

Vernacular Architecture

TRADITION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT CULTURAL POLITICS OF CONCRETE CRARTING A RESEARCH PAPER

Spring 2015

Saturday 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

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This seminar offers an exploration of the field of architecture and the built environment by tracing developments and debates concerning the meaning and history of traditions in architecture and in traditional architecture. What do we mean by traditional architecture? What is the relationship between traditional architecture and modern architecture? How is this relationship played out in the realm of building materials? These questions will be addressed by engaging both foundational and new scholarship on the meanings of traditions in the built environment and the implications of the same. From here onward, the course will move on to explore how meanings in traditions are expressed through/by building materials particularly concrete. Here, we will focus on the history and political economy of cement-a key binder in concrete, in the Indian context. The final part of this course will focus on the process of writing and organizing a research paper and delivering an effective research presentation.

Readings

We will read two books in their entirety:

- Rapoport, Amos. 1969. *House Form and Culture*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.
- Forty, Adrian. 2012. *Concrete and Culture: A Material History*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Requirements and Expectation

Weekly Meetings: Meet for three hours every week to discuss readings and get feedback on critical reading commentaries for those weeks' readings. Get feedback on content and style of writing. This is meant to be a practice exercise in writing effective literature reviews.

Readings Commentaries: Written commentaries in the form of a roughly 1–2 page critical reflection of the weekly readings. These should be analytical rather than only descriptive, critically engaging the week's reading rather than simply summarizing it. A critical reading commentary should do several things:

- Offer an *interpretation* of the arguments presented in the reading. Note that an interpretation is *not* the same as a summary. Do not simply paraphrase and restate the key points. Instead, offer *your understanding* of the arguments, why they are (or are not) significant, and what their strengths and/or weaknesses may be. This will necessarily be a *selective* rather than comprehensive interpretation of the readings. Probably the easiest way to offer an interpretation of the reading is to develop an *argument* and/or a *position* in relation to the reading.

- Relate the reading to other work and or debates in the field. Situate the readings in a broader scholarly conversation.
- Offer some critical questions about the reading and their overall theme or topic for discussion and provocation.

Book Review Exercises: Get feedback on how to write an effective book review based on the book we read for that week.

Research Paper and Presentation: The primary product of the course is the research paper, roughly 7000-8000 words. Furthermore, the last third of the course will be exclusively geared towards writing, organizing and getting feedback on the research paper and delivering a research presentation.

Grades

Reading Commentaries	30%
Book Reviews	30%
Final Research Paper and Presentation	40%

Schedule of topics and readings

Week 1: Discuss Readings, Syllabus, and Expectations

PART 1: TRADITION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Week 2: Unpacking “Tradition”

Required

Anderson Benedict, “Cultural Roots,” in *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and the spread of nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]), pp. 9-36.

Hobsbawm Eric, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Recommended

Edward Shils, “Introduction,” in *Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp.1-33.

Week 3: Tradition and the Built Environment

Required

Oliver Paul, 1989, “Handed Down Architecture: Tradition and Transmission,,: in Nezar AlSayyad and Jean-Paul Bourdier, eds., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America,), pp. 53-75.

Rapoport Amos, 1989, “On the attributes of ‘Tradition’”, in Nezar AlSayyad and Jean-Paul Bourdier, eds., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America), pp. 77-105.

Recommended

Nezar AlSayyad, “Traditional Dwellings and Settlements,” in Helaine Salin, ed.,

Encyclopedia of Science and Technology in the Non-Western World (2007).
Ananya Roy, "Traditions of the Modern: A Corrupt View," in *TDSR Vol. 12, No.2, 2001*.

Week 4: Tradition and the Built Environment [Continued]

Required

Glassie Henry, 1990. "Architects, Vernacular Traditions, Society," in *TDSR*, Vol.1, No.2, 1990.

Tuan Yi-Fu, 1999. "Traditional: What Does It Mean?" in Nezar AlSayyad and Jean –Paul Bourdier, eds., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1999), pp. 27-34.

Recommended

AlSayyad Nezar, Bourdier Jean-Paul, 1989, "Introduction", in Nezar AlSayyad and Jean-Paul Bourdier, eds., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America,)

Bourdier Jean-Paul, 1989, "Reading Tradition", in Nezar AlSayyad and Jean-Paul Bourdier, eds., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America)

Week 5: Tradition, Change, and Modernity

Required

Abu-Lughod Janet, 1992. "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World-Third World; Traditional Modern," in *TDSR*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1992, pp.7-12.

AlSayyad Nezar, 1995. "From Vernacularism to Globalism: The Temporal Reality of Traditional Settlements," in *TDSR*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Fall 1995, pp.13-24.

Upton Dell, 1993. "The Tradition of Change," in *TDSR*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1993, pp. 9-15.

Recommended

AlSayyad Nezar, "The Typical Muslim city: A Historiography of a Concept," in *Cities and Caliphs: On the Genesis of Arab Muslim Urbanism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. 13-33.

Shirine Hamadeh, "Creating the Traditional City: A French Project," in Nezar AlSayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Brookfield, Vt: Avebury, 1992) pp. 241-259.

Tony King, "The Politics of Position: Inventing the Past; Constructing the Present; Imagining the future," in *TDSR*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1993, pp.9-17.

Week 6: Book Review

Required

Rapoport, Amos. 1969. *House Form and Culture*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Week 7: Book Review [Continued: Book review exercise due]

Required

Rapoport, Amos. 1969. *House Form and Culture*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

PART 2: CULTURAL POLITICS OF CONCRETE

Week 8: Concrete

Required

- Bhanu, V. 1995. "Liberalisation and Performance of Cement Industry." *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 34 (August 26, 1995): M111–16. doi:10.2307/4403130
- McDuie-Ra, Duncan. 2018. "Concrete and Culture in Northeast India." www.raiot.in
- Osman, Michael. 2012. "The Managerial Aesthetics of Concrete." *Perspecta* 45: 67–76.
- Tappin, Stuart. 2002. "The Early Use of Reinforced Concrete in India." *Construction History* 18 (2002): 79–98.
- Hardford, Tim. 2017. "How Concrete Cemented its Place in History," in *Citylab* website, <https://www.citylab.com/design/2017/08/undercover-economist-cement-shaped-the-modern-economy/537780>.
- Gross, Daniel. 2015. "How Slightly Better Concrete Could Save the Planet," in *Citylab* website, <https://www.citylab.com/design/2015/05/how-slightly-better-concrete-could-save-the-planet/392996>.

Recommended

- Nitzan-Shifan, Alona. "On Concrete and Stone: Shifts and Conflicts in Israeli Architecture." *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 51–65.
- Picon, Antoine. "Construction History: Between Technological and Cultural History." *Construction History* 21 (2005): 5–19.

Week 9: Book Review

- Forty, Adrian. 2012. *Concrete and Culture: A Material History*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Week 10: Book Review [Continued: Book review exercise due]

- Forty, Adrian. 2012. *Concrete and Culture: A Material History*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

PART 3: WRITING AND ORGANIZING A RESEARCH PAPER

Week 11: Film Review

- Watch: Davies, Dan. 2019. Rebel Architecture. *Al Jazeera*.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/video/rebel-architecture/2014/8/11/rebel-architecture-the-creators-view>

Week 12: Research Paper Presentation

Week 13: Final Paper Feedback

Week 14: Final Paper Due