

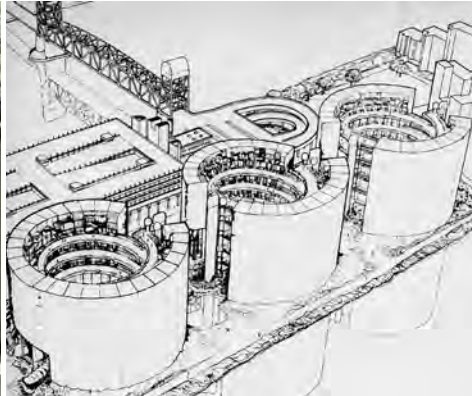
BUILDING BLOCK STREET: SEMINAR IN URBAN HOUSING

Syracuse University School of Architecture

ARC 575 | spring 2026 | 3 credit hours | Professor Elizabeth Kamell | Class Hours: W 2:15-5:05 pm



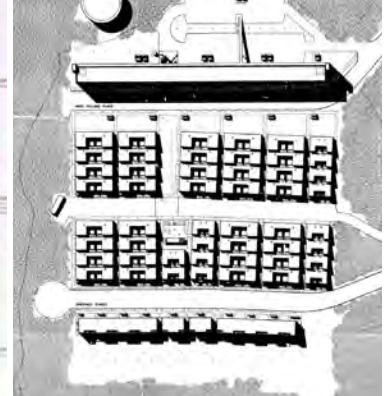
Race Riots, Chicago, 1968



Peter Cook, "The Island Nobody Knows" competition entry, 1974



Pasanella and Klein, Twin Parks, 1967



Elm Street Housing, W. Seligmann, 1973

HOUSING WHEN IT WAS GREAT

In the spring semester 2025, "Building Block Street" will diverge from its usual trajectory to closely examine the politics and product of the most important housing program in U.S. history.

In response to the Race Riots of 1968 and unrest throughout the nation, on the night of Dr. Martin Luther King's funeral, the NYS Assembly established the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC) to build housing throughout the State. The UDC legislation had evolved as a result of social reform policy beginning with the New Deal, through the War on Poverty and the Great Society, federal programs that addressed issues of poverty, justice and the unequal distribution of wealth. It was an unprecedented measure of enormous importance that tied architecture and design to social policy and positioned housing as a human right.

Though it lasted for only 5 years, it is the most significant housing program ever launched in the United States. Run by young and ambitious reformers, the UDC hired architects with little experience, but lots of talent who were hungry and committed to making great architecture. Among them, Sert and Jackson, Kenneth Frampton, Peter Eisenman, Louis I. Kahn, Richard Meier, Gwathmey Siegel, Werner Seligmann, Knox Edelman and Wood, Wells + Dennis, and many others. Because the UDC was committed to architecture and typological, technological and constructional innovation, the projects remain some of the most inventive housing built in the U.S.

Between 1968 and 1973, the UDC completed 33,000 dwelling units that housed more than 100,000 people in over 110 projects across New York State, and produced housing that ranged from low-rise, high density models to modernist towers. The diverse projects were located on dense urban sites, at the periphery of cities, and in suburban areas and included three complete, new towns. The residents were all low- and moderate-income or elderly families. In January of 1973, President Richard Nixon turned off the faucet for federally funded housing subsidies and the UDC died as a progressive program despite its noble ambitions and the quality of its production.

Throughout the semester, the class will conduct original research and document the production of some of the many UDC housing projects. Presentations by the instructor will frame the research, but class time will also be dedicated to conducting, reviewing and editing interviews with UDC architects, archival research and the construction drawings and a digital model. Each student will be responsible for examining one project in depth to fully understand the ambitions and inspiration of the architect and each project's innovative construction methods. Collectively, the class will construct a "UDC Atlas."

ARC 569- Postcolonial Spaces

Prof. Lawrence Chua

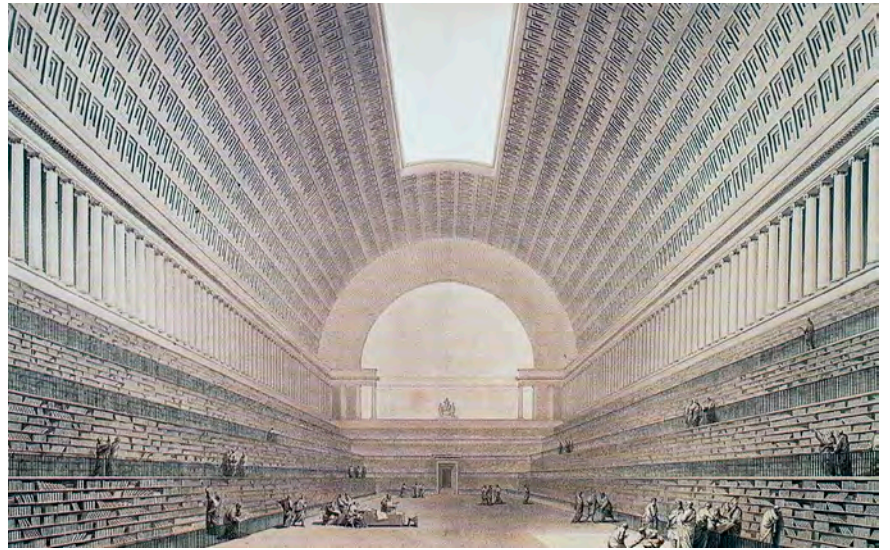
MW 3:45-5:05pm

Professional Elective**

Cold War Modernisms: Architecture and the Geopolitics of post World War II Utopia

This upper-level, reading intensive seminar explores the history of architectural production in the post-World War II period through the lens of Cold War geopolitics and the 1955 Africa Asia Conference of non-aligned nations in Bandung, Indonesia. Moving beyond the canonical narrative of “mid-century modernism” as a progressive aesthetic movement after the exceptional interruption of mid-century fascism, the course interrogates how architecture became a battleground for competing ideological visions—corporate capitalist utopias and socialist social utopias—across newly decolonized nations. We will examine how the utopian aspirations of pre-war modernism were reconfigured in the wake of World War II, the impact of McCarthyism and the Lavender Scare on the profession, and how architecture served as a tool of soft power in the global struggle for influence. Through case studies ranging from Pierre Koenig’s Stahl House and Bruce Goff’s Shinen’kan to Cambodian and Vietnamese modernist experiments, Chinese Cultural Revolution-era buildings, and U.S. and Soviet-sponsored hospitals, stadia, embassies, and hotels in Southeast Asia and Africa, students will analyze how architecture materialized ideological conflict and aspirations for liberation. By foregrounding histories of decolonization, this course challenges linear narratives of techno-scientific-social progress and offers alternative readings of modernism rooted in resistance, adaptation, and global entanglement. Students will make weekly presentations of the readings, create a syllabus for a lecture course on “mid-century modernism,” and produce a 30-minute lecture for the course.

** Undergraduate students may petition to use **ARC 569 Postcolonial Spaces** as an Architecture History Elective **ONLY if you have already completed one architecture history elective**. You can request this using [a petition to faculty form](#) to be reviewed by your academic advisor. Any questions about this should be directed to your academic advisor or the instructor.



PARIS

An Architectural History

Professor Jean-François Bédard

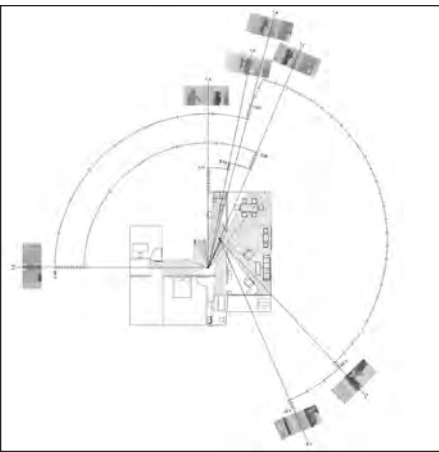
Paris, like other great cities, has constantly reinvented itself. From provincial Roman Lutetia, it became the resplendent capital of the kings of France, the powerhouse of the Enlightenment, the bloody theater of the French Revolution, the violent laboratory of nineteenth-century bourgeois urbanism, and the contemporary showcase of corporate capital and global cultural tourism.

Paris: An Architectural History will address these social, cultural, and political transformations by attending to the city's architectural and urban form. It will proceed chronologically, interspersing broader discussions of architectural movements with case studies of individual buildings that marked their time such as the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, the Abbey Church of St. Geneviève (now the Panthéon), the Opéra Garnier, the Pompidou Center, and the Grand Louvre, among others.

This course counts as a history elective requirement for architecture majors. It is also open to non-majors and architecture minors. No prior experience with architecture is necessary. The instructor will introduce students to the basics of architectural representation. He will also present the fundamental terminology used in architectural design and building construction. Evaluation of student performance will consist of open-book examinations administered online.



Oculus of the Pantheon, Rome



McGrath and Gardner, Cinemetrics: diagram

Architecture and its temporalities

Temporality is subjective progression through moments, while time attempts to objectively measure and mark that progression. Time is necessarily temporal, but temporality can exist plainly without time - a slow clock still measures temporality, even if it doesn't do so in a timely fashion--Michelle Joelle

Architecture is generally understood as a discipline concerned with the composition of space and forms that define it. Architects have developed an elaborate and precise language to describe space and form in images and words. However, this discourse has for the most part been atemporal; it has neglected or entirely ignored many of the roles played by *time*, as an objective system of measurement, and the related phenomenon of *temporality*, as a condition of sequence and duration that can be both objective and subjective.

COURSE CONTENT

In this seminar, we will examine some of the ways in which architecture manifests and even produces different modes of temporality. The following topics have been selected, in part because they seem most directly applicable to design theory and practice. Readings will be assigned for each topic and participation in discussion of these will be essential in the success of this class:

The temporalities of the architectural object

- The indexical expression of construction processes and details that tell a temporal tale; materials and weathering

Temporality in architectural discourse

- The valuing of time and temporality; the denial of time and temporality

Architecture and changing needs over time

- Transformability and adaptation; ephemerality

The representation of spatio-temporal experience

- Representation of direct spatial-temporal experience; analytical modes of representing spatio-temporal experience

Architecture and (its) history

- Modern vs. post-Modern narratives of historical and other temporal meaning; the preservation of architecture and the value of temporal narratives

TERM PROJECTS

Three projects will be undertaken during the term. In the first, students will individually select an image embodying some kind of architectural temporality and present these in a Pecha Kucha format. In the second, pairs of students will produce an object that embodies the temporal process of its making through its form and materiality. In the third, these pairs of students will represent spatio-temporal events or experiences visually.

COURSE MEETINGS

Times: MW 2:15-3:35, location: Slocum 325. Maximum enrollment will be 12 students.

Immersive Spaces, Architectural Simulations

ARC 500.001

Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:45-2:05pm, Slocum 014

Brian Lonsway, blonsway@syr.edu

Course Description

This course is directed towards students interested in integrating interactive simulation and visualization tools into their architectural design process, from immersive full-scale concept exploration and design collaboration to real-time visualization, including modeling for virtual- and mixed-reality applications.

Students will have hands-on experience with multiple online multi-user platforms, including video games, social virtual worlds, and design software to gain insights into their creative potentials and will gain basic proficiency in a leading software application for real-time simulation: *Unreal Engine*.

No experience is required for any applications taught in the class. Digital modeling skills in any application (Rhino-based workflows will be supported), as well as a fundamental grasp of image editing techniques in Photoshop is required.

In the course, small-scale design experiments will parallel a survey of past and present applications and design/development platforms used both within and outside of architectural design. Historically situated, these explorations will provide students with portfolio-ready demonstrations of skills as well as a broad and critically-informed understanding of the field. Students will learn industry-standard workflows for interactive 3d environment design as well as strategies for integrating them into architectural design workflows. To support immersive, first-hand learning, the course will meet in a hybrid model, with some meetings online in various 3d platforms, including in student-designed spaces. At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to integrate lessons learned into their individual and collaborative design practices.

Course Background

Architects have long incorporated and adapted software from other industries into their practices. Early CAD tools were borrowed from engineers, a tradition continued with Gehry's embrace of CATIA, designed for the aerospace industry. Columbia University GSAPP's Paperless Studio initiative leveraged the potential of visual effects software for design conceptualization and representation. So-called modern "game engines," as platforms for the design of interactive and real-time simulations, coupled with the latest wave of computer graphics, VR, and AR hardware, represent a current potential that is just beginning to be tapped.

As developments in the video game, social VR, and design simulation industries have matured, and as their tools have become more affordable and accessible, we can see the fruits of the industries converging. While *Unreal Engine* was developed originally to create video games, its *Twinmotion* app is commonly used in architectural visualization workflows. *Autodesk Workshop XR* builds on the strength of social VR applications for collaborative design in Revit. *Enscape* makes VR design review one click away in *Rhino*. *Unreal Editor for Fortnite* makes custom-designed environments immediately available for anyone on any device that plays *Fortnite*.

Beyond these instrumental technologies, the kinds of social collaboration that form around victory conditions within the immersive spaces of video games has been shown to be just as productive for strategic collaboration around other domains of creative problem-solving. Building on this, the course's focus on immersion and collaboration will highlight some of the ways in which immersive design tools have the potential to enable new perspectives on experience-driven, user-centered, and/or participatory design processes.

Spring 2026
Course Description
ARC 500 Section M006

Third Places: Black Citizens Brigade @blk_citizensbrigade

Room: 104 Slocum Hall
Time: 2:00pm - 4:50pm Thursday

Instructors:
Michael Speaks
Email: maspeaks@syr.edu

Edgar Rodriguez
erodri42@syr.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment and in 104 on scheduled days after class

Course Description

As much of our world continues to move online and our interactions are increasingly driven by algorithms and AI, it is not surprising that human-centered activities occurring in real spaces—reading, dining, shopping—have become more desirable, precious, and valued. Today, physical spaces are more important than ever for those focused on designing authentic, robust, and meaningful experiences. This is especially true in the design of branded spaces, whether schools, art galleries, restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores, or pop-ups.

Among the many approaches that brands have explored recently is the design of so-called “third places,” spaces that are neither work nor home but are in-between spaces that foster community and human interaction within retail environments. These in-between, third places have a long history dating to the design of department stores in the late 19th century, but also share many features with “concept stores” that emerged in the 1990s, such as 10 Corso Como (Milan); Dover Street Market (London); Colette (Paris); and the Prada Epicenter Stores (NYC, LA, Tokyo), designed by OMA/AMO/Rem Koolhaas.

The seminar will quickly review the recent history of these and other concept stores, as well as the redefinition of “luxury” and the emergence of “vintage” as background research for a group-based consulting project for Black Citizens Brigade, a specialty vintage clothing retail store (with books and vinyl) and event space located in Bank Alley in downtown Syracuse. Working with the two instructors and in consultation with store owner, Cjala Surratt, seminar participants will design interior store prototypes and develop merchandising, programming and branding strategies.



Breuer



van der Rohe



Gray



Perriand, Le Corbusier

modern furniture

history and analysis

At the beginning of the twentieth century, as waves of political and social change swept the globe, the arts sought new, foundational significance and novel expression. A generation of artists and designers cast aside nineteenth century eclectic stylings in pursuit of socially liberated and intellectually grounded relevance. Within this context, early modern architects turned to furniture design to experiment - at least it seems so for many. We see this in Corb, and Aalto, and Mies, and etcetera. In furniture, designers saw potential for more-direct explorations of essential relationships between purpose, material, and form.

Starting with the middle-late nineteenth century Arts and Crafts movement, and focusing on twentieth century modernism, this course will examine changing relationships between form, material, and purpose in furniture design. Particular attention will be devoted to seminal designers, including: Rietveld, Breuer, Aalto, Gray, Perriand, Prouvé, and the Eames. Throughout, we will seek to understand design as developed with *material specificity* – material choice, fabrication technique, specific configuration, and joinery. To contextualize our analysis, design work will also be considered from other vantage points - its historic, art-historic, and, even, design pedagogy situations and settings.

Additionally, this course will include student research projects, ranging from art-historical papers to formal/material furniture design analysis. Mid-semester, each student will select and begin developing their course project for submission and presentation at the end of the semester.



Aalto



Breuer



Eames



Perriand

STANDARD PRACTICES

SP26 ARC 500 S4
M 12:45 - 3:30 PM
Slocum 404
Instructor: Tiffany Xu,
Boghosian Fellow
Contact: txu145@syr.edu



Brief:

Contemporary North American construction can be described as a low-tech standardized system of dimensional lumber and veneers: hollow stud walls held together with low-craft nailed and screwed joints provide a surface upon which slats, sheets, and finish layers are fastened.

This seminar examines construction at a scale between the object and the wall. Through field research, material experiments, and readings students will investigate the built environment as contemporary artifact and what everyday construction practices might reveal and enact. The role of memory and lived experience will be equally weighted as ecological provenance, manufacture and conventions of application.

Course Format:

This seminar meets once a week and is research and production-oriented. Course sessions are organized into discussions and presentation of drawings and study models. In addition to close reading texts and buildings, students are expected to participate in discussion and perform field research and documentation. Deliverables include drawings and mixed media models. Proficiency with technical drawing will be helpful but not required.

This course builds upon themes explored in the Boghosian Fellow Fall 2025 research seminar Back Stories and maintains lived experience and everyday materials as design generators.

politics of public space

This seminar will examine issues surrounding public space, politics, and power relations as they impact our public realms. By exploring how architects, artists, and others position their work to engage these spaces, the seminar will raise questions, awareness, and action around those considered excluded, less powerful, or not part of the status quo. Through readings, art, literature, and film, the seminar encourages actions within our public spaces on and around our campus and city of Syracuse.

Student responsibilities will include readings, class participation in discussions, a presentation, and collaborative installation projects during the semester. Because of the cross-disciplinary nature of the seminar, students from various departments are encouraged to participate.

spring 2026

t 9:30 - 12:20

