Building and architecture are cosmogonic arts; that is to say, they involve the creation of artificial worlds to stand against the chaos of nature and the erosive forces of time. In that sense, architecture is a material culture close to the necessities of food production and the practice of medicine. Irrespective of whether we have in mind the idiosyncrasies of vernacular architecture or the embodiment of power, building culture like all culture entails a mediation between innovation and tradition. At the same time, modernization as an ever-accelerating instrumental process continues relentlessly to such an extent that we are on the verge of losing our former capacity to assimilate in cultural terms the volatility of constantly changing conditions. Modern architecture since its inception has been continuously challenged to find modes of spatial, structural and material organization capable of responding adequately to new and often unprecedented circumstances.

This lecture course has been devised in order to convey to young architects the way in which the Modern Movement may be perceived retrospectively as a series of wave-like formations which come into being, rise to their maturity and then fall away as they are overtaken by new impulses responding to totally different conditions. As the following brief history of the Modern Movement attempts to demonstrate, one may look at the past as a sequence of discernable impulses that each have had their own life span. Sometimes a particular development comes to an end because of the death of its principal protagonist, at other times, it ends precipitously due to upheavals such as war or an economic crisis, or on other occasions, it is eclipsed by political edict.

**Course Readings**

The required and recommended readings are given under each lecture and will be made available on Courseworks. The readings marked with an asterisks (*) are a priority. Where they involved texts by me, they are coded as per *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (MACH), page numbers given as per 4th edition and the same for *Studies in Tectonic Culture* (STC) and *Labour, Work and Architecture* (LWA). Copies of MACH and LWA may be obtained from book culture. STC may be ordered online.

**Lecture Schedule/Bibliography**

**Lecture 1: (Jan 23) Frank Lloyd Wright & the Myth of the Prairie, 1889-1924**

Like his master Louis Sullivan, Wright was committed to inventing an architectural culture appropriate to the modernizing thrust of the New World, in contrast to the European “battle of the styles” between the Classical and Gothic traditions. The combination of political revolution with radical culture first emerges with Richard Wagner’s polemical text *The Artwork of the Future* of 1849, which coincides with his first opera *The Flying Dutchman* of the same year. From this stems the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk, or the ‘total work of art’. Owen Jones’s encyclopedic *Grammar of Ornament* of 1856 is the inspiration behind Sullivan’s obsession with creation of a new ornamental system based entirely on nature, as we find this in Sullivan’s mature work and thus in the multi-use Auditorium
Building built on the lakefront in Chicago in 1889 with Wright working as Sullivan’s assistant in the Adler and Sullivan office in the Auditorium tower.

MACH: “Adler and Sullivan: the Auditorium and the high rise 1886-95”, pp. 51-56


Lecture 2: (Jan 30) The Russian Revolution and Millenialistic Constructivism, 1906-32
The loss of the entire Russian fleet at the hands of the Japanese navy in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 was the ultimate humiliation that was the spark for the Revolution of 1905 which in turn was a rehearsal for the Revolution of 1917. Alexander Malinovsky, otherwise known as Bogdanov, following the prophetic words of Wagner’s The Artwork of the Future to the effect that “the Folk must of necessity be the Artist of the Future”, founded in 1909 his Organization for Proletarian Culture in anticipation of the cultural debate that would follow the October Revolution of 1917, when the Bolsheviks triumphed over other political formations. Bogdanov maintained that there were three ways to socialism; the political, the economic and the cultural. For his championship of the latter he was, in essence, expelled from the ruling triumvirate of which the other two were Lenin and Trotsky. The political and cultural energy generated by the Revolution and the ensuing Civil War (1917-20) was accompanied by the cult of construction as the manifestation of a totally new utopian condition, totally divorced from the past. Apart from the Proletcult movement, other key figures who contributed to constructivism were Vladimir Tatlin, Kazimir Malevich, Naum Gabo, Alexei Gan and the architect Moisei Ginzburg.


Lecture 3: (Feb 6) Le Corbusier and the Ideology of Purism, Architecture versus the Engineer’s Aesthetic, 1918-31
The ideology and syntax of Purism comes into being with the manifesto Après le Cubisme of 1918, written by Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier. This singular work was both the precepts of a school of painting and a theory of modern civilization. Le Corbusier was to look to the reinforced concrete engineering of North American grain silos as the wave of the future from which came his dialectic of the Engineer’s Aesthetic versus Architecture that is the alternating theme running through his Vers une architecture of 1923. Along these lines, Le Corbusier’s entry for the League of Nations competition of 1927 will be in manifest contrast to Hannes Meyer’s entry for the same
competition. Meyer, influenced by Russian Constructivism, will focus on Building as overcoming the opposition between architecture and engineering, as expostulated in his Bauhaus address of 1928.


*Le Corbusier, Vers une architecture, Les éditions G. Crès et cie , 1923; translated as Towards a New Architecture, see Dover edition of 1927, It is recommended that students read this book in its entirety! (Otherwise, pp. 9-148 and pp. 221-287).

Lecture 4: (Feb 13) Le Corbusier & the Brutalist Ethos, 1930-1965
Around 1930 Le Corbusier will become preoccupied with vernacular and suddenly abandon Purism as is indicated with his Errazuris house projected for Chile that year. Transcending his Five Points of a New Architecture of 1926, he will turn to the generic vernacular as the basis for a new hybrid culture as we find this in his Maison Week-End, realized outside of Paris in 1925. This existential turn to raw materials and vernacular technique is combined with “hi-tech” elements such as shell concrete, plate glass and glass blocks. Such a synthesis will be a constant theme in his work until his death in 1965.

*LWA: “The Other Le Corbusier: Primitive Form and the Linear City, 1929-52”, pp. 218-225

See also:

Lecture 5: (Feb 20) Alvar Aalto and the Legacy of National Romanticism, 1939-1955
The vernacular as the basis for a hybrid modern architectural culture, capable of representing Finnish national identity, first appears in Aalto’s work with his Villa Mairea built at Noormarkku in Finland in 1939. This work subtly evoked the spirit of National Romanticism as we find this in the paintings of Akseli Gallen-Kallela’s featuring scenes from the Finnish folk-epic the Kalevala and a similar national romantic thematic in the music of Jean Sibelius, Aalto will fully embrace this sensibility in 1948 as the manifestation of a new postwar, nationalistic humanism in opposition to the expansionist aims of the Soviet Union that besieged Finland on and off for five years with limited success. Hence the Winter War of 1939-40 and the Continuation War of 1941-44.
Lecture 6: (Feb 27) Mies, Kahn and the New Monumentality, 1937-1974

Mies van der Rohe’s migration to the United States in 1937 to take over the directorship of the IIT School of Architecture had the effect of monumentalizing his ferrovitreous architecture. Mies’s migration to the States happens to coincide with the defeat of the progressive Republican government of Spain at the hands of Franco’s fascist reactionary coup d’etat. This also coincided with the emerging state styles of three totalitarian regimes; that of the Soviet Union, the Third Reich and of the Italian Fascist state. This sobering reality persuaded Sigfried Giedion, Josep Lluís Sert and Fernand Léger to rethink some of the fundamental precepts of the Modern Movement; above all, the reductive functionalism of the Neue Sachlichkeit. Their ensuing reformist line appears in their joint manifesto of 1943 Nine Points on Monumentality. Although neither Mies nor Kahn will refer to this text, it is clear that their work may be seen as echoing the precepts of this revisionist position.


Lecture 7: (Mar 6) Structural Anthropology and Labyrinthine Clarity. Aldo van Eyck, Herman Hertzberger and Piet Blom, 1937-1990

Between 1947 and 1952, Van Eyck made a succession of trips to North Africa which prompted his essay “Building in the Southern Oasis”, published in the Dutch magazine Forum. It was his repeated trips to visit and study the Dogon and Tellem tribes that eventually led him to coin the term ‘labyrinthine clarity’ in opposition to both Western classicism and the functional rationality of the Modern Movement. The first work of Van Eyck’s to transform this critical discourse into built form was the orphanage that he built in Amsterdam in 1960. However, the idea and ideal of labyrinthine clarity will be developed further in the work of Piet Blom and, above all, Herman Hertzberger. Hertzberger’s Ministry of Social Security in The Hague will bring this movement to a definitive end as the politics of Neoliberalism and Globalization begins to take over the Dutch scene.


Lecture 8: (Mar 13) Jørn Utzon & Transcultural Form / the Pagoda and the Plateau, 1948-1982
Like Van Eyck, Utzon aspired in 1948 to cultivate a modern architecture which would overcome the longstanding schism between Western and Eastern culture. This new transcultural synthesis took the schematic form in his early work of a shell concrete roof suspended over an earthwork. Utzon will render this dyad in an iconic sketch of a traditional Chinese roof raised up over a pre-Columbian podium. His last monumental work in this vein, the Kuwait National Assembly, was a tour de force in prefabricated reinforced concrete, folded plate construction.


Spring Break: (Mar 20)

Lecture 9: (Mar 27) Anglo-Italian Hi-Tech / Rogers, Piano and Foster, 1972-2006
Influenced by Cedric Price’s Fun Palace project of 1961 and by the omnipresent Buckminster Fuller (who had much more influence in the UK than in the US), hi-tech architecture came into being as a response to the spectacular imagery of Archigram. This return to what Le Corbusier had identified 50 years before as the ‘engineer’s aesthetic’ first becomes fully evident in the Centre Pompidou, Paris won in competition by Richard Rogers, Su Rogers and Renzo Piano in 1972. This triumph will be matched by Norman Foster’s Willis Faber and Dumas insurance office building realized in the center of Ipswich in 1974. One may trace the trajectory of this movement through Piano’s Kansai air terminal of 1989 followed by his Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center in Noumea, New Caledonia of 1998 and his New York Times tower in Manhattan of 2007. In a similar way, Foster’s career may be traced through a series of equally typological inventive works, including the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank headquarters built in Hong Kong of 1986, the Stansted Airport, London of 1991 and the Commerzbank in Frankfurt of 1997. Perhaps one of the finest works, symptomatic of a certain triumph as the Hi-Tech movement appears to enter its decline, is the Barajas Terminal, Madrid realized by Rogers Stirk Harbour and Partners in 2006. Compared to the ‘ethical elegance’ of the movement in its prime, Piano’s high-rise Shard tower in London of 2012 would appear to be an excessive aberration.


Lecture 10: (Apr 3) Critical Regionalism as a Mode of Intervention: Southern California; Neutra and Schindler, 1922-1954 and Greece; Pikionis and Konstantinidis, 1949-1960
Both Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler migrated to the US in order to obtain a position in Wright’s office, both eventually collaborating on Wright’s Hollyhock House, Olive Hill, LA., commissioned by the eccentric heiress Aline Barnsdall. Schindler departs from Wright’s employ with his King’s Road House, LA. of 1922 and with the Lovell Beach House of 1926. Neutra succeeds Schindler as architect to Lovell in the Lovell Health House of 1929. Both men are equally committed to evolving a modern liberative architectural culture appropriate to Southern California. Harwell Hamilton Harris will recognize this regionalist dimension in his 1954 address to the AIA regional council in Eugene,
Oregon, in which he distinguished between *regionalism of liberation* from a *regionalism of restriction*, with respect to the Southern Californian school versus the Beaux Arts ideology of the East Coast.

After a bitter struggle against the Ottoman Empire, an independent Greek state emerged as a constitutional monarchy in 1832. The liberal democracy of Eleftherios Venizelos which came into being in the 1914-18 war was followed by the dictatorship of General Metaxas, lasting until his death in 1941. A bitter Civil War broke out between Communist partisans and a rival monarchist militia following the British liberation of Athens in 1944, lasting until 1949, when it is settled in favor of the monarchists. Unrelated to politics *in se*, rival regionalist expressions arose in the early 50s in the work of Dimitri Pikionis and Aris Konstantinidis. In 1981, Alex Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre wrote an essay “The Grid and the Pathway” in which they contrasted the works of these architects and in doing so proffered their theory of Critical Regionalism, as opposed to the right-wing demagogic regionalism that had plagued Europe between the two World Wars.

MACH 5th Edition typescript excerpt: “Greece”.


**Lecture 11: (Apr 10) The School of Porto & the Portuguese Spring / Fernando Távora, Alvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura, 1974-2018**

Modernization first emerges in Portugal in 1928 with the dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and continues as Fascist parallel to Franquista Spain until 1974 when a revolution, organized by a left wing faction within the military, overthrows the Salazar regime and establishes democratic governance in Portugal for the first time since the early 20s. The architectural consequences of this libertative transformation were first echoed in Porto, where the school led by by Carlos Ramos and later by Fernando Távora gave rise successively to the exceptional careers of Alvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura; the former serving as a teacher on the faculty when the later was a student.

Fernando Távora, “The Problem of the Portuguese House” in *Fernando Távora*, Blau, 1993, pp. TBA.

**Lecture 12: (Apr 17) Modernization in Brazil: The Schools of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, 1938-2018**

The United States of Brazil came into being in 1891 after a military revolt which deposed the vestige of the monarchy which has been first installed by the Portuguese in 1808 and reinforced by the creation of the independent empire of Brazil in 1822. Social unrest following the World Wide Crash of 1929 led a revolt in 1930 led by Getúlio Vargas who rose to power and dictatorially governed Brazil from 1930 to 1945 and again from 1951 until his suicide in 1954. Le Corbusier played an ideological role in the modernization of Brazil as he exercised a strong influence on the form of the Ministry of Education, Rio de Janeiro of 1938, designed by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer plus a team of architects including the landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx. It is again Costa, Niemeyer and Marx who will also design the Brazilian Pavilion for the New York World’s Fair of 1939. The so called ‘carioca’ school loses its conviction around the time of Niemeyer’s design for Brasilia as the new Brazilian capital (1956-63) and the creative thrust of
the Brazilian Modern Movement passes to the school of Sao Paulo and to the successive careers of Lina Bo Bardi, João Vilanova Artigas, Paulo Mendes da Rocha and Angelo Bucci.

*MACH 5th Edition typescript excerpt: “Brazil”.

*Kidder Smith, *Brazil Builds*, MOMA Press, 1943, pp. TBA.


The British were more involved with the Indian continent than with any of their other possessions, and over the years they introduced varying levels of self-governance, particularly after the Indian Mutiny of 1857 which originated in the Bengal Army, the personnel of which being provoked by the practice of greasing cartridges with animal fat which was an equally offensive to both Hindus and Muslims. Mahatma Gandhi went to South Africa in 1907 in order to defend the migrant Indian population from persecution by the Transvaal Government. This was the origin of Gandhi’s technique of passive resistance which he will transfer to India in the 1920’s, a movement which will eventually compel the British to leave in 1947. We may date the beginning of modern architecture in India with the return of Achyut Kanvinde to Delhi in September 1947, after having graduated from Harvard where he had been sent by Nehru to study with Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius. The other leading architects of Kanvinde’s generation, Raj Rewal, Charles Correa and Balkrishna Doshi will each be educated in the UK or in the US or, in Doshi’s case, after schooling in India will receive his final formation by working with Le Corbusier in Paris on the design of his Indian work. The next generation, above all, Bijoy Jain and Rahul Mehrotra will also be educated in the US. Like Brazil, the development of modern architecture in India immediately after independence was very much directed by the state in the figure of Jawaharlal Nehru who commissions Le Corbusier with the design of Chandigarh, the new capital of the state Punjab which symbolically appears globally as the new image of India.

*MACH 5th Edition typescript excerpt: “India”.

**Requirements**

Apart from participating in lectures and the weekly class tutorials given by Alireza Karbsioun and Ife Salema Vanable, each student is required to submit a final paper of around 4000 words in length, complete with illustrations, footnotes, bibliography, etc. This requirement may be met in three different ways:

1. As a critical/theoretical discourse touching on the political, ideological and historical contexts of the works under consideration.
2. Similar to the first alternative but pre-conceived as three short papers, around 1500 words each, which treat different topics. However as far as possible these papers should be thematically related to one another.
3. As a critical comparative analysis of two modern buildings which are realized works answering virtually the same programmatic requirements. The overall aim is to trace the similarities and differences between each pair with respect to “the Tradition of the New”. (c.f. Kenneth Frampton, *A Genealogy of Modern Architecture: Comparative Critical Analysis of Built Form*, Lars Muller, 2016. One sample chapter can be
You may choose from the following comparisons or select a pair of works for approval by the instructor:


O. Williams. Boots Factory, Nottingham, UK, 1930.
Van der Vlugt. Van Nelle Factory, Holland, 1930.


E. Saarinen. Saarinen House, Cranbrook, USA, 1936.
F. Lloyd Wright. Falling Water, Bear Run, USA, 1936.

Le Corbusier. Ronchamp, Belfort, France. 1956
A. Perret. Le Raincy, near Paris, France. 1926

Due Dates

The semester-long project will be developed as follows in consultation with your discussion TF:

Wednesday, 20 February:
A preliminary one-paragraph (250-300 words) paper abstract, which should include a clear hypothesis and a proposition for the method of approach, along with a one-page working bibliography, to be confirmed with the instructor.

Wednesday, 27 March:
A three-page annotated outline of the paper, with bibliography.

Wednesday, 8 May:
Final Paper, fully illustrated, fifteen pages minimum (approximately 3,500-4,000 words, double-spaced in 12-point font, following the bibliographic, footnoting, and other guidelines outlined for the “Notes and Bibliography” system in the Chicago Manual of Style).

See “Syllabus Addendum” for detailed submission requirements vis-à-vis academic integrity measures, etc.

Grading

Grades for the class will be determined as follows:
Class Participation 20%
Paper Abstract 10%
Paper Outline 10%
Final paper 60%