Spatial Composition

*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

**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 Lawrence 177

Section times and place (See below)

**Teaching Methodology**

5. Illustrated lectures and weekly discussion section meetings of approximately 18-20 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. 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 2015 are listed below:

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

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 24. 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”
- Drawing media can be ink (fountain pen) pencil or felt marker: NO ballpoint pen media will be accepted
- Recommended notebooks available at the Campus Store:
  - Aquabee, Super Deluxe 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 19. 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 scheduled for Tuesday, December 8 at 12:30 P.M. All students must attend this review for the entire time period scheduled in order to pass this course.

Incompletes are not allowed except for medical emergency; students should notify instructor as soon as possible in such an event.

**Grading/ Evaluations**

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.

10. Grading and evaluations will be returned as promptly as possible.

11. There are three required texts:
   - *Spatial Composition Reader (online)*
   - *Precedents in Architecture* by Clark and Pause

In addition there are several recommended texts:
   - *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* by Colin Rowe
   - *Analyzing Architecture*, by S. Unwin
   - *Experiencing Architecture* by S. E. Rasmussen
   - *Architecture: Form, Space and Order* by F. Ching
   - *Chambers for a Memory Palace*, by D. Lyndon
   - *Elements of Architecture* by P. Von Meiss
   - *Ideas of Order: A Formal Approach to Architecture*
     by J. Gargus
Principles of Architectural Design by J. Tice, ed.

Monographs of the following architects are also recommended:
Alvar Aalto by Fleig, ed.
Frank Lloyd Wright by B. Zevi
Le Corbusier by Boesiger, ed.
Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe, by Cohen

The 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 should be verified with a signed physician’s note. Absenteeism and/or tardiness and early departures will adversely affect your final grade. Students should be familiar with the university policies regarding academic integrity and consequences of dishonest conduct.

Instructors
13. James Tice, Professor of Architecture
Office: 204 Pacific Tel: 346-1443 E-mail: jtice@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: 11:00 – 1:00 Wednesday or by appointment

Graduate Teaching Fellows:
TBA

GTF Policy/Roles:
The GTFs will conduct discussion sessions under the direct supervision of the professor. These sessions will be conducted according to protocols that have been approved by the professor and that are common to all sections of the course. The professor will meet with the GTFs on a weekly basis, to coordinate material and ensure that sections are being run consistently and according to the instructor's specifications. The professor will have ultimate responsibility for determining and entering grades, and the GTFs will assess work under his direct supervision. All grading will be done according to clear criteria determined by the professor. The professor will regularly monitor the grading activities of GTFs with respect to accuracy and fairness. Graduate students have the option of having their work graded only by the professor.

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Course Required

14. This is a required course for undergraduates enrolled in 383, and Track 1 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, interior 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 to advantage. 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 are intended to develop the ability to translate visual information into intellectual concepts and vice versa.