COURSE DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to strains of architectural theory and criticism that have emerged between the postwar period and the new millennium. In general, this time frame represents a shift from utopian speculations on the city and critical approaches to architecture to discussions of globalization, sustainability, and the impact of digital media on architectural design. One goal of this course is to enable students to identify the historical roots of contemporary ideas. To develop a critical awareness of architectural culture, we will examine the ways historical theories continue to precondition and co-exist with contemporary theories.

Most of this course will consist of readings and discussions that reflect upon the shifting demands placed on architecture and design. We will close each thematic section with a brief (one-class) review of buildings, installation projects, or other artistic practices that have emerged in response to each architectural discourse. Recitations will be used to crowd source additional examples when appropriate.

Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to gauge their own design tendencies against historical discourses by means of short written exercises. For the final project, each student will have to prepare a written defense of one of their studio projects, situating the conceptual themes of their project within the history of architectural ideas. The intention of this exercise is to provide each student with an opportunity to use the critical vocabularies gleaned over the course of the semester to articulate the conceptual basis of his or her design interventions.