Elements of the Urban Landscape
Arch 532b
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Course Description

Elements is one part of a sequence of four graduate seminars which were developed to provide a knowledge about the history and theory of cities and city spaces and a working methodology for the designer at work in the City. These seminars supplement the Graduate Studio courses in the School of Architecture. The first two seminars explore how cities developed over time and examine their relation to nature. The second two seminars analyze the fundamental components of urban settings, explore the history and theories of architecture and urbanism, and discuss the ways in which design affects city development.

Elements will concentrate on the detail examination of important examples of urban development while providing a critical review of the literature about the constituent components of which cities are made. Class time will be divided between lectures/discussions about particular cities and ideas and lab sessions which will take place in the classroom or library. Lectures will focus upon the development of a critical attitude about how cities can be analyzed as an assemblage of discrete elements. There will be two lecture/discussions sessions each week and part of the 8 week sequence will be spend on individual research. The research will be presented at the end of the 8th week and will constitute the term paper. Two midterm exams will cover reading and lecture material.

Lectures

The emphasis of the course will be twofold: a) to understand the history and traditions of the elements from which cities are made and, b) to develop a critical attitude about the role and use of this history in the design and development of a modern urban culture. Our aim, therefore, is to develop a “critical history” of urban elements. How can the city be disassembled, what kind of elements are typical to the cities of different cultures, and how are they of value in helping us understand contemporary urban problems?

Typically, each session will begin with a slide lecture about cities, elements, places and buildings relevant to the readings and material to be covered in that session, and end with a group discussion about both lecture and readings. These lecture/discussions might be thought of more as a series of critical vignettes about the City than as a complete history of urban elements. Each lecture in the attached schedule includes required readings and suggested reading. It is important that the reading is done in advance of the lecture. Much emphasis will be placed upon your participation in the discussions about the material in each lecture.

Research and Lab Sessions

Several lab sessions are scheduled during the 8 week period. These times will be used for individual consultation about the research projects. An important concept about graduate study in the School of Architecture is the premise that post-graduate study should require original research. The research element of this course will focus on the documentation and analysis of a Case Study that
you will select from lists of urban elements in the reader. You will develop this project during the first few weeks of the semester and it will be reviewed at the end of the 8 weeks.

It is also important to stress that this is a serious and probably difficult task. Primary research about cities necessarily involves extensive historical reading and persistent detective work to uncover the important documents about a place. This may involve research in libraries other than our own and even correspondence to other places—government agencies, architect’s offices, etc.—for essential material. In the first lab session we will select topics and establish both the method and presentation technique for this comparative study.

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**Examinations Semester Project, and Grading**

There will be two midterm examinations and a semester project. All work will be graded. The final grade will be determined as follows: 30% for the midterms, 40% for the project, and 30% for class attendance, discussion, and participation. Late work will be penalized for each day or part thereof late. Attendance is required for both lectures and lab sessions. An important aspect of 532b is your active participation in class discussions. Typically there will be discussions questions based on the readings and lecture material, as the basis for classroom discussion. Please do the reading in advance so that you may be prepared to comment on seminar subjects and literature.

**Required Readings**

The Reader is available at the University Bookstore. This reader is mandatory, you must have your own copy. Bacon’s book, *The Design of Cities*, is mandatory. Bacon, is an essential volume in every urban designer’s library, be sure you have a copy. See the weekly readings below.

**Selected References**

Anderson, Stanford, *On Streets*
Bacon, Edmund, *The Design of Cities*
Benevolo, Leonardo, *The History of the City*
Diamond, Jared, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*
Dennis, Michael, *Court and Garden*
Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane*
Fernandez, Jose Luis Garcia and Lena Saladina Iglesias Ruoco, *La Plaza en la Ciudad*
Galion, Arthur, *The Urban Pattern*
Hegemann Werner & Elbert and Peets, *American Vitruvius: An Architects’ Handbook of Civic Art*
Jacobs, Allan, *Great Streets*
Kostof, Sprio, *The City Assembled*
Krier, Rob, *Urban Space*
Norberg-Schultz, Christian, *Genius Loci*
De Arce, Rodrigo Perez, *Urban Transformations*
Rasmussen, Steen Eiler, *Towns and Buildings*
Rossi, Aldo, *The Architecture of the City*, Trans. by Diane Ghirardo
Syllabus

**Week 1: Introduction, Overview**

**Reading:**
- Krier, “The Erosion of Urban Space in 20th Century Town Planning”

Note: Bacon’s book, *The Design of Cities*, is used as a collection of examples of important urban paradigms which are presented as Case Studies. You are responsible for knowing the following:
  - p. 68, Athens
  - p. 74, Miletus
  - p. 82-87, 114-119, 131-155, Rome
  - p. 88, Hadrian’s Villa
  - p. 100, Venice
  - p. 106, Florence
  - p. 174, Nancy
  - p. 186, Paris
  - p. 196, St. Petersburg
  - p. 200, Regent’s Street, London
  - p. 244, Peking

**Week 2: Genius Loci and other Concepts of Place**

**Reading:**
- Glossary of Place Terms
- Quotes about Place and Space
- Eliade, “Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred”
- Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, preface

Lab Session, Project Consultation

**Week 3: Greek and Roman Urbanism and Other Traditions of Central Place**

MIDTERM EXAM, (lecture & readings through Bacon, Chapt.)

**Reading:**
- Kriesis, “Town Building Elements”
- Rasmussen, “The City a Temple;” & “Colonial Cities”

**Week 4: Piazze, Plazas, Plätze and Other Places**

**Reading:**
- Kostof, “Public Spaces”
- Herdeg, “Isfahan”
• Bacon, pp.84-161; 170-71; 176-79.

Topic Outline/Bibliography/Illustrations

Week 5: The Street; Places Connected

Reading:
• Ellis, “The Spatial Structure of Streets”
• Keng Chy Kiang, “The Birth of The Commercial Street”
• Suismann, "Los Angeles Boulevard"
• Bacon, pp. 182-213; 216-221.

Lab Session and Project Consultation

Week 6: Landscape as an Element of Urbanism

MIDTERM EXAM. (lectures & readings through Suismann)

Reading:
• Hegemann & Peets, “Garden Art as Civic Art”
• Tschumi, “Cinegram Folie le Parc de la Villette”

Week 7: Building Types and Ensembles

Reading:
• Dennis, “Le Corbusier and the City of Modern Architecture”
• Hegemann & Peets, “The Grouping of Buildings in America”

Presentation & Public Review of Research Projects

Final Project, Discussion & Public exhibition of panels