; e.g.,

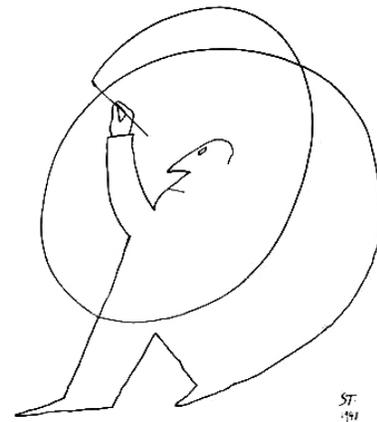
- scale (1:1 to 1:10,000)
- projection (plan, section, perspective, etc.)
- graphic qualities: line, tone, or colour; texture, illumination

You could imagine pinning up these base drawings and sitting down with the author to discuss how to approach the building project. These drawings should not simply imitate features of any drawings or buildings by the author, as that would short-circuit the interpretive process.

5. Write an open letter

Please adopt the role of an architectural ghost-writer on behalf of the author of this book. Using the author's voice, write an open letter to the citizens of Halifax that describes the approach and priorities you would recommend for this museum on Barrington Street in 2023. Develop an argument that is based on evidence and presented coherently and persuasively. For this open letter, you are the author's "architectural apprentice." Include 1500 words and illustrations from your base drawings. Avoid quoting or citing the book directly, as an author would not do this.

Depending on the book, this open letter may express intentions that are not normally found in a building project in 21st-century Canada. Please keep in mind that the open letter



Saul Steinberg, untitled (1948); Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

should be based solely on this book. Please disregard any other books, buildings, or drawings by the author. Your own B5 Design project and its intentions also should be disregarded.

6. Write a ghost-writer's report

After writing this open letter in the author's voice, please write a 500-word report in your own voice that comments on steps in the process. It could discuss:

- the previous group's Project 1
- tensions between the museum on Barrington Street and the author's intentions
- architectural characteristics that the author would (or would not) be concerned about
- any difficulties in preparing base drawings
- any awkwardness in writing the open letter due to anachronism, location differences, cultural differences, or intentions with which you disagree

Submission

This project is submitted twice:

- The first stage (2a) is an abbreviated draft that will receive comments from the instructor on whether the base drawings and open letter are framed and organized appropriately.
- The second stage (2b) is the completed project.

Project 2a: Letter Outline

1. Outline (draft)

- a point-form outline of your open letter in progress: 1–2 pages, 8.5" x 11"; black font, min. 11-point; PDF (for outline tips, refer to "Making an outline" at tinyurl.com/dal-arch-writing)
- preliminary ghost-writer's report, on a second page
- sample file name: 4113-2a-**jacobs-yoursurname**-outline.pdf

2. Three base drawings (draft)

- one or more pages, 11" x 17", 150 ppi, in a single PDF
- sample file name: 4113-2a-**jacobs-yoursurname**-drawings.pdf

Please upload your files to [Assignments > Project 2a: Letter Outline](#).

Project 2b: Open Letter

1. Open letter (complete)

- 1500 words (black font on white background, min. 11-point), plus excerpts from base drawings as illustrations alongside corresponding parts of the text (please do not overlap text and image); PDF
- for the format, you may wish to use a publication layout for a newspaper, website, etc.
- include the book author's name and an appropriate title at the top of the open letter
- include the book title, your name, and the word count at the bottom of the last page
- sample file name: 4113-2b-**jacobs-yoursurname**-letter.pdf

2. Three base drawings (complete)

- one or more pages, 11" x 17", 150 ppi, in a single PDF
- sample file name: 4113-2b-**jacobs-yoursurname**-drawings.pdf

3. Ghost-writer's report

- 500 words, black font on white background (illustrations are optional); min. 11-point; 1.5 line spacing; 8.5" x 11", PDF
- sample file name: 4113-2b-**jacobs-yoursurname**-report.pdf

Please upload your files to [Assignments > Project 2b: Open Letter](#). The open letters will be posted on Brightspace and reviewed during the final class.

SP - 27 Dec. 2022