This course is a graduate and upper-level history/theory seminar devoted to the study of the work of Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. There are two aspects to this course: the study of a rich body of very compelling and comprehensive work and a methodology for architectural design analysis.

The experience of architecture is crucial to its understanding. The complexity of the architectural whole cannot be conveyed by drawings, photographs, video or text. It is also true that without analysis, experience alone is insufficient.

To be successful, an architect must have the analytical tools to understand and overcome design roadblocks or to simply to make their work better. And of course you need to be able to communicate design issues to your colleagues, to clients and to the public.

The study of architecture in the field and its analysis in the studio involves recording impressions and intuitive responses, analyzing the buildings with respect to certain criteria and recording those aspects of the building which seem important for future study and reference.

We will study the following concepts in Aalto’s work:

- **Schematic Organization** ~ basis in program; impacts from context; relationships to formal order; role of composition.
- **Form** ~ Interrelationship with other issues; thematic content; Aalto's particular compositional sensibility.
- **Context** ~ Both natural and built; local, regional, national scale; historical; typological; Aalto's own previous and concurrent work; impact of context on organization, form, light and material.
- **Program** ~ Expression in schematic organization, form, spatial configuration, light; adaptation to changes over time; expansion.
- **Volume** ~ Configuration into "rooms" and "spaces"; the nature of edges and transitions; sequential order and experience; relationship to other issues.
- **Natural Light** ~ Relationship to other issues, especially form, volume and material; functional uses.
- **Material** ~ Imaginative and creative uses; relationship to form, light and material.
- **Structure** ~ Exploitation of structure for it's sculptural qualities vs. "honest" structural expression; issues of articulation.
- **Systems** ~ Emphasis on acoustics and artificial lighting; integration with finishes and detail.
- **Detail** ~ Role in extending and refining architectural order and its expression; technical aspects of weathering, etc.; role of composition at this level.

In Aalto’s work these issues are governed by an encompassing architectural sensibility. This sensibility is very personal and has at its core a sense of composition and visual order. We will relate the investigation of each issue back to this ordering sensibility and learn to distinguish between composition as a tool to unite various layers of architectural order from "empty" composition, where formal qualities are used for solely their own sculptural satisfaction.

Students, working in teams of two, will select one of Aalto's buildings to analyze during the term, using drawings and models to investigate and present results. For all teams there will be an assignment due each week, with one or two teams presenting to the
entire group. I will give a short slide lecture introducing next week's topic, and show examples of design analysis of one or more of Aalto’s buildings. At the end of the term each team will submit the drawings, models, and diagrams completed each week along with a summary report. Student work will be graded on thoroughness and quality of documentation. The emphasis will be on drawing by hand. Students are expected to bring an 8.5 x 11 sketchbook to class and take notes through drawing as well as text.

Prerequisites: The class will be limited to 24 students. Graduate students should have a minimum of 24 hours of design credit and Undergraduates should have a minimum of 36 hours of design credit.

Students are expected to introduce themselves to Aalto’s work prior to the first class meeting, at which students will choose one building to study for the entire term.

See the attached Course Outline / Schedule for an outline of each week’s topics.