

Seminar essay assignments. Students should sign up by Weds. Feb. 20th for a topic and a meeting.

Select one of the following groupings of readings as the subject of an analytical essay. In the essay you will move beyond a synthetic appraisal of the texts to propose your own discussion of the different points of view, modes of analysis and interpretation, and changing and shifting perspectives, underlying assumptions, and changing attitudes embodied in these texts all focused on the same work, group of works, or figure. Your paper should be in the range of 6 or 7 pages. It should include page references after any direct quotes or substantial paraphrase to key your readings to the texts. Footnotes are necessary only if you make reference to sources other than those forming the direct subject of the assignment; but remember that this is not a research assignment but an analysis in which your voice must ultimately emerge.

Your paper must be submitted by the deadline for it is to be read and extensively commented upon by one or more of the course instructors who will be involved in the follow up seminar to discuss each topic. You will receive the paper back before the seminar meets to allow you to digest the comments and think further about the topic in preparation for discussion. Attendance and participation in the seminar is an integral part of this assignment and will form an integral part of the grade assessment.

1. **The Chicago School.** Papers due 25 March 2002. Seminar meets 2 April 6-7 p.m. Room 930 . In addition to the readings by Sullivan, Root, and Colin Rowe listed on the syllabus under topic four, students should read in order: Sigfried Giedion, the section on the skyscraper in part V of his 1941 *Space, Time, and Architecture*; Winston Weisman, *A New View of Skyscraper History*, pp. 115-63 in Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. (ed.), *The Rise of an American Architecture*, New York: Praeger, 1970; Rosemarie Bletter, "The Invention of the Skyscraper: Notes on its Diverse Histories," in *Assemblage 2* (1987), and Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance* 1995. Then reread the above in parallel with a classic essay by Rosalind Krauss on the grid, printed as the first essay in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*.

Here the assignment involves two primary texts from the period when architects in Chicago were first confronting the challenges of the new steel frame construction method and its implications for traditional criteria and images for architectural form. In addition you will look at landmarks in the historiography of the skyscraper and contrast those with the work of two essays by historians/critics in which the steel frame (for Rowe) and the grid (for Krauss) are postulated as fundamentally modern forms. Use the later essays to highlight and elucidate the issues both stated and unstated in Sullivan and Root's essays. Consider the Sullivan and Root essays as two voices in a dialogue. Consider the terms of function, structure, form, as they are used by Sullivan and Root in their own terms, divorced from the baggage of later interpretations of the Chicago School as a forerunner of "functionalism" in architecture. What are their respective criteria, how do they describe the genesis of form in architecture, how do they conceive of the architect in relation to the typical structure?

Then critique Rowe's essay in the way it portrays Sullivan. Consider the issues that Rowe raises. Are they issues related to Sullivan? Are they issues related to the concerns of the 1950s when the essay was written? Are they framed in terms that derive from the problems of historical analysis rather than the architect's statement of the problem?

Consider the subsequent history of skyscrapers in the work of Wiseman, Bletter, and Willis. Assess their concerns and arguments, and in particular compare and contrast their approaches with Rowe's work as a historian.

You are not obliged to incorporate your reactions to Rosalind Krauss's essay unless you find it in some way illuminates the problematic that has developed in working through the readings above.

2. **Interpreting Le Corbusier in the 1920s.** Papers due 1 April. Seminar meets 9 April 5-6 p.m. Room 934 Schermerhorn. Compare the essays by Colin Rowe, Alan Colquhoun, and Francesco Passanti on Corbusier's villas of the 1920s (topic 12 on the syllabus). In addition to your essay you may incorporate your own graphic analyses of the plan, sections, and elevations of any two villas by Le Corbusier from this period as you see fit. You should also look at the essay on Corb in Colquhoun's earlier collection of essays, "Displacement of Concepts in Le Corbusier," in *Essays in Architectural Criticism, Modern Architecture and Historical Change*, MIT 1981

Here the reading is broad in scope and you should concentrate on the points of intersection between Rowe, Colqhoun's and Passanti's analyses. You might want to concentrate in particular on their handling of Le Corbusier in the 1920s, and in particular on his designs of villas of those years. Graphic analyses of other examples could be used to test the validity of the critics claims about Le Corbusier as an architect.

Consider some of the following issues:

- To what extent does each author rely upon Le Corbusier's own voluminous writings on his production and intentions; and to what extent do they use the architect's statements critically, i.e. subject them to analysis as they would his designs.
- To what extent is each author concerned to bring out issues that have not been specifically addressed by Le Corbusier? Are these issues valid? Are they as central as the author claims?
- In what ways do these essays reflect their own times, in what ways do they depart from the standard of "canonic view" of Le Corbusier in their time period?
- Assess Rowe's use of Palladio as a comparison.
- Take arguments from each text and ask whether they would hold up in relation to the claims of the others. For instance how do you fit Rowe's analysis with the tension between classical and avant-garde tendencies that Colqhoun speaks of, or the vernacularism of Passanti's analysis?
- What do you make of the concentration on the plan in the first two authors?
- Test the points of view here by rereading the sections on Le Corbusier in your text books, to what extent do they contradict, reinforce, or echo the points of view you find in the essays.

3. Interpreting the Barcelona Pavilion. Papers Due 15 April. Seminar meets 24 April, Noon-1p.m.
Room 607 Schermerhorn.

Readings: Using the essays in J.P. Bonta's *An Anatomy of Architectural Interpretation* contrast the different ways Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion has been interpreted, and try to situate these views in relation to the individual interpreter's own architectural or interpretive agendas. This topic requires the more individual invention and addition to the core text by Bonta. Use pages 57-81 in Bonta, in which he uses the Barcelona Pavilion to create a model for the critical fortune of a building which has become an icon in modern architecture. Consider the extent to which this phenomenon is prevalent in the historiography of modern architecture. Are there other buildings that could function similarly or is the BP exceptional? Before turning to the essays look at the role the building plays in accounts of modernism such as Pevsner, Giedion (*Space, Time and Architecture*), Hitchcock and Johnson (*The International Style*), and your own texts (Frampton, Benevelo, Curtis). The pavilion was reconstituted in 1986. More people have seen the pavilion in the fifteen years since than during the lifetime of the original. How would you extend Bonta's analysis to this latest phase. Consider the following articles in relation to this:
Robin Evans, "Mies van der Rohe's Paradoxical Symmetries," in *AA Files* 19 (1990): 56-68 (reprinted in Evans collected essays).

Caroline Constant, "The Barcelona Pavilion as Landscape Garden: Modernity and the Picturesque," *AA Files* 20 (1990): 47-54.

José Quetglas, "Fear of Glass," in Beatriz Colomina and K. Michael Hays, *Architectureproduction*.

Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988. And Michael Hays's response in the same volume.

Barry Bergdoll, "The Nature of Mies's Space," in Terrence Riley and Barry Bergdoll, *Mies in Berlin*. New York, 2001, pp. 66-133, esp. the pages on the Barcelona Pavilion.

4. Modernist Urbanism. Papers Due 22 April. Seminar meets 2 May 10-11., Room 934 Schermerhorn..

Readings: *The Athens Charter*, *Team 10 Primer*, , Colin Rowe, *Collage City* (skim), and Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*. . Read these three texts as successive commentaries on one another and as a trajectory in the development of post-World War II thinking about urban form and the role of the designer in shaping it. This is the most straightforward of the four assignments. Trace the genealogy of ideas and critiques across these three major statements of modernist urbanism. Consider not only the issues put forth by each but their formats as books and as texts. What audience are they addressing? How is the text structured and why? What is the relationship to their view of urban form itself? What images are chosen and why? How are they laid out on the page? What are the key issues according to each? What assumptions are common to the first two, to all three, to none. Is the definition of the city itself altered from text to text? Do these models apply to all cities or only certain kinds of cities?

