McGill University  
School of Architecture  
ARCH 626  
Critical Design Strategies  
Winter 2018  
Wednesday 14:35–17:25 Room MDHAR 207

Instructor  
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Room 301, Macdonald-Harrington Building

Calendar Description  
Arch 652  
Architecture: Study of specific contemporary design practices with particular reference to their affinities with the development and current role of architectural criticism, art, literature, and philosophy.

Course Objectives  
The object of this course is to teach students two different research procedures, the background research that informs design, and the design research that provides the “primary generator” (Jane Darke) or “guiding principle” (Bryan Lawson) for design. The contrasts between these two approaches will be assessed through critical reading, writing, and active participation in seminar discussions. By the end of the course, students should be able to:  
1) identify a primary generator for their own work;  
2) distinguish between background research, knowledge production, and design research;  
3) discuss design methods, tools, and techniques in relation to key issues in contemporary architecture and urbanism, including their political and theoretical implications.

Together, these three objectives will constitute for each student a critical design strategy.

Requirements  
1) Seminar participation: 10%. Attendance, while being mandatory, does not constitute marks for participation.  
2) Assignment #1: 750–1,000-word paper (not including footnotes and bibliography, if applicable) on journals (see below for assignment details). The paper is due through MyCourses before class on 14 February, and each student will present
their paper in class that day.

iii) Assignment #2: 750–1,000-word paper (not including footnotes and bibliography, if applicable) on a recent scholarly monograph (see below for assignment details). The paper is due through MyCourses before class, on 13 March, and each student will present their paper in class that day.

iv) Assignment #3: 2,000-3,000 word paper (not including footnotes and bibliography, if applicable) outlining your critical design strategy (see below for assignment details).

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**Late Policy**

Grades for late work will be penalized at one grade level per day. For example, work graded as “A” but handed in in one day late will receive a “A-”; work graded as “A” but handed in two days late will receive a “B+.”

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**Ethics**

Please note that all projects dealing with human subjects require ethics review and approval before research can begin. For more information, see: http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human

If you have questions, please see the Director of the School of Architecture.

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**McGill Policy Statements**

The following two statements must be included in all course outlines, in keeping with various Senate resolutions:

“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” (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003.)

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.” (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

"In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change."
Schedule and Readings
This schedule and list of required reading are subject to change.

Suggested readings. For those who want an overview of architectural research:

For those who want an overview of architectural history and theory:

Required readings.
Week 1 10 January 2018
Welcome – General discussion – Session planning

Week 2: 17 January 2018
RESEARCH CREATION

**Week 3: 24 January 2018 (TOWN HALL) DISIPLINE/AUTONOMY/FIELD**


**Week 4: 31 January 2018**

Student-led seminar #1

**Week 5: 7 February 2018**

Student-led seminar #2

**Week 6: 14 February 2018**

Assignment #1: Journal presentations

1,000 words; hand-in and presentation

**Week 7: 21 February 2018**

Student-led seminar #3

**Week 8: 28 February 2018**

Student-led seminar #4

**March 7 NO CLASS (Reading week March 5-9)**

**Week 9: 13 March 2018**

Assignment #2 Book presentations

1,000 words; hand-in and presentation

**Week 10: 20 March 2018**

Student-led seminar #5

**Week 11: 27 March 2018**

Student-led seminar #6

**Week 12: 4 April 2018**

Student-led seminar #7

**Week 13: 11 April 2018**

Assignment #3 Critical Design strategy
Assignment #1: Journal/Book presentations
This exercise has two objectives: 1) to introduce the class to the variety of current formats and trends of published architectural research; 2) to stimulate critical and systematic reading of secondary literature.

The essay should be no more than 1,000 words (not including footnotes and bibliography, if applicable), double-spaced. It should be a critical synopsis of the themes, arguments, and issues of the last one to two years of publication of a journal chosen from the list below. The essay should also convey your understanding of the critical aspect or relevance of the journal’s articles as they relate to the questions posed in the class or to your particular research interests. We will distribute assignments to journals over the first two classes.

1. JAE
2. JSAH
3. San Rocco
4. Cabinet
5. Grey Room
6. Log
7. Avery Review
8. Journal of Architecture
9. Design Issues
10. Harvard Design Magazine
11. AA Files
12. Volume
13. Lotus
14. Perspecta
15. Praxis: Journal of Writing and Building
16. AD

Assignment #2 Journal/Book presentations
This exercise has two objectives: 1) to introduce the class to the variety of research expertise available at McGill (and, more broadly, in Montreal); 2) to stimulate critical and systematic reading of secondary literature.

The essay should be no more than 1,000 words (not including footnotes and bibliography, if applicable), double-spaced, it should contain a) a summary of the argument; b) an explanation of what (or who) the author is reacting against; c) an explanation of what (or who) the author is aligning themselves with; d) an outline of possible critiques or unresolved problems; e) and finally, the conveyance of your understanding of the critical aspect or relevance of the reading as it relates to the questions posed in the class or to your particular research interests. You’ll have to get your book choice approved by February 14th.

Assignment #3 Critical Design Strategy
This final essay should be between 2,000 and 3,000 words (not including footnotes and bibliography, if applicable), double-spaced. It should contain a) a summary of the argument; b) an explanation of what (or who) the author is reacting against; c) an explanation of what (or who) the author is aligning themselves with; d) an outline of possible critiques or unresolved problems; e) and finally, the conveyance of your understanding of the critical aspect or relevance of the reading as it relates to the questions posed in the class or to your particular research interests.