COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is an interdisciplinary seminar, deliberately crossing the boundaries among theory, professional practice and pedagogical studies, and bringing into play the significance for architecture of issues in economics, sociology, criminology, political science, and intellectual history. This broad scope is essential in addressing paradigms of value and action as they constitute ethical (or counter-ethical) models within architectural practice, education and criticism. Based upon an ongoing research project that examines the involvement of the architectural profession and academy in global economic and political shifts, the course seeks, through readings, discussion and case studies, to unpack and excavate assumptions about propriety and transgression in the day-to-day practices of architecture. Today, as opportunities present themselves in China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Dubai, Qatar, how do we decide what the "right thing" is to do?

In particular, the course examines the effects of the sometimes antagonistic, sometimes collusive, sometimes collaborative relationship between profession and academy in the development of these assumptions. We will examine the political economy of the relations between practitioners and critics, between publications and public relations, intellectual ethics and democratic practices.

Specific architectural practices that can be examined in these terms include Rem Koolhaas/OMA, Herzog & de Meuron, BIG/Bjarke Ingels, Norman Foster, MVRDV, Steven Holl, Zaha Hadid/Patrik Schumacher, Bernard Tschumi, Frank Gehry, Richard Rogers, Daniel Libeskind, William McDonough, their more recent progeny, and the critics who revolve around them; and, for historical comparison, those who have designed and written for or under questionable political or economic regimes, such as Giuseppe Terragni, Piacentini, Albert Speer, Philip Johnson, Oscar Niemeyer, and architects in practice in South Africa under apartheid.

We will examine the architect as tough guy, as fighter pilot, as arbitrageur; as mafioso, as "organic intellectual", as courtier, as insider trader, as multinational executive, as organ-player, and as closet eugenicist.

The course will appeal to the intellectually adventurous.

FORMAT

The course combines a lecture-seminar format with a case-study approach. Evaluation is based upon each student team’s case study responses and a paper. Each team will have the opportunity to select an issue of personal interest for detailed study and presentation, producing a new case study, with this presentation being developed into a paper that will serve as the major component of assessment.

EVALUATION & SCHEDULE

Attendance at all lectures and seminars is expected, and is assessed in the participation grade. In addition, students are expected to take notes, read what is assigned, and hand in assignments on time.

Assignments†

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<tr>
<th>Topic Outline and Annotated Bibliography</th>
<th>15%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Case Studies (in-class presentation and discussion) (classes with Assigned Readings)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentation of Topic</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Final Paper (3000-3500 words)  35%
due end of classes

(Deadlines may occasionally be changed at the discretion of the Instructor. Such changes will be made with as much notice as possible, but may be occasionally be made at short notice).

†Team Work

Participation (active attendance & involvement)  10%

All written assignments should be typed (handwritten submissions will not be graded). The usual School and University regulations apply with regard to written work. There is no final exam. Students should retain copies of their assignments before and after grading.

Assignments will be evaluated on the student’s success in fulfilling the general objectives of the course and the specific objectives of the assignment; quality of writing and presentation will be part of the basis of evaluation. Intellectual rigor and critical judgement will be expected in each student’s work.

ATTENDANCE

In accordance with School policy, attendance at all class sessions is expected, and any unavoidable absence should be cleared in advance with the Instructor. In the case of illness or family emergency, advise the Instructor by email (gowen@tulane.edu) or phone (Ext. 2343). Three unexcused absences constitute a failure in the course.

ACCOMMODATION

Students with documented disabilities who require accommodations should follow the procedures of Tulane’s Office of Disability Services and make an appointment to speak to the Instructor.

LATE WORK

Late work will only be accepted with the permission of the Instructor. Late work submitted after the final day of classes is not acceptable without written permission from the Dean. Any late work accepted will be penalized 10% for the first day of lateness, and 5% per day thereafter. (The first day of lateness begins immediately after the deadline, and weekends are counted). Extensions for medical reasons or family emergencies should be requested as soon after the event as possible and in advance of the deadline, and must be supported by adequate documentation.

REFERENCES

References will be compiled on the list of weekly and supplementary readings, which is subject to revision. The weekly readings will be made available in the class and/or on line.
China
Dubai
Qatar
Russia
Abu Dhabi
Kazakhstan
Azerbaijan
In the wake of recent financial crises, Western architects have found themselves under even more pressure to seek out work in global markets, well beyond their home jurisdiction. Both before and after these events, developing economies have been exploiting the “branding” effect of “iconic” architecture, and the cultural cachet that comes with international practitioners.

“In America, I could never do work like I do here [in China]. We’ve become too backward-looking. In China, they want to make everything look new.”
-Steven Holl

“Clients are sometimes looking for something unique or extreme. So the opportunity for both Chinese and international architects to experiment is more available here than the rest of the world.”
-Bob Nation, RMJM

“In this time of the world, China is the only place that you can work on so many projects. And these projects are usually ridiculously big, which are unimaginable in other places like New York or London.”
-Casey McSweeney, Graft

So far, so good!

“What architects prefer are fearless clients, the kind who commit serious money and laugh in the face of local opposition. How tempting it is, then, to build in places where an emir or a Vladimir can call the shots with impunity – where cash is plentiful, ambitions boundless, and the local opposition more preoccupied with police surveillance or being thrown in jail.”
-Richard Lacayo

Exploitative labour conditions (for example, in the Emirates and Asia), the displacement of rural populations in the name of “sustainability” (China), human rights abuses and authoritarian governments (all over) leave architects implicated in both the means and the ends of the projects they agree to take on. But how could they say no? Isn’t the First Rule of Architecture “Get the job!”? …