

# Course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

This seminar will examine the role of critics, criticism, and the essay form in shaping how we understand architecture, in public life and within architectural discourse. We will consider reviews as testing grounds for the author's own intellectual commitments (theoretical, architectural, political) as those ideas are refracted through the work of others. Readings will include foundational texts in critical theory, histories of reviewing and essay writing, and predominantly the essays themselves. We will explore the complex responses to buildings across generational shifts through selected case studies, and contemplate the possibility that the history of architecture is in fact a history of essays on architecture. We will consider current trajectories within architectural writing and publishing, particularly a recent resurgence in the essay format (spawned in part by the rise of digital publication formats). Finally, we will examine the essay as a means through which to connect the discourse of architecture with a broader political life.

## Course Requirements

Students will be expected to participate vigorously and generously in all class discussions and take an active role in leading the seminar once in the course of the semester. Each student produce her own critical work in the form of two essays (strictly 2,000–3,000 words). These essays will then be workshopped in class and revised for final submission. Each essay will be worth 25% of the final grade, with participation and presentations making up the remaining 50%.

## Required Texts

Terry Eagleton's *The Function of Criticism* (1984) will not be scanned, as we're reading the whole book. I recommend purchasing it or borrowing it from the library.

## Weekly Schedule

### 1. Introduction (January 23)

Recommended background: James Graham, "The Critic as Producer: An Essay on Essays on Architecture," the *Avery Review* 1 (September 2014), <http://averyreview.com/issues/1/the-critic-as-producer> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

### 2. The Essay Form and Literary Criticism (January 30)

Montaigne, Pope, Eagleton

### 3. Origins of Art and Architectural Criticism (February 6)

Hogarth, Laugier, Diderot

4. Essayism: *Fin-de-siècle* Vienna (February 13)

Loos, Freud, Musil, and others

5. Theorizing the Critical (February 20)

Lukács, Benjamin, Adorno

6. Meaning, Technology, Modernism (February 27)

Sullivan, Wright, Banham

Essay #1 should be circulated to the class by 7pm on Thursday, March 2nd

7. In-Class Workshop of Essay #1 (March 6)

8. No Class, spring break (March 13)

9. New Yorkers on New York (March 20)

Mumford, Huxtable, Muschamp, Kimmelman

10. Essays and Alterity (March 27)

Du Bois, Lorde, Spivak

11. Formats: Contemporary Publishing Practices (April 3)

Strelka, Critical Spatial Practices, etc.

12. Architectural Essaying in Uncertain Times (April 10)

13. In-Class Workshop of Essay #2 (April 17)

## Assignments Summary: