



ENVI/POLI 294

The Politics of Architecture and the Built Environment

TR 1:20-2:50
Art Commons 202

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Are buildings political? What does the built environment say about us and to us?

This collaboratively taught course will explore the ways in which architecture and the built environment—a term that encompasses human-made spaces including parks, neighborhoods, and infrastructure—embody (literally) the ideals and political tensions of the individuals and societies that create them. The most vital goal of the course is for students to be able to see both the aspirations and the conflicts in the spaces in which they live, and in doing so to be able to imagine ways to shape communities through attention to physical space.

The course begins with a survey of the language and ideas of architecture, from ancient architecture through to the present. This tour will create the necessary foundation for later work, providing a vocabulary and set of critical ideas for thinking about and discussing architecture. Our emphasis will be on locating the emergence or later appropriation of architectural motifs and styles within socio-economic

and cultural landscapes, so that one can understand the values and ideals underlying the work of the architect.

The remainder of the course will be organized around a series of case studies. We are interested in both the *expressive* meaning and the *behavioral* significance of architecture. Among other topics, we will discuss how European fascists employed architecture to communicate power; how city halls, state capitols, and courthouses similarly tried to advance the legitimacy of democratic institutions; and the grand aspirations behind city-building projects like Brasilia. In addition to the monumental, we will also pay attention to the mundane, exploring topics such as the architecture of prisons, the construction of boulevards and parkways, and the push for neo-traditional designs.

Pedagogically, expect both individual and team lecturing, especially in the first half of the course, before we turn to more seminar style discussion.



OBJECTIVES

1. To develop new skills of visual recognition, and of being more observant of the built environments you traverse;
2. To acquire a new vocabulary to describe and discuss architecture and space in its leading historical and contemporary manifestations;
3. To understand and appreciate how the built environment embodies, reflects, and affects the political values and interests of the community that builds and inhabits it; and to understand how individuals and societies have been motivated by the belief that the built environment can accomplish those things.

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REQUIRED TEXT

This course requires one book, which you may purchase through a local bookstore or online. A copy will also be placed on two-hour reserve for use in the library:

James Holston, *The Modernist City* (1989)



MOODLE

Our Moodle site (moodle.macalester.edu) is a crucial resource for this class. In addition to duplicating the information in this syllabus, it houses our up-to-date daily reading schedule and provides links to all assigned readings and videos (aside from Holston's book). We may assign additional readings during the term, as warranted, but all readings will be considered final two weeks before they are due. Moodle also provides a forum for highlighting items of contemporary interest.



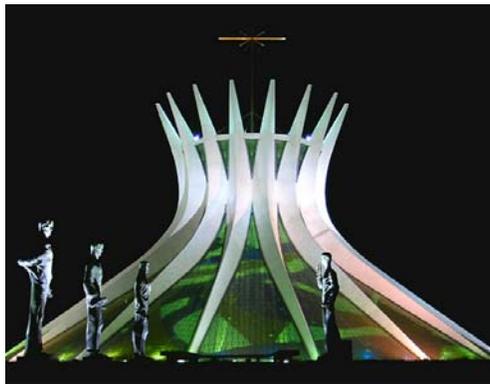
ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Regular attendance and participation are vital to success in this class. Participating on lecture days necessarily means something different than participating on discussion days, when we expect you to arrive ready to discuss readings in depth. No "participation score" has been designated per se, but we reserve the right to factor participation into ultimate grading decisions, both positively and negatively, to reflect your overall level of work for the course.



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of what we know, how we know it, and why it matters. It has no place in this course. For Macalester's policies, see bit.ly/1mKrAKF. For help on avoiding plagiarism, see bit.ly/1mJTGG4.



LATE WORK POLICY

We reserve the right to impose penalties for late work. At our discretion, we will deduct a maximum of half a letter grade per day for late work, so please plan ahead! If extenuating circumstances arise, please try to discuss them with us as soon as you are able rather than after the fact.



ACCOMMODATIONS

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Meet with the Assistant Dean of Students, Robin Ruthenbeck, at the start of the term to ensure your accommodations are approved and in place. Reach her in the Office of Student Affairs, Kagin 125, at 651-696-6874, or by email rhartrut@macalester.edu.



GRADING

The assignments of the course will be weighted as follows:

Building observation (3-4 pgs)	50 points
Building comparison (4-5 pgs)	100 pts
Midterm exam	200 pts
Public space analysis (5-7 pgs)	150 pts
Final exam	150 pts

Your point total for the semester will be converted to a letter grade:

Grade	Percent	Grade	Points
A	93.33% or more	C+	76.67 – 79.99
A-	90.0 – 93.32	C	73.33 – 76.66
B+	86.67 – 89.99	C-	70.0 – 73.33
B	83.33 – 86.66	D's	etc.
B-	80.0 – 83.32	F	59.99 or less