ARCH 7201
DESIGN METHODOLOGIES

Spring 2018 Syllabus
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“... there is no such thing as an entirely new system, and if a system claims to be such, it is either stupid or dangerous.”
Hanno-Walter Kruft

PREMISE
Design Methodologies is a critical exploration of post-critical architectural culture. Following the history/theory sequence, coinciding with the integrated project studio, and preceding the final year of the professional degree, it is an opportunity for students to take stock of emerging trends in the discipline and to respond to them through graphic and verbal criticism. It addresses the enigmatic relationship between concepts, technology, markets, and design, challenging students to identify strategic intellectual biases in response to post-critical trends in the discipline. How do designers navigate ideas, embrace limitations, and operate within the flux of history and culture? The course is a no risk environment in which students are encouraged to explore their biases and to hone their voices on matters of design—its purpose, meaning, methods, and (most importantly) potential. A primary theme is historical recurrence—despite rhetoric to the contrary, the “new” in architectural culture has been seen before. A primary question is the role of research in architectural practice—the extent to which it complements and/or supplants traditional notions of design, and the ways in which design itself may be considered a form of research. More broadly, the course is envisioned as a laboratory on the topic of the design process. The primary method of its confrontation with method is typological thinking. Experimentation and design inquiry are paramount.

OBJECTIVES
The primary objective of this course is to promote a culture of critical inquiry and research in architectural design. To that end, it seeks:

- to develop an understanding of architectural criticism
- to develop critical recklessness through depth and agility
- to demystify the design process
- to consider how design is and is not an interdisciplinary act of research
- to promote reading, writing, and graphic analysis as complementary modes of design knowledge
- to promote history and precedent as contingencies of contemporary practice
- to develop and hone abilities to communicate through diagramming, writing, and speaking
- to reveal representational strategies as biased discourses that steer design biases

STRUCTURE
The semester is divided into three parts: an introduction, a survey of emerging trends in the discipline, and a final section devoted to the development of final projects in both this course and ARCH 7102. Each class session includes a lecture by the instructor and a student-led discussion and/or debate. Some class sessions include a guest speaker, screening, and/or charrette.

Weekly: responses (graphic and verbal) to required readings, conducted individually (approx. 150 words plus sketches/diagrams); plus rotating responsibilities to present synopses of optional readings, conducted in assigned groups.

Midterm: typological analysis (graphic and verbal) of two contemporary design firms, conducted individually.

Final: typological analysis (graphic and verbal) that contextualizes students’ studio projects both historically and within the contemporary era, to be coordinated with studio faculty and contribute to studio presentations; plus “Storrs in the style of ...” diagram series. Both parts of final project conducted in studio design teams.