

**ARC 308**  
**Architecture and Society**

Spring 2025  
Course Description

**Instructor:** Larry Speck  
**Office Hours:** TTh 2:00-3:00pm in GOL 4.142B  
**Email:** [lspeck@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:lspeck@austin.utexas.edu)  
**Class Time:** TTh 12:30-2:00pm

**Prerequisites**

None. Required course for architecture majors. This course may be used to fulfill the Visual and Performing Arts component of the university core curriculum and addresses the following four core objectives established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: communication skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork and social responsibility. This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of non-U.S. cultural groups, past and present.

**Educational Objectives**

1. To establish a perspective of the role and influence of architecture in society and vis-a-vis other disciplines in the arts and science.
2. To develop an understanding of how architecture is shaped by and reflects cultural values and social organization.
3. To present a broad picture of issues and factors which influence architectural design.
4. To understand how global cultures create environments that both reflect and shape their values.

**Educational Approach**

This is a reading/looking/listening/thinking course. It will follow a lecture format supplemented by related outside reading and required participation in discussion sections that hone skills in critical thinking, communication and teamwork. Students will also give oral presentations on their research in discussion sections. Students with disabilities may request accommodations. <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/> or call 512-471-6259.

**Evaluation**

There will be three tests in the course. Each test will count 15% of your final grade. Tests will include building identification and multiple-choice questions as well as essay questions analyzing buildings on campus or nearby to demonstrate understanding of material covered in lectures and reading over a five- to seven-week period. Participation in class (in the form of question responses due in most class periods) will count 20%, and participation in sections will count 10%. The remaining 25% of your grade will be based on a series of short analytical exercises that you will do through the semester. Analytical exercises will be dealt with primarily in sections.

**Required Texts**

Readings will be assigned from the following three texts:  
Rasmussen, Steen Eiler. *Experiencing Architecture*.  
Heschong, Lisa. *Thermal Delight in Architecture*.  
Moore, Charles, et al. *The Place of Houses*.

Website: [www.larryspeck.com](http://www.larryspeck.com)

## I. Introduction

- Jan 14 - Course Description
- Jan 16 - Architecture and Society—Overview
- Jan 21 - *Session to be replaced by campus tours conducted Jan 25-26*
- Jan 23 - Frank Gehry
- Jan 28 - Architectural Values/Philosophy/Principles/Prejudices/Theory

## II. Form in Architecture

- Jan 30 - Architecture as Sensual/Visual Experience
- Feb 4 - Architecture as an Intellectual/Artistic Experience
- Feb 6 - Systems and Order
- Feb 11 - Numbers/Mathematics/Geometry as Inspiration of Form
- Feb 13 - Nature/Biology/Organisms as Inspiration of Form  
[Reading in *Experiencing Architecture* to be completed by Feb 13]
- Feb 18 - Test #1

## III. Physical Considerations in Architecture

- Feb 20 - Buildings and Land
- Feb 25 - Geography/Topography/Ecology
- Feb 27 - Structure and Materials
- Mar 4 - Construction/Tectonics
- Mar 6 - Architecture in Response to Climate  
[Readings in *Thermal Delight in Architecture* to be completed by Mar 6]
- Mar 11 - Synthesis – Physical Considerations
- Mar 13 - Test #2

## IV. Human Factors in Architecture

- Mar 25 - Designation and Organization of Use
- Mar 27 - Architectural Determinism
- Apr 1 - Humanism at the Personal Scale
- Apr 3 - Humanism at the Scale of Organizations/Communities/Bureaucracies
- Apr 8 - Meaning in Public Buildings  
[Readings in *The Place of Houses* to be completed by Apr 8)
- Apr 10 - Synthesis—Human Factors
- Apr 15 - Technology as a Source of Beauty
- Apr 17 - Test #3

## V. Combinations and Synthesis

- Apr 22 - Perfection and Compromise
- Apr 24 - A Few Good Buildings

## **Policies and Information**

Make-up exams will only be given to students with satisfactory justification for excused absences.

Excused absences can be justified in one of three ways:

1. Absence due to illness or quarantine–Notification must be given in advance of the missed class via email to student’s TA.
2. Absence due to family emergency which requires travel out of town–A note from a parent or other responsible family member can document such required absence.
3. Absence due to student observance of a religious holiday. Arrangements must be made in advance with instructor or TA.

**ALL REQUESTS FOR MAKE-UP EXAMS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING WITHIN ONE WEEK OF THE MISSED EXAM ALONG WITH PROPER DOCUMENTATION.**

-A notice regarding academic dishonesty. UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism is located at the following link:  
<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct>

-See the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

-Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Please familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

-Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may not be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have the instructor’s explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course. Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

