A discourse on black subjectivity in contemporary architectural theory is virtually non-existent. Architecture historically privileges the construction of perspectival space through the gaze of the white male subject, from Pietro Perugino’s *Christ Handing the Keys to St. Peter* (1481–83)—whose primary actors are represented as fair-skinned European men with Roman features (although Christ and the Apostles were from Palestine and likely of darker skin tones)—to Mies van der Rohe’s perspective collages that unbind space in a manner that dislocates the stationary viewpoint and collapses it at the eye of the author. Within this spectrum, architectural space is conceptualized as a rational, linear system of spatial projection in which privileged and honorific bodies are captured within view and all other bodies and objects that lie beyond the cone of vision are excluded from the frame of the picture plane. In architectural representation, black bodies systematically fall beyond the frame of reference for spatial inclusion; likewise in architectural discourse, black bodies are either invisible, occupy unspoken spaces of colonial subjugation, or dismissed to locations of repressive difference where the black body is simultaneously an object of desire and derision, yet has no desires of its own.

The initial questions that come to mind ponder over the subjectivities that were relegated to the hidden kitchen entrances and rear doors of restaurants, hotels, and doctors’ offices during the Jim Crow era; the subjectivities that occupy the servant positions within Modernism’s hierarchal dyad of “served” and “servant” spaces; and the subjectivities of the curved, feminized, and “primitive” bodies to which Modernism refers as irrational, dangerous, and difficult, but which
nevertheless signify sensuousness in contrast to the straight-lined rationality of the modernist grid. However, such considerations rarely occupy a position in architectural theory. Hence, black subjectivity is not just an “other” in modern architectural discourse; architectural theory represents a space of exclusion of black subjectivity.

The basis for that exclusion can be traced to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s posthumously published *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, presented at the University of Berlin in 1822, 1828, and 1830. Hegel positions the “Negro” outside of analytical history through examples of intellectual, technological, and moral histories as well as cultural progress—all of which exclude the “Negro.” According to Hegel, “The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all our ideas—the category of Universality...The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state.”¹ In the text, Hegel constructs a dichotomy of the Negro in counter-distinction to the white European, who is motivated by rational thought processes evidenced by organized forms of political and social orders, scientific and technological achievements, and desire for progress, in order to establish the superior of the white (implicitly male) subject. Yet the paradox of this dialectic is the required exegetical presence of the Negro. Hence, race and blackness have been fundamental to the teleology of the history of modernity and humanist thought; and by extension architectural discourse, rooted in humanist notions, is complicit in the maintenance of this racial power structure.

**PURPOSE**

The seminar will examine the spaces of exclusion of black and African American histories from architectural discourse and the ways in which modernist architecture participates in racial hierarchies in terms of representation. Furthermore, the seminar will recover the narratives of black subjectivity and African American architectural production with regards to architectural theory to reveal liberation is a spatial practice.

---

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Satisfactory completion of the course requires that students actively engage the course content and meaningfully contribute to expand the boundaries of knowledge and spatialize cultural theory.

Course Design:
The course will be divided into three sections:

The first section will present a critical overview of themes related to African American history and architectural production. The intention is to situate the general parameters of a critical discourse in architectural theory as it pertains to black identity and representation that will be discussed throughout the course.

The second section will entail weekly research seminar presentations by teams of students working in pairs. The presentations will be based upon a given theme or topic and the students will examine the work of specific architects (and artists) and their engagement with new spaces for cultural discourse within architectural history and theory.

In preparation for the research seminar presentation, the instructor will hold weekly individual tutorials.

The third section of the seminar will be a research paper or visual analysis (analytical drawing):

Students have the option to complete a fifteen-page research paper based upon the research seminar presentation topic or to construct an analytical drawing that spatializes the relationships and issues discussed in their seminar presentation.

Research Seminar Presentation:
40% - Preparation and in-class Presentation

In addition to the in-class presentation, each student will submit a rough draft of his / her research paper (minimum 1000 words) no later than one week following the presentation.

Final Research Option/ Research Paper or Visual Analysis:
45% - Fifteen (15) page (minimum) research paper or Visual Analysis / Analytical Drawing.

Participation, Progress, Effort:
15%
Seminar Topics

- Architecture Liberation Theology
- Space as Praxis as Identity
- Modernism and its Ghosts
- The Problem with African American Museums
- Re-Mastry and Dreams of Architecture
- (Black) Sexuality and Space: Gender and the Gaze

SCHEDULE

Discussion January 16, 2018: *Introduction*:
*Made in America, There is No Such Thing as African American Architecture*


Discussion January 23, 2018:

Architecture Liberation Theology


Discussion January 30, 2018:

**Space as Praxis as Identity**


Discussion February 6, 2018

**Modernism and Its Ghosts**


Discussion February 13, 2018:
*The Problem with African American Museums*


Discussion February 20, 2018
*Re-Mastery and Dreams of Architecture*

Wagner-Steagall Act, 1937. U.S. Statutes at Large (75th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 888-899)


Discussion February 27, 2018

*(Black) Sexuality and Space: Gender and the Gaze*


Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

Anja Zimmermann, “‘Sorry for Having to Make You Suffer’: Body, Spectator, and the Gaze in the Performances of Yves Klein, Gina Pane, and Orlan,” *Discourse*, vol. 24, no. 3 (Fall 2002).


*Azurest South, Chesterfield County, Virginia*, National Register of Historic Places, Virginia Department of Historic Resources No. 020-5583, NRHP Registration (December 30, 1993), Section 7: 1.

March 5 - 16, 2018: Kinne Week / Spring Break

- Seminar Presentation March 20, 2018: Architecture Liberation Theology
- Seminar Presentation March 27, 2018: Space as Praxis as Identity
- Seminar Presentation April 3, 2018: Modernism and its Ghosts
- Seminar Presentation April 10, 2018: The Problem with African American Museums
- Seminar Presentation April 17, 2018: Re-Mastery and Dreams of Architecture
- Seminar Presentation April 24, 2018: (Black) Sexuality and Space: Gender and the Gaze