

## **INTRODUCTION TO DESIGN THEORIES [EVDA 621]**

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TA: Matthew Parker, matthewparker@live.ca  
Class Time: Tu, Th 11:00-12:20  
Location: PF3160

### **OVERVIEW**

Introduction to Design Theories (IDT) is a required lecture/seminar course in the Master of Architecture program devoted to the examination of significant thematic developments in architectural discourse from 1900 through a contemporary lens. The course addresses the transition from singular and centralized models of authorship and control toward distributed models of interaction, collaboration and integration within complex ecological environments in order to prepare students for present and future challenges facing the built environment. Toward this end, the course emphasizes critical diagrammatic analysis as a tool for learning, discovery and design. The course themes of formation(s), communication(s), production(s), and sensation(s) structure the course into four discrete sections that facilitate a discovery of the complex and contradictory problems that define the always-changing discipline of architecture. The course consists of the following components, each described in their own subsequent section in the course outline: student group presentations, lectures, critical evaluations, required readings, in-class discussion sessions, and term project.

### **CACB STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**

The following CACB Student Performance Criteria is covered in this course at a primary level:

A1: Critical Thinking Skills; A2: Research Skills; A4: Verbal and Writing Skills; A6: Human Behavior; A8: History and Theory; A9: Precedents

The following CACB Student Performance Criteria is covered in this course at a secondary level:

A5: Collaborative Skills

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Explore developments in 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture through a series of thematic lenses.
2. Develop an understanding of critical architectural theory in order to recognize historical precedents and contexts for issues of contemporary concern.
3. Develop a general comprehension of and familiarity with historical architectural debates that have occurred over the course of the past century.
4. Develop an understanding of contemporary architectural works through an analysis of the theoretical views that motivated their development and production.
5. Develop the ability to understand, develop and participate in significant and sustained theoretical discussions.
6. Develop a sense of the critical issues that shape theoretical debates and cultural evolution in the visual and performing arts, humanities and science in relation to architecture.

### **CONTENT**

The development of topics allows for the capturing of movement through the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the present, with an emphasis on the impact of digital technologies and Continental philosophy upon architectural discourse + practice.

## TEACHING APPROACH

As mentioned above, the course is divided into four themes: formation(s), communication(s), production(s), and sensation(s). Each theme is explored through a series of lectures by the course instructors that investigate specific questions and problems

. Students are assigned weekly readings and write corresponding critical evaluations for each. Students also work in groups to prepare in-class presentations of a given topic. Additionally, each student undertakes a four-part term project where they will critically analyze a significant post-1900 building or project. Through these aforementioned components, students are expected to learn about and contribute toward various developments in contemporary architectural theory. All assignments, course announcements and supplementary material will be posted to the class blog.

## COURSE COMPONENTS

### Student Group Presentations

Each class will begin with a 20-minute student group presentation. This presentation should build on an clearly defined issue originating from the assigned reading, demonstrating how it manifests within a curated set of architectural projects.

### Lectures

Instructors will give a 45-minute lecture in each class with the exception of *in-class discussion session* days. These lectures address specific questions and topics within a given theme thus serving to expand on problems touched upon in the assigned reading. The lecture will typically follow the *student group presentations* and will aim to have approximately 5-10 minutes of time at the end of the class session for any questions and/or clarifications. More nuanced and in-depth discussions are generally reserved for the *in-class discussion sessions*.

### Required Readings

Each class session corresponds with an assigned reading. Each student is expected to complete and familiarize themselves with that text prior to the beginning of the class session to which it is assigned. It is likely that one must read the text more than once in order to achieve the prescribed level of understanding.

### In-class Discussion Sessions

In-class discussion sessions occur at the end of a given thematic section of the course. For these sessions, the class is broken down into three sections with each section's discussion moderated by either an instructor or the course TA (on a rotating basis). These discussions are wide ranging and open ended in nature so that students are given the opportunity to work out problems and ideas themselves that originate from the assigned texts and lectures. Participation defines the role of students in these sessions. Students should come to the sessions prepared (familiarized with all texts from the thematic section, with copies of their own CE's in hand, additional questions drafted). The role of the instructors in these sessions is to keep things from going too far off track while also taking note of each student's grasp of the topics – occasionally prompting the group with questions to facilitate further discussion.

## **COURSE COMPONENTS (cont.)**

### **Critical Evaluations**

Each Critical Evaluation (CE's) consists of a succinct (300 word max.) paragraph demonstrating your understand of its corresponding, required EVDA 621 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. You will produce one CE for each required reading.

***Critical Evaluations are not reading summaries*** and you should not simply restate what the article is saying. CEs are also not a place to offer your personal opinions or thoughts on the writings or their subject matter. They are designed to develop your ability to understand and question the assigned texts in a rigorous way.

Please note that your personal opinions are an important component of the course – but the course is structured such that they exist outside the realm of what is graded – no personal opinion is worth a higher or lower mark than any other. Save your opinions for in-class discussions. CE's are due on paper at the beginning of each class.

Some useful pointers:

1. Use the CE's to demonstrate a rigorous and critical understanding of the text.
2. Clearly relate your question(s) to specific and identified moments/issues in the text.
3. CE's must not exceed 300 words. You are entirely free to write more, but we will stop reading them at the 300 word mark and you will only be graded on those first 300 words – so say what you have to say efficiently and succinctly.
4. In addition to improving your reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, the CE's are also designed to improve your writing skills. This translates into developing clear structural organization, understandable language and proper grammar.

Note: This description contains 300 words (not including title).

### **Term Project**

The term project is designed so that each student develops an in-depth knowledge of a significant post-1900 architectural project. In addition to reporting on the general history and common understanding of the project, it is the responsibility of each student to generate a novel critical reading of the project itself. The term project is divided into 4 phased assignments each building off the one that precedes it and corresponding in time with the course's thematic sections. Assignment 1 asks students to gather and assemble all existing information surrounding their assigned project in order to establish its commonly understood significance as well as identifying possible gaps in that understanding in form of a limited set of questions about the project itself. It should include basics such as when it was built, who designed it, why it was designed, how it was used, its current state, historical images, existing diagrams, and critical positions in a fully cited format. In short, Assignment 1 is a comprehensive project report that results in a series of questions that have not yet been asked (or answered) of the project. Assignment 2 asks students to develop a methodology for critically addressing a particular question identified in Assignment 1. This methodology will be developed in consultation with the course instructors and will include a set of expected outcomes and will serve as a set of instructions to be rigorously follow in Assignment 3. Assignment 3 will yield a series of critical diagrams, texts and observations stemming from the process prescribed in the methodology. In Assignment 4, students evaluate the successes and failures of their methodologies as well as identifying insights gained into their assigned architectural project. The final term project submission is an assembly of these four assignments into a single cohesive document.

## SCHEDULE

Tuesday, Sept. 9	COURSE OVERVIEW: On critical analysis
<b>Formation(s)</b>	
Thursday, Sept. 11	NATURAL FORMATION(S): Between principled ideals & material behaviors
Tuesday, Sept. 16	MODERN FORMATION(S): Between the One & the Many
Thursday, Sept. 18	POSTMODERN FORMATION(S): On complexity & contradiction
Tuesday, Sept. 23	FORM, FUNCTION & BEYOND: On material and formal operations in architecture
Thursday, Sept. 25	DISCUSSION SESSIONS
<b>Communication(s)</b>	
Tuesday, Sept. 30	INTERACTION BETWEEN BODIES: On program and violence <b>Assignment 1 due at beginning of class</b>
Thursday, Oct. 2	LIMITS OF COMMUNICATION: On signified aspects of architecture
Tuesday, Oct. 7	EXCESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS: On aesthetics and internalization
Thursday, Oct. 9	MATERIAL COMMUNICATIONS: On spaces of possibilities
<b>BLOCK WEEK</b>	NO CLASSES
Tuesday, Oct. 21	DISCUSSION SESSIONS
Thursday, Oct. 23	NO CLASS
<b>Production(s)</b>	
Tuesday, Oct. 28	DYNAMIC SYSTEMS: From qualities to behaviors <b>Assignment 2 due at beginning of class</b>
Thursday, Oct. 30	ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTS: On parts and populations
Tuesday, Nov. 4	ECOLOGICAL PRODUCTION: On letting go of nature
Thursday, Nov. 6	TECHNIQUES OF GOVERNANCE: On managing scarcity and excess
Tuesday, Nov 11	READING DAY - NO CLASS
Thursday, Nov. 13	DISCUSSION SESSIONS
<b>Sensation(s)</b>	
Thursday, Nov. 20	LIVED EXPERIENCES: On forming the whole of life <b>Assignment 3 due at beginning of class</b>
Tuesday, Nov. 25	DISTRIBUTED SENSATION(S): Between agency and complicity
Thursday, Nov. 27	CONSTRUCTING ENVIRONMENTS: On programming spaces
Tuesday, Dec. 2	SENSORY BOUNDARIES: Between architecture and the city
Thursday, Dec. 4	DISCUSSION SESSIONS
Friday, Dec. 5	<b>Assignment 4 due by 4:30pm; submitted at EVDS front desk</b>

## READING LIST

### Formation(s)

- Thursday, Sept. 11  
Required Reading: NATURAL FORMATION(S): Between principled ideals & material behaviors (Taron) Sanford Kwinter and Umberto Boccioni, *Landscapes of Change: Boccioni's "Stati d'animo" as a General Theory of Models*, in *Assemblage*, No. 19 (Dec. 1992), MIT Press, pp 50-65.
- Tuesday, Sept. 16  
Required Reading: MODERN FORMATION(S): Between the One & the Many (Taron) Le Corbusier, *Architecture or Revolution*, in *Toward an Architecture (Vers un Architecture)*, Frances Lincoln, 2007, pp. 293-307. ISBN: 978-0711228085 (360 pages)
- Thursday, Sept. 18  
Required Reading: POSTMODERN FORMATION(S): On complexity & contradiction (Parlac) Rem Koolhaas, *What Ever Happened to Urbanism?*, in *S,M,L,XL*, The Monicelli Press, New York, 1995, pp. 959-971. ISBN: 978-1885254863 (1376 pages)
- Tuesday, Sept. 23  
Required Reading: FORM, FUNCTION & BEYOND: On material and formal operations in architecture (Parlac) Peter Eisenman, *Postfunctionalism*, in *Eisenman inside out: selected writings, 1963-1988*/Peter Eisenman, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2004, pp. 83-87. ISBN: 0-300-09008-0 (248 pages)

### Communication(s)

- Tuesday, Sept. 30  
Required Reading: INTERACTION BETWEEN BODIES: On program and violence (Taron) Bernard Tschumi, *Violence of Architecture*, in *Art Forum*, Vol XX (1), 1981, pp. 44-47. ISSN: 0004-3532 (75 pages)
- Thursday, Oct. 2  
Required Reading: LIMITS OF COMMUNICATION: On signified aspects of architecture (Parlac) Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, in *Perspecta* Vol. 9, 1965, pp. 17-56. Article DOI: 10.2307/1566911
- Tuesday, Oct. 7  
Required Readings: EXCESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS: On aesthetics and internalization (Taron) Frederic Jameson, *Cognitive Mapping*, in *The Jameson Reader*, ed. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2000, pp. 277-87. ISBN: 978-0631202707 (420 pages)
- Thursday, Oct. 9  
Required Readings: MATERIAL COMMUNICATIONS: On the space of possibilities (Parlac) Manuel Delanda, *Materiality: Anexact and Intense*, Intense, in *Lars Spuybroek NOX Machining Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, New York, 2004, pp. 370-377 ISBN: 978-0500285190 (392 pages)

## READING LIST (cont.)

### Production(s)

- Tuesday, Oct. 28  
Required Reading: DYNAMIC SYSTEMS: From qualities to behaviors (Parlac)  
Cecil Balmond, *New Structure and the Informal*, in *Architectural Design Profile* 129, Vol 76 No 9/10, John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 1997,
- Thursday, Oct. 30  
Required Reading: ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTS: On parts and populations (Taron)  
Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (parts I-XXII), trans. J. Underwood, Penguin, 2008, pp. 3-27.  
ISBN: 978-0141036199 (128 pages)
- Tuesday, Nov. 4  
Required Reading: ECOLOGICAL PRODUCTION: On letting go of nature (Parlac)  
Morton, Timothy, *Introduction: Critical Thinking*, in *The Ecological Thought*, Harvard University Press, April 2010, pp. 1-19.  
ISBN: 9780674049208 (163 pages)
- Thursday, Nov. 6  
Required Reading: TECHNIQUES OF GOVERNANCE: On managing scarcity and excess (Taron)  
Rem Koolhaas, *Junkspace*, in *October*, Vol. 100 *Obsolescence* (Spring 2002), MIT Press, pp. 175-190.

### Sensation(s)

- Thursday, Nov. 20  
Required Reading: LIVED EXPERIENCES: On forming the whole of life (Parlac)  
McKenzie Wark, *New Babylon*, in *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International*, Verso, 2011, pp. 123-134  
ISBN: 978-1844677207 (224 pages)
- Tuesday, Nov. 25  
Required Reading: DISTRIBUTED SENSATION(S): Between agency and complicity  
Reza Negarestani, *Contingency and Complicity*, in *The Medium of Contingency*, Robin Mackay (ed.), Cornerhouse (2011), pp. 10-16.  
ISBN: 978-1905464395 (80 pages)
- Thursday, Nov. 27  
Required Reading: CONSTRUCTING ENVIRONMENTS: On programming spaces (Parlac)  
Usman Haque, *The Architectural Relevance of Gordon Pask*, in *4dsocial*, Lucy Bullivant (ed), *Architectural Design* July/August 2007, Wiley-Academy, pp. 54-61.  
ISBN: 9780470319116 (128 pages)
- Tuesday, Dec. 2  
Required Reading: SENSORY BOUNDARIES: Between architecture and the city  
Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Toward the Archipelago: Defining the political and the formal in architecture*, in *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, pp. 1-46.  
ISBN: 978-0262515795 (252 pages)

## EVALUATION

The course evaluation is based on assignments completed during the term including: student group presentations, critical evaluations, in-class discussion sessions, and term project assignments 1-4. Each assignment must be completed by its assigned due date in order to pass the course. The following weights are applied to each assignment category:

Student Group Presentations	25%
Critical Evaluations	20%
In-class Discussions	15%
Term Project Assignment 1	10%
Term Project Assignment 2	10%
Term Project Assignment 3	10%
Term Project Assignment 4	10%

The following grade equivalencies will be used when interpolating rubric scoring from each assignment:

A+: 92.5-100; A: 85-92.49; A-: 80-84.99; B+: 76-79.99; B: 73-75.99; B-: 70-72.99;  
C+: 66-69.99; C: 63-65.99; C-: 60-62.99; D+: 56-59.99; D: 50-55.99; F: 0-49.99

Each assignment includes its own set of instructions and grading rubrics. Regular attendance is required. More than two unexcused absences may result in failure to pass the course. It is recommended that students consult with instructor(s) regarding the group presentation assignment approximately 2 weeks in advance of their scheduled date. Students are expected to submit all assignments on time. Late submission will result in a 10% grade penalty with exception of critical evaluations. In the case of critical evaluations, late submissions are not accepted. Failure to submit assigned critical evaluation will result in 0 points for the missed reading. Revisions of the course schedule may occur during the term in which case revised schedules will be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make certain they are using a current schedule and reading list.

## SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

The following books are suggested as supplementary reading for the course:

### Selected Readers

Harrison-Moore, A. and C. Rowe, *Architecture and Design in Europe and America, 1750-2000*.  
Hays, K.M., ed., *Architectural Theory since 1968*.  
Hays, K.M., *Oppositions Reader*.  
Leach, N., *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*.  
Nesbitt, K., ed., *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965-1995*.  
Ockman, J., ed., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology*.  
Stern, R., A. Plattus and P. Dreamer, *[Re]Reading Persepecta*.  
Sykes, K.A., ed., *Constructing a New Agenda: Architectural Theory 1993-2009*.  
Braham, W. and J.A. Hale, ed., *Rethinking Technology: A Reader in Architectural Theory, 1901-2004*.

### Selected General Bibliography

Frampton, K., *Labor, Work and Architecture: Collected Essays on Architecture and Design*  
Tafuri, M. and F. Dal Co, *Modern Architecture 1 & 2*  
Weinstock, M., *The Architecture of Emergence: The Evolution of Form in Nature and Civilization*.

## 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. 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.