

ARC 308 Architecture and Society Fall 2026

Instructor: Larry Speck

Office Hours: TTh 10-11am in GOL 4.142B

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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.

Educational Objectives

- To establish a perspective of the role and influence of architecture in society vis-a-vis other disciplines in the arts and science.
- To develop an understanding of how architecture is shaped by and reflects cultural values and social organization.
- To present a broad picture of issues and factors which influence architectural design. -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. See more information at <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 short answer 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 five 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

Course Outline

I. Introduction

Aug 25 - Course Description

Aug 27 - Architecture and Society—Overview

Sept 1 - Architectural Values/Philosophy/Principles/Prejudices/Theory

II. Form in Architecture

Sept 3 - Architecture as Sensual/Visual Experience

Sept 8 - Architecture as an Intellectual/Artistic Experience

Sept 10 - Systems and Order

Sept 15 - Numbers/Mathematics/Geometry as Inspiration of Form Sept

17 - Nature/Biology/Organisms as Inspiration of Form [Reading in

Experiencing Architecture completed by Sept 17] Sept 22 - Technology

as a Source of Beauty

Sept 24 - Session to be replaced by campus tours conducted Sept 19-20 Sept

29 - Synthesis – Form

Oct 1 - Test #1

III. Physical Considerations in Architecture

Oct 6 - Buildings and Land

Oct 8 - Geography/Topography/Ecology

Oct 13 - Structure and Materials

Oct 15 - Construction/Tectonics

Oct 20 - Architecture in Response to Climate

[Readings in Thermal Delight in Architecture to be completed by Oct 20]

Oct 22 - Synthesis – Physical Consideration

Oct 27 - Test #2

IV. Human Factors in Architecture

Oct 29 - Designation and Organization of Use

Nov 3 - Architectural Determinism

Nov 5 - Humanism at the Personal Scale

Nov 10 - Humanism at the Scale of Organizations/Communities/Bureaucracies Nov

12 - Meaning in Public Buildings

[Readings in The Place of Houses completed by Nov 12]

Nov 17 - Synthesis—Human Factors

Nov 19 - Test #3

V. Combinations and Synthesis

Dec 1 - Perfection and Compromise

Dec 3 - 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 the 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 the 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>

-Safety notice. 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.

-Integrity of class materials. 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.