

*It is easy to see why we fail so often. For one thing we do not draw space, but rather plans and sections in which the space lives. So there is a constant temptation to focus on objects rather than on the architectural space they breathe into existence. "drawing board victories"...replace and negate the real pleasures discoverable in space.*

Charles Moore

# Spatial Composition

## **Catalogue Description**

1. Principles of form and composition in the making of architectural space. The study of past and present ideas and principles through which building elements are given order and meaning.

2. Credits: 4

3. Prerequisites: Arch 182 for undergraduates and Arch 680 for graduates

**Meeting Time/Place** 4. Lectures: Tu Th 2:00 - 3:20, Rm Lawrence 177  
Section times and place (See below)

## **Teaching Methodology**

5. Illustrated lectures and weekly discussion section meetings of approximately 20 students.

## **Discussion Sections**

Beginning the first week of class there will be one discussion session meeting per week for a total of eight. The purpose of these sessions will be to discuss assigned readings and issues raised in lectures. In addition these sessions will be used to introduce class projects and to review the results. Graduate students are required to submit a written response to a required reading each week. For the sake of continuity it is important that students remain in their section for the duration of the quarter, i.e. transfers to other sections will not be permitted. If a problem arises with your scheduled time please see your GTF immediately to resolve the problem. More information about discussion section procedures will be forthcoming from your GTF section leader.

## Requirements

6. Projects: A series of projects covering issues raised in lecture and discussion sections will be assigned during the course of the term.

Class Projects for Fall 2007 are listed below:

1. Spatial Definition of a Cube within a Field
2. Spatial Analysis of a Threshold
3. Façade Exercise
4. Transformation Exercises

More detailed schedule, requirements and format to be announced.

Original drawings and models completed as course requirements are the property of the Department of Architecture and may be retained permanently in the archive for accreditation purposes. Students will be able to access archives for photographs and record taking of their work.

7. Course Notebook: In addition to the projects, all students will be required to take notes for this class in a notebook specifically devoted to this purpose. As the topic of the class is visual and spatial, your notes should be weighted towards graphic documentation and investigation. The intention is that you are an active participant during the lectures, analyzing and thinking critically about the information that is being presented. This practice will also give you an opportunity to further develop your drawing and graphic skills. Periodically during lectures, specific analytic problems will be presented and should be documented in the notebooks accordingly. These notebooks will be turned in to your section instructors once during the third/fourth week of the term and then again on the last day of class, Tuesday, November 22. The review of your notebooks will be part of your class participation grade.

Notebooks should be unlined with minimum size of 8" X 10"  
maximum size of 9" X 12"

Recommended notebooks available at the Campus Store:

*Aquabee, Super Delux 808 9" x 12"*

*Strathmore Sketch, 400 Series 9" x 12"* (recycled or standard is fine)

*Bateman Sketchbook, 8 1/2" x 11"*

8. Reading Response: Each week, all students will submit a reading response to their GTF's that discusses the readings for that week. This response should not be a summary of the readings, but instead should engage the issues brought up in the readings and should probe these issues further. GTF's will discuss the format of this assignment in section.

9. Exam: There will be one comprehensive exam given during week 8 on Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be one practice exam that will not be graded.

There will be no final exam although there will be a final review of your last project scheduled during exam week. All students must

attend this review for the entire time period noted in order to pass the course.

Incompletes are not allowed except for medical emergency; students should notify instructor as soon as possible in such an event; written physician's excuse required.

**Grading/  
Evaluations**

10. Grading and evaluations will be returned as promptly as possible. The graded weight for each required portion of the course follows:

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Projects                     | 55% |
| Exam                         | 30% |
| Notebook/Class Participation | 15% |

Every effort is made to grade fairly for each student and maintain consistency among sections. If you have questions about your grade please see your section instructor for resolution.

**Reading**

11. There are three required texts:

*Spatial Composition Reader 2007*  
*The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* by Colin Rowe  
*Precedents in Architecture* by Clark and Pause

In addition there are several recommended texts:

*Alvar Aalto* by Fleig, ed.  
*Analyzing Architecture*, by S. Unwin  
*Architecture: Form, Space and Order* by F. Ching  
*Chambers for a Memory Palace*, by D. Lyndon  
*Elements of Architecture* by P. Von Meiss  
*Experiencing Architecture* by S. E. Rasmussen  
*Frank Lloyd Wright* by Bruno Zevi  
*Ideas of Order: A Formal Approach to Architecture*  
by J. Gargus  
*Le Corbusier* by Boesiger, ed.  
*Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe*, by Cohen  
*Principles of Architectural Design* by J. Tice, ed.  
*Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, by K. Nesbit, ed.

These texts above are available at the Campus Store; additional course related materials will be on electronic reserve in the AAA Library.

**Attendance**

12. Attendance at both lectures and discussion sections are critically important. Students are permitted one unexcused absence for lectures. There will be no unexcused absences for discussion sections. Medical excuses must be verified with a signed physician's note. Absenteeism and/or tardiness and early departures will adversely affect your final grade.

**Instructors** 13. Nico Larco, Assistant Professor of Architecture  
Office: 204B Pacific Tel: 346-1421 E-Mail: nlarco@uoregon.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:00-2:00 P.M. or by appointment

James Tice, Professor of Architecture  
Office: 317 Law Tel: 346-1443 E-mail: jtice@uoregon.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00-12:00 P.M. or by appointment

Graduate Teaching Fellows:  
TBA

**Under Graduate** TBA

**Graduate  
Discussion Sections** TBA

**Course Required** 14. This is a required course for undergraduates enrolled in 383, and Option III Students enrolled in 681. The first of three required Design Arts courses, Spatial Composition will engage fundamental issues of architectural space, its design, meaning and its relevance to architects, designers and society at large. It will run parallel to Architectural Design studios and complement the other two subject areas of the Design Arts Curriculum, namely, "Architectural Context: Place and Culture" and "Human Context of Design".

**Objectives** 15. The "Sense of space" is the fundamental framework of architectural experience--inhabitable space is the unique concern of our art. Composition deals both with the (a) TECHNIQUES of organizing the various elements to form space, as well as with the (b) CONTENT of the experience itself.

(a ) TECHNIQUE describes the particular mode of spatial perception as well as the principles which the designer uses to organize and relate the elements and spaces.

(b) CONTENT informs us about the nature, quality and character of the place. Content is the IDEA expressed through the spatial structure. It is the composite of all the various sets and patterns of perceivable relationships.

Spatial Composition, then, is the study of the organizational principles in the patterns and structure of architectural space and as such, is the MEANS to the CONTENT of experience.

The "Shape of Content" theorists constantly debate the interrelations of space/form and meaning. An architectural structure exists within, and is defined by, the existing socio-cultural structure. Thus the study of architecture is inextricably related to the studies of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, economics, science, etc.. But in art and

architecture the expression of an idea must be through visual media--it must be formed and interact with space. Visual space/form and the circumstances of formation can be analyzed. Although it may be difficult to analyze the relationship of space/form to meaning (as is the relation of sign to symbol and denotative to connotative meaning in language), it is the presumption of this course that the dichotomy can be individually examined. Through the process of abstraction of principles in relation to their complex historical and cultural contexts, the revealed differences between "pure principles" and "applied principles" will become the basis of discussion.

Thus an important intention of the course is to demonstrate and explain principles of design which are true for different cultures and different building purposes because they derive their meaning from inherent and thus stable, formal characteristics related to basic human biological and psychological traits. Built examples extracted from the reservoir of history will be used to demonstrate these principles.

Beyond having internal cohesion and unity, the course, as mentioned above, is meant to be complementary to your design studio experience. The course material and the method of its treatment by instructor and student is intended to develop the ability to translate visual information into intellectual concepts and vice versa.