

Studies in the Photographic / ARTH 360 / 001 / 3 credits
Building with Light: The Entangled Histories of Photography and Architecture



Geert Goiris. Liepaja, 2004.

Fall 2023 / Wednesdays and Fridays / 10:05 – 11:25 / ARTS W-215
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Office hours: Wednesdays, 12:00 – 13:00 / ARTS W-290
TA: Irem Karaaslan

Course overview

Influential architectural photographer Eric de Maré famously described photography as ‘building with light,’ emphasizing its visual and conceptual kinship with architecture. Drawing from this poetic analogy, the present course explores the entanglement of the two media, beginning with the inception of photography in the nineteenth century, progressing through its aesthetic permutations during the consecutive eras of Historicism and Modernism, then its integration of Postmodernist complexities and contradictions, and culminating with its digital metamorphosis in the Post-Internet age. We will discuss how photography (1) influences our ideas about buildings and cities; (2) shapes architectural and urban design practices; (3) articulates the relationship between public and private spheres, man-made and natural environments, as well as the individuals and social groups that inhabit them; (4) translates the tectonic language of space, mass, and structure into a visual form; and (5) adapts it to a variety of uses – commercial, political, scholarly, archival, artistic, sentimental, etc.. Special attention will be given to architectural photography as a means of critical commentary on such pressing issues as poverty, social inequality, military conflict, accessibility, gentrification, historic preservation, and climate change.

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Learning objectives

- Cultivate visual literacy skills to proficiently identify and describe (1) the formal qualities of architectural photographs, including composition, lighting, point of view, framing, and more, and (2) the narrative and storytelling devices employed within photographs.
- Develop the ability to recognize and analyze different styles and trends within photography, specifically examining how architecture is featured within or influenced by the aesthetic characteristics and thematic considerations of each style or trend.
- Develop proficiency in discipline-specific vocabulary related to photography and architecture, enabling effective communication and critical analysis within these fields.
- Assess the transformative effects of technological advancements on the ways in which photography is practiced and experienced.
- Develop the ability to analyze and interpret photographs of buildings and cities within their historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts, appreciating its broader significance and contributions to the field of visual culture. Examine how architectural photography reflects political ideologies, social narratives, and power dynamics of a given historical moment.
- Develop a critical understanding of the reciprocal relationship between photography and architecture, recognizing how they inform and shape each other's practice and discourse.
- Foster interdisciplinary perspectives by drawing connections between the historical development and significance of photography and architecture, recognizing their intersections with other art forms, technological advancements, and social movements.
- Effectively employ theoretical and scholarly literature to enhance critical analysis of topics covered in this course.

Required course materials

- All weekly readings, PowerPoint slides, and handouts will be posted on MyCourses.
- Relevant reference books will be placed on course reserves at the library (see the "Resources" section at the end of the syllabus.)
- The liaison librarian for Art History & Communication Studies is David Greene (David.greene@mcgill.ca)

Instructional methods

- Students can contact me by email for any questions or concerns. I am available for on-campus meetings during my office hours, as well as virtual meetings over Zoom upon request. I aim to respond to emails by the end of the day, and students are encouraged to check their email and myCourses for course updates at least 24 hours before each class.
- All lectures and exams are conducted in person.
- Students are responsible for all course material covered in class, whether they are in attendance or not. If you miss a class, you must acquire notes from another student.
- Class recordings will be made available upon request for students registered with the SA&A office and for documented justifiable absences.
- Learning technologies used by the instructor: myCourses, Polling @ McGill, Zoom.
- FAQs for students using myCourses: Teaching & learning - myCourses (learning management system)
- Mobile computing and communications devices are permitted in class insofar as their use does not disrupt the teaching and learning process. Exception: Mobile and computing devices are not permitted during the in-class assignments and the midterm exam.

- In the absence of a medical certificate or analogous circumstances, any required evaluation submitted after the due date and time will incur a penalty of one grading unit per day, including weekends.
- All written work must be submitted on the assigned date by 12AM. Coursework received after 00:00 without an approved extension will be subject to a grading penalty.
- All assignments submitted are final - students will not be permitted to submit any additional work or an alternative version.
- Students who feel they may be warranted an extension must complete the Extension Request Form immediately, at least 24h before to the assignment deadline.
- Having more than one test/quiz/assignment submission deadline scheduled on the same day does not constitute a schedule conflict.
- Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with text-matching software within myCourses.
- Students must complete all coursework to pass the class.

GPT Disclosure Agreement: This class maintains a policy that you may use AI writing tools to assist you in the writing process but that all artificially generated text needs to be explicitly labeled. In handing in your assignment you agree to disclose the extent to which you used #chatGPT or other AI writing tools in your assignment. All text written by AI must be quoted with the source of the model in parentheses (chatGPT). At the end of your paper please include the following statement. Failure to adequately disclose your AI use will result in a 0 for the assignment. "This paper used (did not use) AI for the following components of the writing process:" Choose none to three of the following: brainstorming, editing, sentence generation.

Evaluation

Name of assignment	Due date	Grade %
<p>Attendance of weekly lectures and participation Attendance of weekly lectures is mandatory. You are expected to bring detailed notes on assigned weekly readings and contribute to class discussions regularly and respectfully. You are also invited to post discussion prompts on MyCourses and/or respond to discussion prompts posted by other students.</p>	Throughout the semester (August 30 – December 6, 2023)	10%
<p>Rare Books visit and visual analysis assignment. On October 13, the class will be replaced by a visit to the Rare Books & Special Collections at McGill library. During the visit, students will receive information on how to research, handle, and cite archival images. They will be asked to produce a visual analysis of one historic architectural photo of their choice from the collection (excluding the ones discussed during the information session). Detailed instructions will follow.</p>	November 15	20%
<p>CCA exhibition visit and report. Students are required to visit the exhibition “The Lives of Documents—Photography” at the Canadian Centre of Architecture. They should then produce a 2-3-page report on their visit, discussing five exhibits that most captivated them. Detailed instructions will follow.</p>	November 15	20%

<p>Research paper proposal. Students are required to produce a one-page description outlining the key themes and questions they intend to explore in their final research paper, focusing on the interplay between photography and architecture. Detailed instructions will follow.</p>	November 24	20%
<p>Final research paper. For their final research paper in this course, students have the opportunity to delve into any topic related to the interplay between architecture and photography. Building upon the knowledge and insights gained throughout the course, your research paper should aim to provide a comprehensive examination of a specific aspect of the dynamic relationship between these two media. Detailed instructions will follow.</p>	December 15	30%

Course content and weekly schedule

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Required Readings	Evaluations
1.	August 30	Introductions and housekeeping.	No assigned readings.	
	September 1	History of photography vs. Photography Studies.	David Bate. "History and Photography," In <i>Photography</i> , 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 231-247.	
2.	September 6	Reading photographs. Representation and reality.	Terry Barrett. "Principles for Interpreting Photographs," In <i>The Weight of Photography. Photography History, Theory, and Criticism</i> , ed. John Swinnen and Luc Deneuli. Brussels: ASP, 2010, pp. 147-172.	
	September 8	Architecture and the early photographic processes (1839-1860).	Micheline Nilsen. "1. Photography as a Medium," In <i>Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Photographs. Essays on Reading a Collection</i> . Farham: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 17-28.	
3.	September 13	Survey photography and state patronage in the 1850s. France, Britain, US.	M. Christine Boyer. "La Mission Héliographique: Architectural Photography, Collective Memory and the Patrimony of France, 1851," In <i>Picturing Place Photography and the Geographical Imagination</i> , ed. Joan Schwartz and James Ryan. London: Routledge, 2021, pp. 21-54.	
	September 15	Urban renewal. Demolition, conservation and	Elvire Perego. "The Urban Machine. Architecture and Industry," In <i>The New History of Photography</i> , ed.	

		restoration. (1860s and '70s)	Michel Frizot. Köln: Könemann, 1998, pp. 197-223.
4.	September 20	Tourism, exploration, expeditions. Egypt, the Holy Land, Africa, and the Pacific.	<p>Siel Acar. "Intersecting Routes of Architectural Travel, Photography, and Survey Books in the Nineteenth Century," In <i>Nineteenth-Century Photographs and Architecture Documenting History, Charting Progress, and Exploring the World</i>, ed. Micheline Nilsen, 2013. London: Routledge, pp. 75-92.</p> <p>Derek Gregory. "Emperors of the Gaze: Photographic Practices and Productions of Space in Egypt, 1839–1914," In <i>Picturing Place Photography and the Geographical Imagination</i>, ed. Joan Schwartz, James Ryan. London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 195-225.</p>
	September 22	Pictorialism and the Photo-Secession.	Beaumont Newhall. "8. Photography as an Art," In <i>The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present</i> . New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982, pp. 119-138.
5.	September 27	Visual analysis workshop.	<p>Video: Kaveh Nikpour et al. <i>Decoding Photographic Images</i>. Hamilton: Films Media Group, 2005. <i>Online</i>: https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/707972639</p>
	September 29	Photography and the modern city. Social reform and early street photography. The ideal city.	Clive Scott. "Streets, Buildings and the Gendered City," In <i>Street Photography. From Brassai to Cartier-Bresson</i> . London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 162-194.
6.	October 4	Rare Books & Special Collections visit.	Margrit Prussat. "Reflexions on the Photographic Archive in the Humanities," In <i>Global Photographies. Memory – History – Archives</i> , ed. Sissy Helff and Stefanie Michels. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2018, pp 133-154.

7.	October 13	Photography and movement. Transition to Modernism. Italian Futurism.	Marta Braun. "Photography," In <i>Handbook of International Futurism</i> , ed. Günter Berghaus. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019, pp. 215-230.	
8.	October 18	The Soviet photograph. Constructivism and Socialist Realism.	Peter Galassi. "Rodchenko and Photography's Revolution," In <i>Aleksandr Rodchenko</i> , ed. Magdalena Dabrowski, Leah Dickerman, and Peter Galassi. New York: N. Abrams and the Museum of Modern Art, 1998, pp. 100-137.	
	October 20	Modernism in Germany. Bauhaus and the New Vision.	Andreas Haus. "Photography at the Bauhaus: Discovery of a Medium," In <i>Photography at the Bauhaus</i> , ed. Jeannine Fiedler. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990, pp. 127-184.	
9.	October 25	Dadaism and Surrealism. Photomontage.	Dawn Ades. "Chapter 2. Metropolis: The Vision of the Future," In <i>Photomontage</i> , New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001, n.p.	
	October 27	CCA exhibition visit.	Photography Collection: https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/34085/guide-to-the-photography-collection# . The Lives of Documents : https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/86030/the-lives-of-documentsphotography-as-project	
10.	November 1	American Modernism. The West Coast Photographic Movement, "straight photography" and Group f.64.	Beaumont Newhall. "9. The Straight Approach," In <i>The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present</i> . New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982, pp. 139-166.	
	November 3	CCA exhibition or RBSC workshop visit	See readings for October 4 and October 27.	
11.	November 8	War photography. Destruction and reconstruction (1940s-1950s).	Tom Allbeson. "'The Face of the City.' Photographic pleasures and the illustrated press, c. 1949-55," In <i>Photography, Reconstruction and the Cultural History of the Postwar</i>	

			<i>European City</i> . London: Routledge, 2020, pp. 136-177.	
	November 10	Industrialism and the New Brutalism. Photographing Le Corbusier. (1960s-1970s)	Andrew Higgott. "Memorability as Image: The New Brutalism and Photography," In <i>Camera Constructs: Photography, Architecture and the Modern City</i> , ed. Andrew Higgott and Timothy Wray. London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 283-294.	
12.	November 15	Manipulations and color (pre-digital).	Lisa Hostetler. "Real Color," In <i>Color Rush. American Color Photography from Stieglitz to Sherman</i> , ed. Katherine A. Bussard and Lisa Hostetler. New York: Aperture; Milwaukee: The Milwaukee Art Museum, 2013, pp. 17-26.	CCA and RBSC assignments due
	November 17	Postmodernism in photography and architecture. (1970s-1990s). Polaroid. Interiors.	Jane Tormey. "Postmodern Megapolis," In <i>Cities and Photography</i> , Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013, pp. 155-182.	
13.	November 22	Interior and lifestyle photography.	Arthur Rüegg. "The Role of Furniture Photography in Modernist Propaganda," In <i>Photography, Modern Architecture, and Design</i> , ed. Antoine Baudin. Lausanne: EPFL Press, 2003, pp. 174-183.	
	November 24	Photographs of man-altered landscape. "New Topographics" (1975). Düsseldorf Deadpan. Environmentalism.	Sarah E. James. "Subject, Object, Mimesis: The Aesthetic World of the Bechers' Photography," In <i>Photography after Conceptual Art</i> , ed. D. Costello and M. Iversen. Association of Art Historians, 2010, pp. 50-69.	Final paper proposals due
14.	November 29	Panoptical structures. Surveillance and voyeurism. Activism and protest.	Pauline Hadaway. "Escaping the Panopticon," In <i>Photography Reframed. New Visions in Photographic Culture</i> , ed. Ben Burbridge, Annebella Pollen. London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 196-204.	

	December 1	Architectural image in the digital culture. The future.	David M. Frohlich. "Future Technology in Photography From Capture to Use of Images," In <i>The Handbook of Photography Studies</i> , ed. Gil Pasternak. London: Routledge, 2020, pp. 548-565.
15.	December 6	Architectural photography in Canada. "Photogenic Montreal." Expo 67. Urban Exploration.	Suzanne Paquet. "Post-industrialist Passions: Urban Exploration, Photography, and the Spirit of Place," In <i>Photogenic Montreal: Activisms and Archives in a Post-Industrial City</i> , ed. Martha Langford and Johanne Sloan. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021, pp. 131-148.

Additional information on the course schedule: [key academic dates](#), [holy days](#), [university-scheduled reading breaks](#).

McGill policy statements

- In accord with McGill University's [Charter of Students' Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.
- McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#)
- Please be aware that some of the content in this course contains language or images that may be difficult for some students. It is included in this course because it directly relates to totalitarian and authoritarian political regimes.
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- I will notify you if part of a class is being recorded. By remaining in classes that are recorded, you agree to the recording, and you understand that your image, voice, and name may be disclosed to classmates. You also understand that recordings will be made available in myCourses to students registered in the course. Please consult me if you have concerns about privacy and we can discuss possible measures that can be taken.
- In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.
- As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and/or [Student Accessibility and Achievement](#).

- Mercury course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.
- Many students may face mental health challenges that can impact not only their academic success but also their ability to thrive in our campus community. Please reach out for support when you need it; wellness resources are available on campus, off campus, and online.