Gender and Architecture
Columbia University GSAPP
History/Theory Seminar, Spring 2020
Tuesdays, 11am-1pm
Professor: Bryony Roberts

While issues of gender equity have gained greater public attention in recent years, the language and discourses around gender are rapidly transforming, leading to shifts in both the goals and methods of activism. Expanding awareness of the fluidity of gender expression and sexuality, as well as intersectional understandings of the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ableness demand nuanced approaches to discourse and action. In this moment of cultural upheaval, this seminar takes stock of past and present approaches to gender and discusses different modes of practice for architecture in pursuit of inclusion and equity.

Contextualizing past discourses on gender and sexuality, the course reconsiders Second Wave feminism and examines how gender theory expanded with work on gender performativity, intersectionality, and decolonialization. Exploring the implications for architectural discourse and practice, students examine architectural theorists, historians, and practitioners who have addressed gender through planning cities and buildings, introducing alternative material practices, and restructuring the architectural design process. Every discussion of these undertakings in historiography, planning, materiality, and process addresses the specific contexts in which these projects emerged. The goal of the course is for students to develop critical views of existing discourses and to gain exposure to the wide range of available discursive, projective, and material tools of engagement.

While primarily focused on texts, the course addresses modes of practice in architecture and therefore involves discussion of theoretical positions relative to design methods and projects.
SCHEDULE

January 21 – Introduction
General introduction to course topic, assignments, and expectations

January 28 – Terminology
> select dates for presentations by end of class

Required Reading:


https://books.google.com/books?id=XcQ_BAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

February 4 – Historical Feminisms
Guest presentation by Andrea Merrett

Required Reading:


Optional Reading:
http://circuitious.org/scraps/combahee.html

“National Organization of Women (NOW) Statement of Purpose” (1966)
www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/gna/Quellensammlung/10/10_nowstatementofpurpose_1966.htm


http://www.columbia.edu/~sss31/rainbow/wife.html

February 11 – Intersectionality: Gender, Race, Class, Sexuality, Ableness

Required Reading:


**Optional Reading:**


http://www.dsq-sds.org/article/view/3871/3411


Prado de O. Martins, L. “Privilege and oppression: towards a feminist speculative Design.”

**February 18 – Gender Trouble: Naturalism, Performativity, and Gender Abolitionism**

**Required Reading:**

**Optional Reading:**


**February 25 – Decolonizing Gender Discourse**
*Guest presentation by Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi*

**Required Reading:**


**Optional Reading:**


**March 3 – Rethinking Architecture: Domesticity**

**Required Reading:**


**Optional Reading:**
March 10 – Rethinking Architecture: Materiality

Required Reading:


Optional Reading:


March 17 >>Spring Break<<

March 24 – Rethinking Architecture: Maintenance

Required Reading:
Federici, Silvia. Wages Against Housework. Bristol: Falling Wall Press Ltd., 1975


Optional Reading:


March 31 – New Waves: Care

**Required Reading:**


**Optional Reading:**


April 7 – New Waves: Posthumanism, Xenofeminism

**Required Reading:**


**Optional Reading:**

April 14 – New Waves: Process

*Guest presentation by Lori Brown*

**Required Reading:**

**Optional Reading:**


April 21 – Conclusions
REFERENCE MATERIALS

Reference Texts:
Reference texts are available on reserve at Avery Library.


Contemporary collectives, practices, and online platforms:

Architexx
Atelier d'architecture autogérée
Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation
Bulletin Broads
Crunk Feminist Collective
Equity by Design
FATALE
Feminist architecture collective
Feminist Art and Architecture Collaborative
Girl Uninterrupted
Madame Architect
Muf Architecture / Art
Mycket
Parlour
Precarity Pilot
Rebel Architette
Jane Rendell's Situated Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture
WdKA makes a Difference
Women's Center for Creative Work
Women In Architecture
XYX Lab at Monash University
COURSE INFORMATION

Contact
Bryony Roberts - bryony@bryonyroberts.com

Course Meetings
Tuesdays, 11am-1pm

Course Structure
Weekly seminars will include close textual analysis of the reading assignments and discussions. Students are expected to complete weekly reading assignments, to participate actively in weekly discussions, and to complete all assignments.

Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course, students should gain a critical understanding of historical and contemporary feminisms. Through discussions and assignments, students are expected to improve their abilities to analyze texts, articulate their ideas and construct compelling arguments.

Grading
Students are graded using the standard GSAPP metric:
HP (high pass) = a superior level of work
P (pass) = an acceptable level of work
LP (low pass) = work that meets minimal standards
F (fail) = work that is unsatisfactory

Grading rubric:
- Attendance and active participation in reading discussions - 30%
- Position paper - 1000-word paper presented verbally in class - 30%
- Final project - 2000-word paper - 40%

Deadlines
Students must attend all class sessions and deliver all assignments on time. Deadlines are not negotiable. If a student is ill and unable to attend class or deliver an assignment, they must email the instructor ahead of time and include a doctor’s note.

Reading Assignments and Discussions
Weekly reading assignments are listed in the syllabus as “required reading.” Other optional reading material is included for those seeking further information on each topic. Students are expected to complete the reading assignments and to participate actively in class discussions. Students should not only absorb information from the readings, but also develop the ability to critical reflect on and develop arguments about the texts.

Articles are available as scanned pdfs on Dropbox and books listed in the optional readings are available in Avery Library.
ASSIGNMENTS

Position paper
Each student writes one position paper in response to one of the required readings during a week of their choice. Selections of weeks and topics are made at the beginning of the semester. Position papers are presented verbally in class during class discussion when the reading is addressed. They are also due as word documents at the beginning of the same class discussion, emailed to: bryony@bryonyroberts.com

The position paper is 1000 words long (approx 6 minute verbal presentation). The paper takes a position in relation to the reading, and constructs an argument in favor or against the central thesis of the given text. The paper is not a summary of the article, or a biographical description of the author. Instead it presents a critical, thoughtful response to the text, using specific examples and quotations from the text to make an argument. Presented verbally, the paper is intended as a prompt for further discussion and debate among the classmates.

Final paper
Students select two texts discussed in class that outline opposing positions on a theme. For example, whether gender is natural or performative, whether decorative arts are empowering or confining to women, whether the ethics of care is liberating or essentializing, etc.

Students respond to the debates outlined in the texts, and develop their own position on the topic. The paper is not a summary of the two texts. Instead the paper begins with a strong thesis position, which states the student’s position, and supports that thesis through specific examples from the text and from research.

The final paper is 2000 words and must include specific references and quotations from at least two texts on the syllabus.

Final papers are due on at the end of day on May 7.