Course Syllabus

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A4780: Architecture. Human Rights. Spatial Politics   **Fall 2017**

Description: This seminar will investigate contemporary trajectories of architectural research and practice that intersect with questions of human rights, notions of democratic public space, and spatial politics. We will ask what role the discipline plays (or might play) in current debates over questions of political representation, defense, the organization of territory, surveillance, warfare, political conflict, and cultural heritage as well as in questions of citizenship, diaspora, humanitarian intervention, and justice. These questions mark out a profoundly fascinating and highly complicated field of study, and there is a growing body of important literature pertaining to them. The seminar will provide a forum for considering aspects of this literature and practices associated with it, as well as for identifying new lines of research and further critical prospects for the discipline of architecture.

Architecture and the city have long been understood to provide an infrastructure for citizenship and democracy—for instance in the sense of organizing and of giving a formal and aesthetic identity to public space and to cultural and political institutions. In the first half of the 20th century, modern architecture was largely identified with ideals of social progress and radical spatial transformation, and the discipline soon came to be embraced after the Second World War by the United Nations as having a role to play not only in addressing rights issues, such as housing, but in the world of international relations. Such enlightenment ideals are not without their own difficult legacy and specific critiques of human rights and humanitarian intervention and aid will be addressed during the class. Architecture and urban sites have also, of course, frequently been the location of (or even provided techniques for) inequity, colonization, terrorism, and exclusion, raising the question of the discipline's possible responsibility to address its imbrication within such forms of violence. Finally, as will be addressed in the seminar, architecture's current role in the organization of public space is further complicated by the increasingly interconnected and mediated if dispersed condition we know as globalization, and by the post-national politics to which it has given rise. Indeed, the very notion of space and of a public within it has been profoundly transformed since World War II, raising not only questions but also significant critical prospects for architecture.

To investigate this complex set of issues, students will address relevant work and research by architects and architectural theorists as well as working through important

literature and critiques of human rights, public space, the public sphere, surveillance, and citizenship. We will look at topics including camps, borders, apartheid planning, as well as architectures of warfare, displacement, and occupation. In addition we will identify and discuss contemporary practices that have forged critical and strategic interventions within these fields.

Requirements and Grades: Students are expected to attend all sessions and to keep up with required readings. Each student will be required to give a brief presentation on two-selected readings (from a single week) and a 15-minute final presentation of his or her research for the seminar during the last four weeks of class, which will form the basis of a final paper. All work submitted should be original and written for this course. Students should familiarize themselves with Columbia's Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity, found at http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement

The grade for this class will be determined as follows:

Class Presentations and Participation   50%

Final Paper   50%

Readings: Required readings are available either through Courseworks, unless otherwise noted on syllabus. The Courseworks readings are found under "Class Files," then the sub-file "Shared Files," and are organized by week. Further readings are not provided.