

COURSE OUTLINE

Architecture + Anonymity

EVDS 683.53

Winter 2018 (H)

Tu, Th 11:00-12:20 hrs.

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

Room: PF2165



Blue Sunset, still from *Wanderers*



Pig Pile, *Bittertang*

"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 age of serial repetition, mass customization and ubiquitous information.

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 to produce an immediate present that incubates the possibility of a future.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explore philosophical and architectural positions relating to anonymity.
2. Reconsider disciplinary boundaries of and objectives for architecture in the context of anonymity.
3. Explore new techniques and uses for the production of anonymity through 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 a brief 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)
Why address a world without us? (Thacker)

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 (Hays)
-Term Project Brief Released

Week 6: Block Week

The Non-relational

Week 7 - Autonomy as a model for a World *Without-us* (Agamben)

Week 8 - Generic Originals (Thenhaus)

Autonomy and Anonymity

Week 9 - Form, Function, Art (Heidegger, Harman, Negarestani)

Week 10 - Between Autopoeisis and Automation (Schumacher, Bratton)

Disappearance of Power

Week 11 - Distributed Sensations (Nealon/Foucault)

Week 12 - Dromology (Virilio)

Politics and Aesthetics

Week 13 - Cognition + Automation (Srnicek)

Week 14 - Between Anaesthetics & Anesthetics (Leach, Taron)

COURSE EVALUATION

Critical Evaluations:	30%
Participation in Class Discussions:	20%
Term Project (Due April 5)	30%
Summary Document (Due April 8)	20%

READING LIST

Week 1

Bryant, L., Srnicek, N., Harman, G., *Toward a Speculative Philosophy*, in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, Open access, Re:press, Melbourne 2011, pp. 1-8.
http://www.re-press.org/book-files/OA_Version_Speculative_Turn_9780980668346.pdf

Thacker, E., *In the Dust of this Planet: Horror of Philosophy vol 1*, Zero Books, Washington, 2011, pp. 1-9. ISBN: 978-1-84694-676-9 (170 pages) (PDF)

Week 2

Meillassoux, Q., *Ancestrality*, in *After Finitude: An essay on the necessity of contingency*, Continuum, New York, 2008, pp. 1-27. ISBN: 978-1-4411-7383-6 (148 pages) (PDF)

Week 3

Rossi, A., *The Architecture of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 21-35. ISBN: 0-262-18101-0 (201 pages) (PDF)

Week 4

Meillassoux, Q., *Ancestrality*, in *After Finitude: An essay on the necessity of contingency*, Continuum, New York, 2008, pp. 50-81. ISBN: 978-1-4411-7383-6 (148 pages) (PDF)

Week 5

K. Michael Hays, *Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form*, in *Perspecta Vol. 21* (1984), MIT Press, pp. 14-29. (PDF)

Week 7

Agamben, G. *State of Exception*, University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 52-64. ISBN: 978-0226009254 (104 pages) (PDF)

Week 8

Thenhaus, C. *Four Acts: Between Legibility and Ambivalence*, in *ACSA 103 Conference Proceedings*, pp. 119-128. (678 pages) (PDF)

Week 9

Heidegger, M. *The Thing*, in *Poetry, Language Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter, Harper and Row, 1971, pp. 404-408. (256 pages) (PDF)

Reza Negarestani, *Contingency and Complicity*, in *The Medium of Contingency*, Robin Mackay (ed.), Cornerhouse (2011), pp. 10-16. ISBN: 978-1905464395 (80 pages) (PDF)

Week 10

Schumacher, P., *The Autonomy of Architecture*, in *The Autopoiesis of Architecture Vol 1*, Wiley, 2011, pp. 188-197. ISBN: 978-0-470-77298-0 (480 pages) (PDF)

Bratton, B.H. *Force Finding Function Finding Form*, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*, MIT Press, 2015, pp. 160-168. ISBN: 978-0-262-02957-5 (502 pages) (PDF)

Week 11

Nealon, J.T., *Foucault beyond Foucault: Power and its intensification since 1984*, Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 24-53. (PDF)

Week 12

Virilio, P. *Speed and Politics*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2006, pp. 149-167. ISBN: 978-1-58435-040-8 (174 pages) (PDF)

Week 13

Srnicek, N., Williams, A. *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, Verso, NY pp. 129-141. ISBN: 978-1-78478-098-2 (245 pages) (PDF)

Week 14

Leach, N. *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 71-88. ISBN: 0-262-62126-6 (98 pages). (PDF)

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, however, if a student fails any phase of the course worth 30% or more they will fail the 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+** (95.0-100.0); **A** (90.0-94.99); **A-** (85-89.99); **B+** (80.0-84.99); **B** (75.0-79.99); **B-** (70.0-74.99); **C+** (65.0-69.99); **C** (60.0-64.99); **C-** (55.0-59.99); **D+** (50.0-55.99); **D** (45.0-49.99); **F** (0-44.99).
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.
11. Academic Accommodations. Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfill requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their Instructor or the designated contact person in EVDS, Jennifer Taillefer (jtaillef@ucalgary.ca). Students who require an accommodation unrelated to their coursework or the requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the Vice-Provost (Student Experience). For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/