

Course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

Architecture and Settler Colonialism: Landscapes, Territories, & Infrastructures

This seminar will address the relationship between architecture and settler colonialism across the twentieth century. Understood as a specific strain of colonialism, settler colonialism here refers to historic and ongoing strategies of land dispossession through processes of permanent settlement. Departing from recent protest movements at places like Standing Rock, Maunakea, or the West Bank, the course examines how settler colonial governance, and violence, operates through architecture. It also looks at resistance to, and organization against, such forms of state power. How do we situate events like these in a longer history of settler colonialism and the built environment? What does that history look like when told not only from the United States, but also from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Palestine, South Africa, Brazil, or Bolivia? And what does it mean to call this an architectural history?

Though architecture's entanglement with settler colonialism dates back centuries, the twentieth century is marked by unique permutations and contradictions in settler governance. These contradictions often play out in contested spaces where ideas of public lands and private property confront practices of sovereignty, or where institutions such as schools and housing developments exercise the ideological imperatives of the state on the one hand, or of activist movements and parainstitutional organizations on the other. These dynamics have given rise to a range of architectural, infrastructural, and territorial interventions, including national parks, dams, mines, border towns, highways, walls, settlements, and residential schools among others. They have also yielded internationalist decolonial movements, with their own spatial formations and networks of communication such as land claims, protest camps, road closures, educational centers, and syllabi.

The seminar takes a comparative as well as interdisciplinary approach, tracking the intertwined histories of settler colonial and decolonial spatial practices through an engagement with texts from the history of architecture as well as Native and Indigenous studies, anthropology, the history of technology, and geography.