Arch 511 (3) Theoretical *Perspectives* in Architecture

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required texts

Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry* and *Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept.*

selected articles (reprints)

on-line resources; google "boundary language," or http://www.art3idea.psu.edu

required external activities

film screenings (at home, individually or in groups)

visit studio crits, report

best sketches, best study models, best presentation practices

required attendance

2 allowed absences (no excuses needed, or "electronic absence")

full attention during lectures (no electronic communications; counts as absence)

mini-symposium (open attendance)

round-table discussion with Claudio Sgarbi (tentative) and David Cunningham, invited students and faculty

evaluation

zairja completion by end of semester

scholarly critical paper, with footnotes and bibliography as per Ashgate style sheet.

NO EXAMS

A – significant achievement, evidence of initiative and effectiveness

B – complete, followed instructions (initiative, but not effective)

C – followed most instructions (no significant initiative, no significant effectiveness)

D – followed some instructions (all of the above, owing to low energy input)

F – failed, incomplete, late, or non-submission, with 2+ absences

warning — media activity (cell phone, tablet, messaging etc. during class counted as absence

office hours

by appointment, Websters or Panera, e-mail for most questions

pattern

tuesdays — problem/issue introduction, background

thursdays — response, critiques, discussion; film screenings

scheduled instructor absences: film screenings, group projects

SCHEDULE

This is a tentative and completely *ad hoc* list of topics as they might occur during seminar discussions. It is a guide, not a program, and even as a guide no more than a suggestion of what *kind* of thing might happen.

week 1

introductions
the zairja technique
what is a primary source?
what is cultural critique?
what is ideology?
why write theory? (and, is theory all about writing?)
where do courses like this fail?
what is a university, why are you here?
(if you got the right answer, then …) what is discourse?
what forms does "discourse" take?

week 2

mystery story
the Vernon hotel (Chesterton's "the queer feet")
the event dream (Florensky)
sorites
the cube

week 3

contemporary hot ideas, bogus and otherwise
when architecture theory got "fixed"
the re-purposing of theory in architecture schools
a bit of marx, a bit of hegel
plato's strategy
turing's test & artificial intelligence
what is emergence?
curtains: The Wizard of Oz to The Truman Show
explanation in the human sciences
binary signifiers and occultation

week 4

theory has "nothing" to do with architecture practice
you're planning to teach, right? theory & pedagogy
ivan illich's radical options that we must consider
bit of history: Wittgenstein's Vienna
Freud, Lacan, Žižek
Halbwachs and collective memory
the subject in architecture theory (find Waldo)

week 5

theory topic groups: anamorphosis
theory topic groups: chiasmus, art of memory
theory topic groups: boundaries, partial objects, cannibals
theory topic groups: shamanistic practices, magic, voudoun, architecture as therapy
theory topic groups: OULIPO and Perec's lipograms

week 6

theory topic groups: emergence
theory topic groups: Poe and the purloined letter
theory topic groups: Harold Bloom's six interesting concepts
theory topic groups: theories of travel (Johnstone)
theory topic groups: la voix acousmatique
theory topic groups: the four discourses

week 7

other arts, other artists … why?
influential in architecture: Duchamp
influential in architecture: Hitchcock
influential in architecture: Beuys (why?)
influential in architecture: Tatlin, Malevich
influential in architecture: Tarkovsky
influential for architecture: Lynch, Jarmusch
not yet famous: Truman Show, Harvey, District 9
structure of reception
frames in Picasso, Piero, Antonello da Messina, Breughel, Velázquez

week 8

other schools of thought: phenomenology
other schools of thought: semiotics/semiology …
other schools of thought: social area analysis, statistics etc.
other schools of thought: deleuze & guattari
other schools of thought: lacan, freud
other schools of thought: žižek, dolar, zupančič
sexuation, feminist theory, queer theory, subaltern theory
what is: material idealism? romantic irony? ideal materialism? magical realism?

week 9

structures of perception
structures of discourse
structures of territory/motility
vertical atlas
structures: metaphor, metonymy, metalepsis
structures of time
structures of narrative (theory)
structures of virtuality (detached)

week 10

case studies: Vertigo
case studies: Villa Savoie
case studies: iconic architecture (Brott)
case studies: Rear Window
case studies: Mulholland Drive
case studies: The Truman Show

week 11

the critique: why architecture schools (not this one of course) suck
the critique: esquisse, presentation drawings, sketches, study models
the critique: site models, maps
the critique: dialogic structures, narratives
practique-critique: presentation space
practique-critique: pedagogical openings
practique-critique: morals versus ethics

week 12

writing: reading samples critique
writing: fictional constructs
writing: argumentative constructs
writing: discursive constructs (Lacan)
writing: parataxis, hypotaxis, metalepsis
writing: thesis, dissertation standards
writing: subtexts
writing: experimentation, empirical studies, statistics
writing: ars topica
writing: the zairja

week 13

stereognosis and propriocept
emergence
occultation/metonymy
reversed predication
"flesh of the world" (emergence)
the gapped circle (the drive)
super-symmetry
metalepsis/extimity

week 14

body loading
automaton
detachable virtuality
the radical feminine (pas tout)
sites of exception
anamorphosis/aphanisis
enunciation
acousmatic voice
demon/askesis
clinamen/tesseræ
kenosis/apophrades

week 15

Hestia/hermes
origin of cities (Wheatley)
theory of communication (Shannon-Weaver)
enunciation theory
poché
body loading
chirality
treasuries of signifiers (*Rebecca*)

university fine print

The University Faculty Senate is charged with establishing many of the policies relevant to instruction. The Academic Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual provides important information and detail about their implementation. A written (paper or electronic form) syllabus must be distributed to students in each course on or before the first class meeting. In addition to course content and expectations, the syllabus must include contact information for all course instructors, the course examination policy, grade breakdown by assessment type and percentage, required course materials, and the academic integrity policy for the course, and information on procedures related to academic adjustments identified by the Office for Disability Services. Changes to the syllabus shall also be given to the student in written (paper or electronic) form.

Faculty should review the appropriate University Faculty Senate and AAPP websites for specific details related to instructional policies as they prepare the course policies for students. The following course policies are some of the most frequently cited.

Grading (Senate Policies 47-00, 48-00, 49-00, and AAPP G-1 through G-10). These policies cover the basis for grades; the grading system for undergraduate and graduate students and candidates enrolled in M.D. programs; definition of grades; the repeating of courses when a grade of D or F was received; failure to complete a course; corrected grades; deferred grades; no grades; grades for credit by examination; symbols for course audits; academic integrity; research grades; and satisfactory/unsatisfactory grades.

Class Attendance (Senate Policy 42-27 and AAPP E-11). Students who will miss a class in accordance with Senate Policy 42-27, should, where appropriate, present a class absence form to the faculty member as soon as possible and, except in unavoidable situations, at least one week in advance of a planned absence. In the case of illness, students are not required to secure the signature of medical personnel.

Students should be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. Ordinarily, it is inappropriate to substitute for the missed assignment the weighting of a semester's work that does not include the missed assignment. Completion of all assignments assures the greatest chance for students to develop heightened understanding and content mastery that is unavailable through the weighting process. The opportunity to complete all assignments supports the University's desire to enable students to make responsible situational decisions without endangering their academic work.

Examinations (Senate Policy 44-10, AAPP F-1 through F-5). Faculty members teaching and coordinating courses are responsible for determining the examination policy used in the courses. Written notification of the examination policies must be made available to students during the first ten calendar days of the semester or its equivalent.

Evening examinations (Senate Policy 44-30, AAPP F-5). The holding of evening non-final examinations in courses that are not normally scheduled in the evening requires approval in advance by the dean or chancellor. Students must be informed during the first week of the semester if such examinations are to be expected.

Academic integrity (Senate Policy 49-20 and AAPP G-9). The policy defines academic integrity and the procedures to be followed in a charge of academic dishonesty. The instructor is responsible for providing a statement clarifying the application of academic integrity criteria to each course at the beginning of the semester.

Originality. In the digital world it is all too easy to use copied materials without remembering to attribute the original source. Please consult and rigorously observe the University's regulations as outlined in "A Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty," which is available at the following Penn State website: http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html. As always, you must observe strict academic rigor in the citation of published sources. Use an established citation convention consistently. You are strongly encouraged to use the Penn State Graduate Thesis Guide, which is available at the following website: http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/current/thesis/guide.html. Please carefully review the "Technical Requirements" section of the Thesis Guide.

Special Needs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807 (V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services Web site at http://equity.psu.edu/ods/ In order to receive consideration for course accommodations, you must contact ODS and provide documentation (see the documentation guidelines at http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports the need for academic adjustments, ODS will provide a letter identifying appropriate academic adjustments. Please share this letter and discuss the adjustments with your instructor as early in the course as possible. You must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of each semester.

instructor's fine print:

The point of a syllabus is to lay out what there is to be learned, when it is to be learned, and how what is to be learned shall be valued. Most syllabuses don't do this. They are obliged to take on the tasks of administration, to advise students of legal rights and responsibilities, threaten them with penalties for misbehavior, and get the university off the hook for obligations it should respect as a matter of ethics. Instead, the syllabus has become the university's "fine print," the stuff that you must click the box to say that you agreed and read although you can't possibly finish reading it and you have no possible way to legally agree to what is put forward as a forced choice.

I will cease to pine for the old days and address conditions in the present. Even in the worst of conditions, there is something to be learned. So, the first issue is just how we address this, what we think that learning is and how it is to be done, and what is the proposed outcome of this learning.

Learning is not the same thing as knowledge, but there are parallels. This course is about theory so it is especially interested in both, and the parallels. Learning is what counts for accomplishment in any course, no different here. But, how one learns is a matter of great difference of opinion. Mine counts only because I'm officially assigned to teach the course, otherwise it's not important. There's learning that accomplishes something unrelated to the knowledge involved with the course: to get a grade and move through the program. Here, knowledge is just a means to an end. Naturally, I see the knowledge as the end in itself, and I regard how you get through the program as your own business.

In theory, the question of there being different kinds of knowledge and different kinds of learning is subject to examination. It's one of the things we study. So, we can't lay out in advance a pre-cooked idea of what knowledge or learning is. It is one of the things we put to question. In the Medieval system known as the Quadrigia, learning was set out in a series of four stages, the literal, the moral, the analogical, the anagogical. Literal is just getting the content, in a "wrote" fashion. Moral is learning what the content might be good for. Analogy means that there is some transfer of mastery, that the learner is able to see connections on his or her own. Anagogy is a transformative stage, meaning that the learner is transformed by the knowledge and *vice versa*. These four levels suggest the standard grading scheme of D, C, B, and A. An 'A' student shows signs of transformation, the 'B' student can manage comparisons and witty insights, the 'C' student at least knows how to manipulate the system, and the 'D' student gets the content but doesn't know what it means.

This seems as good a system as any, but it's not my business to say how you go about getting to the top rank. That seems to be something that is differently designed for each individual. In Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, Brian asks the crowd, "We're all individuals here, aren't we?" and someone from the back (the A-student presumably) says "not me!" So it is with anagogy. it sees the set-up and evades the trick of ideology, by which free choice is subverted by conditions. Being asked to be an individual is ideology because it works on two levels. On the first level, "being an individual" is a state that can be achieved and is an ideal; on the other level it is a requirement made by someone outside the box who makes everyone in the box behave according to the requirement. Of course being an individual inside a box with other "individuals" is contradictory, everyone knows, but they go along with it and engage in duplicity.

This double level condition has been known for a long time, and is the basis for the famous Cretan Paradox, where the Cretan says "All Cretans are liars." If he's telling the truth, then he's telling a lie, and if he's telling a lie, then he's not a liar … etc. etc. The Cretan is operating inside the box and outside the box at the same time. His statement is the box, but he allows himself to go in and out, while the audience is required to stay inside. That's ideology in a nutshell. It is a box where all inside obey a rule, as long as there is at least one who does not obey the rule.

This starts to sound like students, who must stay in the box, as long as there is a duplicitous teacher. This is the part I refuse to play. I show you the box, we talk about the box in its various guises, and see how ideology uses it. We realize how we all play the ideology game, but we do not impose it on each other. This is why grades are useless and why so-called teacher evaluations are idiotic. Satisfaction has to be mutual, but not everyone is likely to be satisfied, unless we get lucky.

A good syllabus must say how it is students and teachers adopt a "not-all" position. This means that we go in and out of the box in various states of "suspension of disbelief." That is, we do a bit of performance art to keep from taking the box too seriously. The only thing that disrupts this play is bad faith — where someone pretends to be participating but is creating another box for him or her to hide outside. This is not a matter of being lazy, but a character defect, the desire to be an informer, to operate at a "higher level" in collusion with what is called the Big Other, to explain one's faults by projecting them on to others, and getting those projections authenticated with a series of false accusations. Traitors don't need to be punished, they are betraying themselves and no one ever likes them.

The other kind of failure that disrupts play is accidental: sickness, mental or physical; unavoidable life events; other blameless interruptions of the learning process. Even when there is no blame damage is done and has to be repaired, but sympathy and assistance should be made available.

Examining the box and its rules through play requires earnest participation and resourcefulness. Effort is wasted unless presence is active rather than passive. One cannot learn by asking what it is to be learned and what the value of that learning will be ("Will this be on the exam?" or "What do you want me to do?" kinds of questions). Free activity contributes to the group's ambitions and accomplishments; restrictions on this freedom detract and diminish. Simple enough.

A schedule with content distributed across it is required even though everyone knows it makes no sense. See below. What really happens is that discussion develops and adjustments are made to the things to be studied and the way to study them. Unpredictable. It s the responsibility of the instructor, even in theory seminars, to keep a general framework going, to make sure the "course is going somewhere." This is provided by the main theme of the course, which is human subjectivity and its correlate, architecture's temporal nature. This involves a hypothesis, that architecture is "intrinsically subjective," and that this subjectivity is "intrinsically temporal" in nature. It's not something we have to believe in, it's simply something we put to the test. The instructor brings to the course the things he's most able to explain, that's the "content." When and how it's brought is his responsibility, adjusted to the evolving needs of the participants.

Theory is not like other subjects, such as "Renaissance Philosophy in Italy." It cannot pretend that there is "stuff out there" to be learned, first through acquaintance with the facts and then understanding of relations of the facts. Theory is dialectical, meaning both that it involves dialectic style conversation, and it

addresses the irony of dialectic as Hegel defined it best. Basically, this is "you can't get what you think you want, but desire sets up a logical pattern that, through an evolving relationship, achieves an unintended outcome." The outcome retroactively redefines the whole process. We see it best in Hegel's Parable of the Master and Servant, where the Master, unable to get recognition of other Masters, must seek it from Servants, who end up benefitting most although they seem to also suffer the most. This irony gave Marx some optimism, that workers/servants could eventually unite and rule, but this didn't happen. Instead, the Masters evolved new and ever more duplistic systems of domination, and we have today Late Capitalism, whose ideology enforces itself most effectively through the imagination of unlimited freedom of choice. This choice is a bit like the setting on a toaster, which between cold and hot lie "infinite setttings." This of course is the trick of the binary signifier, to set up goal posts and then say you can take up any position in between even though the ideal end-zones may be unachievable. We will examine the binary signifier in detail, and pry open its ideological components.

Theory is, if anything, resistance to ideology. Theory that can be written down as a series of beliefs is not theory, it's ideology intended to suppress theory. That's why a reading list in a theory course is a bit of a false front. We can't learn theory by reading, only by acting that is some kind of resistance to ideology. Theory is not about beliefs, its about what we do in relation to beliefs as necessary by-products of ideology. So, the usual thing said about seminars as an "exchange of opinions" is contradictory. We exchange, but opinions have no value and should not be set on the mantle-piece as trophies. Exchange is discourse, and dialectic. Otherwise theory doesn't exist.

Opinions and beliefs however make for good play, so in a play-acting mode (performance art) we present them in the guise of ideological stooges who seem to believe what we say, even though we intend to manipulate the system. This can be fun as long as we recognize the play-acting performative aspect. This gives is First Amendment protection; we are allowed to parody the way theory is subverted by ideology, but then we all laugh about it. The Constitution is not a box of rules. It's a dialectic; a theory about subjectivity. It must not be allowed to live on the two levels of the Cretan Liar; its one level is "we the people," i.e. subjectivity. In this seminar we go by this "law of the land."