

# Course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

This doctoral colloquium is addressed to the question of what other (or alternatively cast) histories of architectural modernism might be told. The class will assume some acquaintance with the more familiar extant narratives of the history of modern architecture and the key topoi through which they have been conceptualized—standardization and industrialized mass production, capitalist rationalization, nationalism, secularism, urbanization, circumscribed social and gender relations and class structures, labor and leisure, health and hygiene, media and the public sphere, Kantian aesthetics, abstraction, enlightenment notions of progress, technological invention and environmental control, utopian ideals and revolutionary upheavals, public programs, regionalism, etc. The ambition is not to refuse or reject the importance of such critical frameworks and the variegated and contingent stakes that motivated and subtended them. Rather, taking them as an important discursive and disciplinary archive, the ambition of the seminar is to ask how, why, and to what ends additional historical materials and foci as well as critical and conceptual frameworks might be introduced to complicate such already variegated narratives. The course will ask, that is, how alternative genealogies and representations of that historical period have been or might continue to be forged: What happens, for instance, when modernity is no longer equated with enlightenment notions of progress or rationality, or when it is no longer understood simply to have emanated from a Western metropolitan condition? What happens when other archives supplement existing histories, or when other stories are told, including those addressed, for instance, to questions of gender, social injustice, colonization and anti-colonial struggles, geopolitical transformation, the persistence of mysticism, or the discipline's relation to the emergence of new techniques of power? We might also ask what other readings might emerge, for example, from within familiar discourses such as Taylorism and Fordism, or when other technologies are brought into focus? Who and what, we might ask, emerge as the key protagonists, discourses, sites, programs, practices, institutions, territories, forms, and technologies within such histories? And what role would the aesthetic and formal dimensions of architecture continue to play?

The ambition of the colloquium is thus to raise a set of questions relating to how as an architectural historian one constructs or demarcates an archive for the discipline and its historiography, deciding what is included, what is excluded, and how to address that which has previously been cast as other to it. It raises the question, in turn, of how to take responsibility for articulating critical and political stakes within the domain of architectural history, stakes that attempt to account for architecture's imbrication within a transforming, and disjunctive modernity. In this sense the course will operate at times in the manner of a workshop for new historical projects, providing a platform for students to critically interrogate

methods of conceptualizing architecture's encounters with the forces of  
modernity, and the structural incoherence of its extant historical representations.