

ARCH&UD 98T: THE INFORMATIONAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Winter 2008, UCLA Department of Architecture and Urban Design
Wednesday 11am-2:00pm, Perloff Hall – Resource Room

Instructor: Ewan Branda

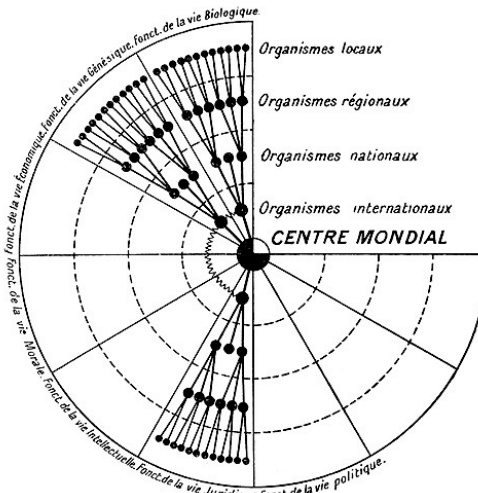
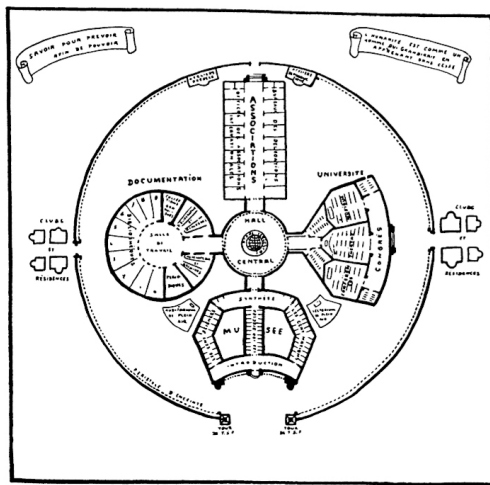
Email: ebranda@ucla.edu

Phone: (626) 398-6758

Office: Perloff Hall, B315-C

Office hours: Wednesday 2:30-4:00pm, or by appointment

Course web site: <http://cms.aud.ucla.edu/course/view.php?id=87>



Paul Otlet, Schematic plan of the Mundaneum (1925), Organisation mondiale (1934)

This seminar interprets the built environment as a vast system for the storage, transmission, and reception of information. It tracks the emergence of what we will be calling “information spaces” in European modernism during the period between 1800 and 1970. As much actual as virtual, these spaces demonstrate a tendency in modernity to think about architectural and urban space according to metaphors and methods of information organization. By examining them we will see how information media operate as an invisible form of organization in the built environment both historically and today, and so speculate on architecture’s place within a the modern information society.

SEMINAR OBJECTIVES

1. To provide students with conceptual frameworks with which to interpret architecture, and to encourage the development of an analytical attitude toward the built environment in which we dwell.
2. To help students expand their mental map of Western modernity and thereby sharpen their awareness of the ideas informing our contemporary world.
3. To talk in precise terms about the sometimes-vague concept of “information culture” that is loosely thrown about today, and to understand it as a historical and cultural phenomenon with material implications.
4. To help students develop their writing skills and make the job of writing less painful.
5. To offer students the opportunity to actively participate in the formulation of a hitherto undefined area of research, and to explore the risks and rewards of interdisciplinary research.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course has no prerequisites other than a strong curiosity about the built environment in which we live. But as it is a reading, writing and discussion-intensive seminar, it does require regular attendance, consistent punctuality, active participation, and that you come to class having completed the weekly readings and film viewings. Discussions will frequently build upon themes introduced in previous weeks, so if you miss a class you will need to try your best to catch up beforehand. All materials for weekly preparation will be available on the class web site, and you will be expected to complete these before the start of each class, as these will be the basis for much of the discussion. During the final half-hour of each class I will introduce the authors and readings due the following week. *You are strongly encouraged to do each week's preparation in the order listed in the syllabus.*

You will be given two assignments in this course:

1. A series of written responses to the readings, 8 in total
2. A short final paper

ASSIGNMENT 1: WEEKLY READING RESPONSES

DUE EACH TUESDAY AT 12:00 NOON THE DAY BEFORE CLASS FROM WEEK 2 – WEEK 9

The primary objective of this assignment is to learn how to process a set of sometimes difficult texts through short bursts of speculative writing. Each week you will write a mini-essay analyzing the readings. The online Forum for that week will give you some questions and key concepts to guide your analysis. Your essay should be based on the following structure:

- *An introductory paragraph* summarizing your view of the theme of the week
- *For each reading, one paragraph* summarizing it and discussing how it addresses the theme
- *An evaluative concluding paragraph* that builds on the opening paragraph and identifies a key problem, question, or conflict in the readings that usefully forms the basis of a class discussion

The overall length of your essay will vary from week to week, but *should never be longer than 750 words*. You should keep in mind that, although you will be graded for clarity of argument, the purpose of these writings is to help *you* process the readings; you should therefore approach them as an exercise in interpretation, without the preconception of there being a “right answer.”

Post your response to the Forum on the class web site *by 12 noon on the Tuesday before class*. You will receive written comments on your assignment in class the next day. Each week, two students will present their responses to the class. Based on these presentations we as a group will identify a question for discussion, following which we will then break into discussion groups of two or three students. We will then reassemble to discuss each group’s observations. Only your best 6 written assignments will count toward your final grade.

ASSIGNMENT 2: FINAL PAPER

DUE BY TUESDAY MARCH 19 AT 2:00 PM

The primary objective of this assignment is to organize your observations about the course materials and to give you the chance to revise some of your earlier writings. In a short paper of 2000-2500 words, use selected course readings to illustrate one of the models from week 3. You should base your paper on *four to six of the readings or films*, selected from at *least two different information spaces* discussed in weeks 4-10. You should open with a clear explanation of your interpretation of the model, spend the bulk of the paper *showing how the selected readings support that interpretation*, and end with an evaluative conclusion. Taking a cue from the readings themselves, this paper encourages you to make a scholarly argument through a combination of text and image, and so you *should illustrate your discussion of each reading with at least one carefully chosen image*, either taken from the reading or found elsewhere.

You should consider this paper to be primarily a re-organization, revision, and expansion of the observations you have already made in your weekly writings, with your chosen model acting as your organizing device. Note that many of the information spaces we discuss are exemplary of all three models, and so it will be up to you to demonstrate how the readings illustrate the model you have chosen and not the others.

You should submit your paper *by 2 pm on March 19*, in PDF (preferred) or MS Word format, using the TurnItIn link on the Study List page of the MyUCLA web site. If you would like your paper back with comments then please inform me by email or in class. *Note that this assignment is subject to change as the quarter progresses.*

GRADING

I will be using a non-competitive grade scale, which means that your work will be graded based on the degree to which it demonstrates mastery of the material. Your grade does not depend on your performance relative to others in the class.

Weekly writing	50 %	<i>due each Tuesday by noon; only 6 of 8 best count</i>
Participation in discussion	20%	
Final paper	30%	<i>due by 2:00 pm on March 19</i>

For details on the grading scheme and other course policies see the Appendix of this syllabus.

SUMMARY OF COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – JANUARY 9

MODES OF INFORMATION, MODES OF ARCHITECTURAL THINKING

WEEK 2 – JANUARY 16

THE RISE OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY, 1830-1980

Readings: Mattelart, Beniger, Nora and Minc

Film: Eames, *The Information Machine*

WEEK 3 – JANUARY 23

SPACE-INFORMATION-KNOWLEDGE: 3 MODELS

Webcast: *Empiricism*

Readings: Yates, Di Palma, Mattelart

WEEK 4 – JANUARY 30

INFORMATION_SPACE_0: MEGATECHNICS AND METALANGUAGE

Readings: Mumford, Schivelbusch, Choay, Vidler

WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 6

INFORMATION_SPACE_1: AMBIENT DATABASES

Webcasts: *The Grand Tour*, *The Great Exhibition*

Readings: Szegedy-Maszak, Baedeker, Hawthorne, Pelizzari, Kaufman

WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 13

INFORMATION_SPACE_2: MODERNIST UTOPIAS

Webcasts: *The Encyclopédie*, *Modernist Utopias*

Film: *Biography of Paul Otlet*

Readings: Wells, Baird, Teige, Cohen

WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 20

INFORMATION_SPACE_3: SPACES OF COMMUNICATION

Film: Eames, *A Communication Primer*

Readings: Shannon and Weaver, Jencks, Czarnowski, Choay, Eco

WEEK 8 – FEBRUARY 27

INFORMATION_SPACE_4: COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Readings: Boulding, Lynch, Barthes, Noordegraaf, Staneszewski

WEEK 9 – MARCH 5

INFORMATION_SPACE_5: CYBERNETIC ENVIRONMENTS

Film: *Centre Georges Pompidou*

Readings: Weiner, Pask, Mathews, Crompton

WEEK 10 – MARCH 12 – NO WEEKLY WRITING DUE

INFORMATION_SPACE_6: DYSTOPIA AND RESISTANCE

Film: *Alphaville*

Readings: Mumford (re-read), Ellul

MARCH 19 – FINAL PAPER DUE AT 2:00 PM

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – JANUARY 9

MODES OF INFORMATION, MODES OF ARCHITECTURAL THINKING

What are some of the meanings of the word “information”? What is the difference between architectural design and architectural interpretation? How are architectural history, theory, and criticism distinct ways of thinking about the built environment and how do they overlap?

WEEK 2 – JANUARY 16

THE RISE OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY, 1830-1980

What do we mean when we talk about the “information society”? What are some of its foundational ideas, and which of these can we usefully apply to the analysis of the built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Mattelart, Armand. *The Information Society: An Introduction*. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003. Pages 1-46.

Beniger, James R. *The Control Revolution : Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. Pages v-x, 1-44.

Nora, Simon, and Alain Minc. *The Computerization of Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980. Pages vii-xx, 1-29.

The Information Machine. Eames Office, 1958, 10 min. Film available at <http://www.archive.org/details/InformationM> [For best resolution, click on MPEG2 in the Play/download menu on the left-hand side of the window]

WEEK 3 – JANUARY 23

SPACE-INFORMATION-KNOWLEDGE: 3 MODELS

What does it mean to say that the built environment operates as an information archive? On what precedents can we base such a claim? What are some models of the informational built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Empiricism. Webcast available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20040610.shtml

Yates, Frances. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. Pages xi-xiii, 1-16, 129-144.

Di Palma, Vittoria. “Fragmentation, Multiplication, Permutation: Natural Histories and Sylvan Aesthetics from Bacon to Evelyn”. In *Fragments: Architecture and the Unfinished: Essays Presented to Robin Middleton*, ed. B. Bergdoll and W. Oechslin. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006. Pages 233-244.

Mattelart, Armand. “Mapping Modernity: Utopia and Communications Networks”. In *Mappings*, ed. Denis E. Cosgrove. London: Reaktion Books, 1999. Pages 169-192.

WEEK 4 – JANUARY 30

INFORMATION_SPACE_0: MEGATECHNICS AND METALANGUAGE

How did an emerging information society emerging in the 19th century provide new ways of thinking about the built environment? What were some of the useful metaphors it provided?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Mumford, Lewis. *The Myth of the Machine*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967. Pages 3-5, 163-194.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. Pages 16-32.

Choay, Françoise. *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*. New York: G. Braziller, 1970. Pages 7-19, 24-27.

Vidler, Anthony. "The Scenes of the Street: Transformations in Ideal and Reality, 1750-1871". In *On Streets*, ed. Stanford Anderson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978. Pages 29, 86-96.

WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 6

INFORMATION_SPACE_1: AMBIENT DATABASES

How did a new environmental awareness in the 19th century offer an alternative to the museum?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

The Grand Tour. Webcast available at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20020530.shtml

The Great Exhibition. Webcast available at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20060427.shtml

Szegedy-Maszak, Andrew. "A Perfect Ruin: Nineteenth-Century Views of the Colosseum." *Arion* Winter (1992). Pages 1-15.

Baedeker, Karl. *Italy: Handbook for Travellers*. Coblenz: Baedeker, 1872. Selection.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Transformation: or, the Romance of Monte Beni*. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860. Selection.

Pelizzari, Maria Antonella. "Retracing the Outlines of Rome: Intertextuality and Imaginative Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Photographs". In *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan. London: Tauris, 2003. Pages 55-73.

Kaufman, Edward N. "The Architectural Museum from World's Fair to Restoration Village." *Assemblage*, no. 9 (1989). Pages 20-30.

WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 13

INFORMATION_SPACE_2: MODERNIST UTOPIAS

What are information utopias, and why did they suddenly appear at the start of the 20th century? In what ways can they be seen as spatialized books? In what ways did the doctrines of architectural modernism conflict with an informational view of the built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

The Encyclopédie. Webcast available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20061026.shtml

Modernist Utopias. Webcast available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20050310.shtml

Biography of Paul Otlet. Film available at <http://www.archive.org/details/paulotlet> [For best resolution, click on MPEG2 in the Play/download menu on the left-hand side of the window]

Wells, H. G. *World Brain*. London: Methuen & Co., 1938. Pages 81-88.

Baird, George. "Karel Teige's Mundaneum, 1929 and Le Corbusier's In Defense of Architecture, 1933. Reprinted in *Oppositions Reader*, ed. K. Michael Hays. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998. Pages 585-588.

Teige, Karel. "Mundaneum" (1929). Reprinted in *Oppositions Reader*, ed. K. Michael Hays. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998. Pages 589-597.

Cohen, Jean-Louis. *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of the USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow, 1928-1936*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. Pages 110-114.

WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 20

INFORMATION_SPACE_3: SPACES OF COMMUNICATION

How did new ideas about communication and semiotics establish a new informational role for the built environment during the postwar era?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

A Communications Primer. Eames Office, 1953, 21 min. Film available at http://www.archive.org/details/communications_primer [For best resolution, click on MPEG2 in the Play/download menu on the left-hand side of the window]

Shannon, Claude Elwood, and Warren Weaver. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949. Pages 94-117.

Jencks, Charles. "Semiology & Architecture". In *Meaning in Architecture*, ed. Charles Jencks and George Baird. New York: George Braziller, 1969. Pages 11-26.

Czarnowski, Thomas V. "The Street as a Communications Artifact". In *On Streets*, ed. Stanford Anderson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978. Pages 207-212.

Choay, Françoise. "Urbanism & Semiology". In *Meaning in Architecture*, ed. Charles Jencks and George Baird. New York: George Braziller, 1969. Pages 27-37.

Eco, Umberto. "How an exposition exposes itself (1987)". Reprinted in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach. London: Routledge, 1997. Pages 165-172.

WEEK 8 – FEBRUARY 27

INFORMATION_SPACE_4: COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

In what ways does the human mind work together with the built environment to create an information space?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Boulding, Kenneth. *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956. Pages 3-31.

Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960. Pages 1-13, 46-90.

Barthes, Roland. "Semiology and the Urban (1967)". Reprinted in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach. London: Routledge, 1997. Pages 165-172.

Noordegraaf, Julia. *Strategies of Display: Museum Presentation in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Visual Culture*. Rotterdam: NAI, 2004. Pages 9-17.

Staniszewski, Mary Anne. "René D'harmoncourt's Vistas and Affinities and the Museum Of 'Primitive' Art". In *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998. Pages 110-128.

WEEK 9 – MARCH 5

INFORMATION_SPACE_5: CYBERNETIC ENVIRONMENTS

How did ideas about information messages in dynamic systems suggest new ways of looking at the organization and inhabitation of the built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Wiener, Norbert. *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*. New York: Da Capo, 1954. Pages 15-27, 136-162.

Pask, Gordon. "The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics (1969)". Reprinted in *Cyber_Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era*, ed. Neil Spiller. London: Phaidon, 2002. Pages 76-82.

Mathews, Stanley. "The Fun Palace as Virtual Architecture: Cedric Price and the Practices of Indeterminacy." *Journal of Architectural Education* 59, no. 3 (2006). Pages 39-48.

Centre Georges Pompidou. Richard Copans, 1997, 26 min. Film available on course web site.

Crompton, D. "Centre Pompidou: A Live Centre of Information." *Architectural Design* 47, no. 2 (1977). Pages 100-127 (6 pages of text).

WEEK 10 – MARCH 12 – NO WEEKLY WRITING DUE

INFORMATION_SPACE_6: DYSTOPIA AND RESISTANCE

What were some criticisms of the information society and its built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution. Jean-Luc Godard, 1965, 99 min. Film available on course web site and on reserves at the Powell Instructional Media Lab.

Re-read Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*. Pages 3-5.

Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*. New York: Knopf, 1964. Pages v-xii, xxv-xxvi, 3-14.

APPENDIX 1: COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

EMAIL COMMUNICATION AND ONLINE RESOURCES

Outside class time, the best way to communicate with me is by email; likewise, I will communicate with the class through email, and so you should make sure that your email address on record is working and that you check it regularly. You will also need an active UCLA Logon username and password to access the class web site as well as online article databases. Many online databases require that you either log in from a computer on the campus network or, if you plan to work from home, that you correctly configure your computer to access a proxy server (instructions are at <http://www.bol.ucla.edu/services/proxy>).

A NOTE ON WIKIPEDIA

Wikipedia (wikipedia.org) is often an excellent place to start when dealing with unfamiliar material, and I encourage you to use it. That said, you should be aware of its limitations and risks. First, it is an unreliable source of facts; although many of the entries are checked by experts in the field, many are not. Second, its anonymous nature makes it difficult to understand the particular scholarly conversation of which you are a part at the moment you use any information you find there. Third, if you make use of any material from Wikipedia you will be expected to cite it as you would any other scholarly resource.

As a general guideline, I recommend immediately scrolling down to the “Bibliography” and “External links” section (found at the foot of any worthwhile Wikipedia entry) as this is often the most useful information and can help you get started with a new project. I also encourage you to use Wikipedia while doing the weekly preparation: you are certainly not expected already to be familiar with every person, place, or historical event referred to in the readings!

DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

It is a priority of the instructor and the responsibility of the university to make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities or medical conditions that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation. If you have a disability that prevents you from meeting the course requirements as set out in the syllabus then you are encouraged to speak to me before the end of the first week of classes so that we can make alternate arrangements. You can get more information about the Office for Students with Disabilities at www.osd.ucla.edu.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

If you are currently learning English and think this will affect your reading pace or assignments, you are asked to communicate with the instructor about options and support. It will be your responsibility to keep up with the course materials. For information on UCLA ESL courses, visit www.international.ucla.edu/languages/esl/

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is your responsibility to make sure that you are aware of what constitutes academic dishonesty and its consequences. Plagiarism—the use of another’s words or ideas without proper acknowledgment—is a serious offense. You will receive a failing grade on any assignment in which there is clear evidence of plagiarism, with possibly more severe consequences. *All evidence of cheating and plagiarism will, without exception, be turned over to the Dean of Students.* Please review Bruin Success With Less Stress (online tutorial regarding plagiarism and documentation at <http://www.library.ucla.edu/bruinsuccess> to ensure that you understand what constitutes the offense of plagiarism. You should also visit

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html> for a complete explanation of policies and procedures regarding academic dishonesty.

GRADING POLICIES

WEEKLY WRITING (50% OF TOTAL GRADE – ONLY 6 BEST OF 8 TOTAL WILL COUNT)

Clearly summarizes and analyzes the readings	1.5
Insightfully evaluates the readings in a concluding paragraph	1.5
Demonstrates comprehension of readings	0.5
Addresses assignment as described in syllabus	0.25
Correct use of spelling and grammar	0.25
Total	4.0

PARTICIPATION (20% OF TOTAL GRADE)

Offers responses to questions posed by instructor to the group during discussion	2.0
Clearly answers verbal questions about weekly writings	1.0
Poses well-considered questions to other students about weekly writings	1.0
Total	4.0

FINAL PAPER (30% OF TOTAL GRADE)

Clarity of argument and explanation	1.5
Meaningfully applies readings to analysis of model	1.0
Makes effective use of non-textual media to support argument	0.5
Addresses assignment as posed in the syllabus	0.5
Correct use of citations, notes, and bibliography	0.25
Correct use of spelling and grammar	0.25
Total	4.0

POLICY ON LATE HAND-INS

All late assignments will lose one letter grade for each day late and will not be accepted after four days—no exceptions. Abstracts submitted after 2:00 pm on Tuesdays will be considered one day late, and final papers submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. If you submit an assignment late because of medical or family reasons then you will need to provide written proof.