

Architectural Theory 1  
 ARC2201, Fall 2025  
 School of Architecture  
 Dr. Hui Zou

Lecture/ T/ 3 pm-4:55 pm (by Zou)  
 Seminar/ R/ 4:05 pm-4:55 pm (by GTA)  
 Rm/ TUR L005

### **Meditations in Architecture**

3 credits, qualified for General Education courses in “Humanities” (H)

#### **Introduction:**

The course introduces the architectural theoretical concepts, issues, problems, poetics and creativity, hermeneutic interpretation, and critical perspectives in architectural imagination, construction, and meditation. The weekly topics and readings include ancient Greek and Roman cosmic theories, Renaissance and Western humanistic and hermetic theories, and modern Western and United States phenomenological theories. Paralleled with architectural theories, ancient Greek cosmology and phenomenological theories on art are introduced to present a broad theoretical context of architectural meditation and understanding. A hermeneutic comparative study of eastern-western concepts of architectural space is also introduced for the student to explore the cross-cultural architectural design facing today’s pressures and challenges of technical globalization and the loss of cultural identity and humanism in architecture. Through this course, students are expected to develop their abilities to theorize architectural issues and ideas for the design process and understand how critical theories intrinsically engage in history and design. The course provides a constructive curriculum structure (lecture + seminar) for the student to learn how to interweave intellectual skills of architectural thinking (through reading and writing), imagination (through visualization and representation) and communication (through speaking) into a dynamic theoretical discourse that can open up the design process towards poetical and ethical architecture.

The course consists of lectures, seminars, research papers and group presentations. The topic of each Tuesday lecture is specified in the syllabus, and each Thursday seminar is an expansion of the Tuesday topic through students’ active participation in speaking and debating. The Tuesday lecture will highlight the main contents of the selected texts for reading assignments and interpret the texts’ theoretical significance within architectural discourse. The Thursday seminar is specifically provided for the student to exercise and develop theoretical thinking and speaking through “dialoguing” with the seminar instructor and other students. The reading materials for each week will be posted in the previous week on the Canvas course site. The student needs to read the assigned texts before attending the related lecture and seminar. Besides attending the class, the student is required to complete two papers and participate in one group presentation to articulate theoretical reading and contemplation. Detailed paper assignments will be given during the class. The papers should explore the theoretical issues, ideas and concepts of architecture and are encouraged to be related to design thinking in the studio.

#### **General Education Requirements for Humanities:**

The course satisfies the university’s General Education course requirements for Humanities (H) category. The university’s H-category outline of General Education can be found at: <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>. As the university’s H-category objectives state, “Humanities courses must afford students the ability to

think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general.” Although this course mainly presents the historical line of architectural theories developed from antiquity to modernity in Western cultures and traditions, it critically introduces the comparative philosophical-cultural perspective for revealing the aesthetic and ethical common ground of poetical dwelling of humanity in general. The Gordon Rule writing requirement is not applied to this course. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):**

As the result of the course, the student should obtain the fundamental knowledge of architectural theories and develop the student’s own constructive skills of critical thinking, communication (writing and speaking), and design imagination for thoughtful architecture. The course’s main objectives for the purpose of “general education in humanities” are the introduction of architectural fundamental concepts, meaningful terminology, and critical thinking, writing and speaking in architectural discourse. Through this course, the student should obtain a comprehensive knowledge of architectural theories, especially in design, philosophy and aesthetics related, within the historical horizon and develop the student’s own theoretical skills of critical thinking and poetical imagination.

### **Class Regulations:**

Constant preparation, attendance, participation and interest are expected. Keeping a quiet class environment is important for the success of the whole class. No eating food, use of cell phones (including the ringing of phones) or chattering will be tolerated in the classroom. In addition, you are expected to be in the classroom on time and remain in the classroom until the completion of the lecture. You are responsible for your own class attendance. The dates of the paper submissions are marked in the syllabus, and no late submission will be accepted.

### **Office Hour and Email Policies:**

The students’ questions about the course can be addressed in the instructor’s office hours or emailed individually to the GTA through Canvas. All questions about attendance and study documentation should be emailed directly to the GTA. Office hours and email communication can be used for quick and simple communication on a certain issue related to the course but cannot be used as a replacement for the lecture and seminar class attendance and participation.

### **Weekly Topics:**

#### Week 1

R (8/21)/ Course introduction.

#### Week 2

T/ Vitruvius, “Book I,” p. 3-32.

---Architectural education, interdisciplinary knowledge, fundamental principles, crafts (building, time, machinery) and quality criteria (*venustas*), site, city, cosmic links (air, wind).

R/ Seminar (seminar introduction, formulating discussion/presentation groups).

#### Week 3

T/ Vitruvius, “Book II,” p. 35-42; “Book III,” p. 69-75; “Book IV,” p. 101-109.

---The primitive hut, primordial substance (cosmic elements), symmetry (proportion) and the body, origin of orders, ornament.

R/ Seminar

Week 4

T/ Vitruvius, "Book V," p. 137-153; "Book IX," p. 251-270.

---Theater: harmony of site, air and sound, harmonics of music and architecture, acoustics, cosmic geometry, stage design; cosmology.

R/ Seminar

Week 5

T/ Plato, Chs. 9-26, p. 57-82.

---Greek cosmography, cosmic elements and geometry, *chora* and space.

R/ Seminar

Week 6

T/ Alberti, "Book I," p. 7-32; "Book VI," p. 154-157.

---Lineament, joining together, *venustas* as grace and elegance, locality, water, virtue, composition, scale, pleasing and enchanting the mind, openings and stairs; beauty.

R/ Seminar

Week 7

T/ Yates, "Camillo's Theater," p. 129-59.

---The built mind, Renaissance hermeticism, art of memory.

R/ Seminar

Week 8

T/ Vesely, "Architectonics of Embodiment," p. 28-43; Harries, "Representation and Re-Presentation," p. 118-133.

---Body and embodiment, microcosm, metaphor and analogy; architecture as art of representation.

R/ Seminar (**Paper 1** due by 5 pm, 10/9, Thursday on Canvas)

Week 9

T/ Pérez-Gómez, "Chora," p. 1-34.

---A hermeneutic and phenomenological interpretation of *chora* throughout architectural history.

R/ Seminar

Week 10

T/ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking", p. 347-363; Harries, "Lessons of a Dream."

---The fourfold world, bridge, farmhouse, poetically man dwells; ideal dwelling.

R/ Seminar

Week 11

T/ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 143-203.

---Origin, truth, work of art, Van Gogh's painting, *alētheia*, Greek temple, *techné* (craft and art).

R/ Seminar

Week 12

T/ Holl, "Intertwining," with Pérez-Gómez's "Introduction;" Frascari, "The-Tell-The-Tale-Detail;" Holl, "Steven Holl Architects: Ex of In House" (video on YouTube).

---Phenomenological architectural theories and design practice.

R/ Seminar

Week 13

T/ (11/11, no class, Veterans Day)

R/ Vesely, "Toward a Poetics of Architecture," p. 355-389.

---Symbolic representation, classic decorum, *mimesis*, praxis, poetic design vs. progressive design, the latent world, poetic analogy.

R/ Seminar

Week 14

T/ Perez-Gomez, "Architecture and *Spiritus* in the Twenty-First Century," p. 215-233; Zou, "Dao and Chora."

---Atmosphere, mood, embodied consciousness, emotion, poetic image, psychosomatic health, *spiritus* as breath, space of desire, architectural attunement; the origins of space in eastern and western cultures and philosophies, Chan (Zen) space.

Week 15

(11/24-11/28, no class, Thanksgiving)

Week 16

(No class; writing the paper, **Paper 2** due by 5 pm, 12/5, Friday on Canvas)

**Textbooks:**

1. (required) Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Morgan (Dover, 1960, or any edition).
2. (recommended) Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (MIT Press, 2016).

**Reading List:** (scanned book chapters and articles posted weekly on Canvas)

Leon B. Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* (1996).

Marco Frascari, "The-Tell-The-Tale-Detail," *Semiotics* (1981).

Karsten Harries, "Representation and Re-Presentation," *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (1998).

-----, "Lessons of a Dream," *Chora 2: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* (1996).

Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951), *Basic Writings* (1993).

-----, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935), *Basic Writings*.

Steven Holl, "Intertwining," with Pérez-Gómez's "Introduction," *Intertwining* (1996).

-----, "Steven Holl Architects: Ex of In House" (video on YouTube).

Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation," in *Chora 1: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* (1994).

-----, Ch. 8 "Architecture and *Spiritus* in the Twenty-First Century," *Attunement* (2016).

Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* (1977).

Ellery Susa and Hui Zou, "The Narrative Space: John Hejduk's Angelic Architecture," *UF Journal of Undergraduate Research* (2022) (free online access, for extra reading).

Dalibor Vesely, "The Architectonics of Embodiment," *Body and Building* (2002).

-----, Ch. 8 "Toward a Poetics of Architecture," *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation* (2004). (E-book, access through UF library catalogue).

Frances A. Yates, "Camilo's Theater," *The Art of Memory* (1966).

Hui Zou, "Dao and Chora: The Echoes of Empty Mountains," *Vorkurs 3* (2019).

**Grading:**

1) Paper 1: 30%

2) Paper 2: 30%

3) Participation: 40%

--Lecture attendance: 20%

--Seminar attendance + group presentation: 10% + 10%=20%

The papers will be graded by the GTA and the school-hired graduate grader. The group presentations will be organized and graded by the GTA. Once a grade is announced, it remains as the final. Academic integrity will be highly maintained, and no plagiarism is tolerated.

**Grading Scale:**

Letter Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Numeric Grade	100-95	94-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	0
Quality Points	4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0.0

You can find the university grading policy at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/> .

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> .

**Paper Grading Rubrics:**

- 1) Paper formatting---text length, words font, footnote requirement, image requirement, cover page.
- 2) Writing---Topic introduction, historical analysis and hermeneutic interpretation, scholarly publication quotes, case studies, cohesive structure, critical historical and theoretical perspective, convincing conclusion.

**Office Hours:**

Dr. Hui Zou / Tue, 12:50 pm-2:45 pm; Thu, 10:40 pm-12:35 pm (appointment required)  
GTA / 1 class-hour weekly (meeting schedule and place are upon the student and GTA's agreement, or through digital communication).

**Contact:** Please use email for in-time contact.

Instructor: Dr. Hui Zou, Office: AH134, Email: [h Zhou@ufl.edu](mailto:h Zhou@ufl.edu), Phone: 352-294-1470

GTA: Shannon Brixner (MA student), Email: [shannonbrixner@ufl.edu](mailto:shannonbrixner@ufl.edu)

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

**UF Policies:**

**UF Academic Policies and Campus Resources:** <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolices>

**University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:**

<https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>

**University Policy on Academic Misconduct:** <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>

**Netiquette: Communication Courtesy:**

<http://teach.ufl.edu/docs/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

**Canvas Help:**

- [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu)
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

**Other Resources:** <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

**Should you have any complaints** with your experience in this course, please visit

<http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints>

**The online course evaluation process:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals,
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or
3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com/>
  - a. Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>