

COURSE OUTLINE

Architecture + Anonymity EVDS 683.53

Winter 2015 (H)

M, W 12:30-13:50 hrs.

Instructors: Prof. Joshua M. Taron, jmtaron@ucalgary.ca

Room: PF2110



Blue Sunset, still from *Wanderers* (2014)

"It is beyond our powers to predict the future. Catastrophic events have a way of sneaking up on us, of catching us unaware. Your own life, or your band's, or even your species' might be owed to a restless few – drawn by a craving they can hardly articulate or understand, to undiscovered lands and new worlds."

-Carl Sagan, excerpt from *Pale Blue Dot*

INTRODUCTION

While indeterminacy and emergence have come into the mainstream of architectural discourse, it has done so with a great deal of friction with modern conventions such as certainty, authority, authorship and autonomy – all of which are projected upon the figure of the architect. Central to these problems has been a cultural transition from autonomy and identity toward multiplicities and anonymity. But anonymity is a multivalent thing, at once both a threat to the possibility of imagining new futures while providing an exceptional incubatory space for possibilities to develop. Never something knowable but fundamentally something that is thinkable, anonymity is perhaps the most valuable and controversial natural resource of the information age.

Using Quentin Meillassoux's essay, *After Finitude*, as a point of departure, this elective explores a variety of philosophical and architectural perspectives that problematize the material production of anonymity in the context of a call for a fundamentally new approach to the discipline of architecture. The course begins by asking the question, "why anonymity in architecture?" What follows is an investigation into how anonymity might have been made throughout time – and how we might be able to make and make use of it in the future.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explore historical and contemporary positions relating to speculative materialism as an architectural problem.
2. Reconsider disciplinary boundaries and objectives of architecture in the context of anonymity.
3. Explore and develop new techniques for the production of anonymity in architecture.

TEACHING APPROACH / SCHEDULE / TOPICS

A typical week consists of an assigned reading(s), lecture, and discussion session. Students will also develop a small project during the second half of the term.

Mondays will be lecture-based classes consisting of a 45 minute lecture followed by discussion. Wednesdays will be discussion-based classes used to develop problems emerging from the weekly reading.

For the sake of legibility, every 2 week period of the course will be divided into two equal parts. Part 1 will address a problem from a philosophical source. Part 2 will address a related problem from an architectural source.

Introduction

Week 1 - What's so different about a speculative approach? (Bryant, Srnicek, Harman)

Materiality of Thought

Week 2 - Ancestrality and the Arche-fossil (Meillassoux)

Week 3 - Architecture of the City (Rossi)

Absolute Fragmentation

Week 4 - Principle of Unreason (Meillassoux)

Week 5 - Post-critical Origins (Corbusier, Eisenman, Koolhaas)

Week 6: Block Week

Autonomy and Anonymity

Week 7 - Form, Function, Art (Heidegger, Harman, Negarestani)

Week 8 - Between Autopoeisis and Automation (Schumacher, Bratton)

Disappearance of Power

Week 9 - Distributed Sensations (Nealon/Foucault)

Week 10 - Dromology (Virilio)

Politics and Aesthetics

Week 11 - Aesthetics and Cognition (Jameson/Srnicek)

Week 12 - 2 Different Anaesthetics (Leach, Taron)

The Non-relational

Week 13 - Autonomy as a model for a World *Without-us* (Agamben, Thacker)

Week 14 - Architecture as a State of Exception (Aureli)

COURSE EVALUATION

Students are required to have completed the assigned readings for the week prior to each class session including prepared notes (approx. 100-200 words) for discussion.

Critical Evaluations:	35%
Participation in Class Discussions:	15%
Term Project:	50%

Term projects will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Focus + Exploration (40% of grade) – Project demonstrates student's ability to identify, research and develop their proposed object of study.
2. Structure (30% of grade) – Project methodology is clear, insightful and legible.
3. Documentation (30% of grade) – Project is thoroughly described through sources, images, and diagrams.

*Each Critical Evaluation (CE's) consists of a succinct (300 word max.) paragraph demonstrating that you understand its corresponding, required reading. This is broadly achieved by identifying a critical moment/issue (or related set of moments/issues) in the text and producing a subsequent question (or set of questions) that critically engages a problem and its relationship to architecture.

CE's are due on paper at the beginning of each discussion session.

NOTES

1. Written work, term assignments and other course related work may only be submitted by e-mail if prior permission to do so has been obtained from the course instructor.
2. It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/drc/node/46>) Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.
3. Plagiarism - Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:(a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),(b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,(c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,(d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course(although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved. While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. It is recognized that clause (d) does not prevent a graduate student incorporating work previously done by him or her in a thesis. Any suspicion of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean, and dealt with as per the regulations in the University of Calgary Graduate Calendar.
4. Information regarding the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>) and how this impacts the receipt and delivery of course material
5. Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>)
6. Safewalk information (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>)
7. Contact Info for: Student Union (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/page/affordability-accessibility/su-structure/contact-info>); Graduate Student representative(<http://www.ucalgary.ca/gsa/>) and Student Ombudsman's Office (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/page/quality-education/academic-services/student-rights>).
8. Students will be expected to complete each of the course assignments. There will be no final exam. Students must obtain an overall passing grade to pass this course.
9. At the discretion of the instructor, assignments submitted after the deadline **may** be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. The following equivalencies (the University of Calgary has no official percentage scale system) will be used in calculating grades: **A+** (95-100) Exceptional; **A** (90-94.99) Excellent; **A-** (85-89.99) Above Average; **B+** (80-84.99) Average; **B** (75-79.99) Adequate/Below Average; **B-** (70-74.99) Minimum Pass; **C+** (65-69.99) Fail; **C** (60-64.99) Fail; **C-** (55-59.99) Fail; **D+** (50-54.99) Fail; **D** (45-49.99) Fail; **F** (0-44.99) Fail.
10. A student who receives a "C+" or lower in any one course will be required to withdraw regardless of their grade point average (GPA) unless the program recommends otherwise. If the program permits the student to retake a failed course, the second grade will replace the initial grade in the calculation of the GPA, and both grades will appear on the transcript. Final grades will be reported as letter grades, with the final grade calculated according to a 4-point range. Assignments will be evaluated by percentage grades with their letter grade equivalents as shown.