

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GSAPP SYLLABUS SPRING 2026

Session: Fridays, 11am to 1pm EST

Location: 409 Avery Hall, Columbia University Main Campus

AAD seminar: A6981 - Industry, Practice & Research - Intersecting Design & Entrepreneurship in Architecture

Call Number: 15635

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THEME:

Defectors of Architecture - What motivates you?

PREMISE:

Bridging Architecture, Practice, and Industry, this course is to challenge the larger field of (a)rchitecture, and how we can redefine the future of architecture – as a profession, practice, and discourse. *Why do Architects defect? What are other fields Architects can defect to? Who are these defectors? How can they defect?*

Architecture as a practice and business operates between art, design, craft, and foremost, entrepreneurship. This course explores various opportunities of how creatives can use applied research and integration architecture, by leveraging the student's diverse skills and techniques learnt in the field of architecture to create innovative business ventures within the built environment, and beyond.

In addition to learning about different architects, designers, creatives (outside of architecture), their processes, techniques, and surrounding fields including, such as, emerging technologies, innovative platform urbanism, and other industries that complement architectural production, students will learn about novel explorations of diagrams through machine learning, and artificial intelligence (Ai), and new forms of technological adaptation in architecture and design. Larger explorations include various metaverse and web3 explorations and case-studies.

DATES:

- January 23, 2026 - First Class - Faculty Lecture - *What is an Architectural Defector?*
- January 30, 2026 - Individual Review: Research Questions & Pain Points
- February 6, 2026 - **Class Presentation** - Research & Development

- February 13, 2026 - Faculty Lecture - Grants & Funding
- February 20, 2026 - Individual Review: Propositions & Oppositions
- February 27, 2026 - **Class Presentation** - Opportunities & Entrepreneurship
- March 6, 2026 - Individual Reviews: Project &/ Topic Research
- March 13, 2026 - *Kinne Week (No Class)*
- March 20, 2026 - *Spring Break (No Class)*
- March 27, 2026 - **Class Presentation & Project/Paper topic selection (1,500-words)**
- April 3, 2026 - *Good Friday (No Class)*
- April 10, 2026 - Individual Reviews - Panel Discussion Preparation Week
- April 17, 2026 - Final Class - Panel Discussion Regroup & **Presentation**

STRUCTURE, DELIVERABLES, & FORMAT

January 23, 2026 - First Class - Faculty Lecture: *What is an Architectural Defector?*

- Introduction of course and gathering of the definition of Design, research, Entrepreneurship.
- Introduction between peers & colleagues.
- Vote on Guest Critic - Two (2) invited creatives
- Vote on mid-April 2026 - Three (3) invited Panelists

Deliverable for next week:

- Research and discovery of precedents and case-studies of businesses, projects, architects/designers/creatives, and/or companies that inspire you.

Deliverable Format:

16:9 Horizontal PDF presentation with information that includes:

- the names of the business/person/Project;
- When the entity started;
- Seed fund amount, or annual gross income if the company is public or has board report;
- Where is this company, founded and now;
- How did it expand or grow? Is growth important;
- What is its impact (social, cultural, economical, sustainable, etc.)

January 30, 2026 - Individual Review: *Research Questions & Pain Points*

Individual one-on-one with Faculty & Teaching fellow, on the following:

Questions:

- What are impactful Projects/People/Companies?

- What are the pain points that they are driven to solve?
- What's their mission and/or "thesis"?

Start thinking:

- What are your contribution(s) to the field of architecture?
- What is your brand?
- How do you implement Funding into design, if it's not client and service driven?

Deliverable for next week:

- Business Structure Research
- Economic structure Research
- Funding opportunities Research

Deliverable Format: 16:9 Horizontal PDF presentation with information that includes above.

February 6, 2026 - Class Presentation - Research & Development

- Collective and group feedback critique.
- Presentation of research and pitch
- Format: 8 to 10-minutes per person, maximum.

You will be timed, if you go over, you will be cut off. This exercise is to offer feedback and presentations that are concise and precise, that deliver succinct and impactful messaging. Ultimately, how to lead a client to want to learn more without you delivering all your points ad infinitum.

February 13, 2026 - Faculty Lecture - Grants & Funding

Discussion and presentation about the different types of funding models for business establishments. Discovery and dialogues on the advantages and disadvantages of different types of private-public partnerships to solo-preneurs.

Larger discussion will include but not limited to how to raise capital through their networks, from friends and family rounds to equity-based crowdfunding.

Start thinking:

- How to position your brand towards what type of funding.
- What is your ideal funding structure?
- Research about different types of networks, incubators, assets, loans, funds, grants, etc.

Deliverable for next week:

1. Research related to Funding Structures, Pro Forma, Project Assets and Economic Breakdown for your company/project/brand.
2. Type of Business Model: LLC, S-Corp, B-Corp, Public Benefits Corp, PLLC, etc.

Deliverable Format:

16:9 Horizontal PDF presentation with information that includes above.

February 20, 2026 - Individual Review: Propositions & Oppositions

Individual one-on-one with Faculty & Teaching fellow, on the following:

Questions:

- What/who are your competitors/competition?
- How can you partner and collaborate to bring new clients?
- Who is your target audience?
 - Are you providing a:
 - Service?
 - Product?
 - Non-tangible?

Start thinking:

- What are your contribution(s) to the field of architecture?
- What is your brand?

Deliverable for next week: *16:9 Horizontal PDF presentation*

- Presentation on *Proposition* > Refined Project/Company Statement
 - Presentation on *Opposition* > Competitive Analysis Matrix & Chart
 - Business Structure & Partners
 - Integration of Fundraising, Pitching, and Networking
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February 27, 2026 - Class Presentation - Opportunities & Entrepreneurship

- Collective and group feedback critique.
- Presentation of research and pitch
- Format: 8 to 10-minutes per person, maximum.

You will be timed, if you go over, you will be cut off. This exercise is to offer feedback and presentations that are concise and precise, that deliver succinct and impactful messaging. Ultimately, how to lead a client to want to learn more without you delivering all your points ad infinitum.

March 6, 2026 - Individual Reviews: Project &/ Topic Research

Individual one-on-one with Faculty & Teaching fellow, on the following:

Questions:

- We are at the mid-way point?
- What is your market, target, and distribution?
- Who do you sell to? How to pitch?

Start thinking:

- Practice the 8-minute (maximum) elevator pitch
- What makes your product/project/company special?

Deliverable for next week:

- Video pitch, up to 3-minutes of your project/product/company in MP4 or MOV format
- Or, Website Wireframe (i.e. ReadyMag, Canva, Adobe HTML)

Deliverable Format: 16:9 Horizontal PDF presentation with information that includes above.

March 27, 2026 - Class Presentation & Project/Paper topic selection (1,500-words)

- Collective and group feedback critique.
- Presentation of Final Project/Business
- Presentation of Final Paper Topic
 - Short-Form Pitch: 180-words
 - Long-Form Pitch: 500-words
- Format: 8 to 10-minutes per person, maximum.

You will be timed, if you go over, you will be cut off. This exercise is to offer feedback and presentations that are concise and precise, that deliver succinct and impactful messaging. Ultimately, how to lead a client to want to learn more without you delivering all your points ad infinitum.

April 10, 2026 - Individual Reviews - Panel Discussion Preparation Week

Individual one-on-one with Faculty & Teaching fellow, on the following:

Deliverable for next week:

- Bring provocative questions for the panelist
- Questions for your Final Presentation, Written Pitch, and/or Video Creation
- Harvest your hustle and energy

April 17, 2026 - Final Class - Panel Discussion Regroup & Presentation

Final Deliverable Format:

- 16:9 Horizontal PDF “pitch” presentation with the past ten-classes of research, propositions, oppositions, and designs that includes above.
- 1,500 to 2,000-words of written proposal in PDF format
- 3 to 5 Minutes Video Presentation in MOV or MP4 format
- **All deliverables should be uploaded to the class G-Drive.**

Next Steps:

- Do you want to “really” kick-off your business?
- What are your ambitions?
- Who may you select as a board member, or mentor to your next phase in your career?
- Are you going to **defect**?

Brief List of Architectural Defectors:

Creatives who went to Architecture School

Source: Various, Archinect, ArchDaily, RTF, BBC UK, Forbes.

- Evan Sharp, Pinterest Co-Founder, GSAPP Columbia University
- Queen Noor of the Kingdom of Jordan (née: Lisa Halaby), Princeton University
- Bill Gaytten (CD of John Galliano, Christian Dior, etc.), Bartlett School - UCL
- Tom Ford (Founder of Tom Ford), Parsons School of Design
- George Takei (actor), University of California Berkeley
- Virgil Abloh (LVMH, Fashion), Illinois Institute of Technology
- Roger Waters, Nick Mason and Richard Wright (aka Pink Floyd), Regent Street Polytechnic in London, now known as the University of Westminster.
- Ice Cube (rapper), Phoenix Institute of Technology

Architects who dropped out or were autodidacts (to later become Architects)

Source: Various, Archinect, ArchDaily, RTF, BBC UK, Forbes.

- Buckminster Fuller, Harvard GSD dropped-out, then returned
- Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, aka Le Corbusier, due to WWI
- Frank Lloyd Wright, 1-year at University of Wisconsin at Madison
- Eileen Gray, studied Industrial Design, worked with Jean Badovici
- Louis Sullivan, 1-year MIT, 6-months École des Beaux-Arts Paris
- Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, worked at the Bauhaus (Bruno Paul/Walter Gropius)
- Tadao Ando, self-taught, dropped-out