

School of Architecture University of Waterloo, Cambridge
ARCH 684 002 - Master of Architecture Elective, Winter 2014
Instructor: Adrian Blackwell
Mondays: 1:00-4:00pm
Room: 2026
Office: 2024
Office Hours: Mondays: 4:00-5:00pm

The Architecture of Capital



Factories and Dormitories under construction in Shenzhen, China. pinhole photo: Adrian Blackwell

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Like many others of my generation I have been influenced by a Marxist interpretation of history...

Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*

...the successive resolution of the linked riddles, or dilemmas, lay in place the architecture of a whole construct or system, which is that of capital as such.

Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One*

There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.

Karl Marx – "Letter to Maurice La Chatre on the publication of Capital in as a serial"

There is no single theoretical tendency that has had a greater effect on architectural theory and criticism in the last century than Marxism. The reception of Marxism in the west was accomplished in large part through the work of the Frankfurt School, in the writing of figures such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse, and others with whom they were in close contact and whose work resonated with theirs such as Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht and Siegfried Kracauer. These writers so dominated mid twentieth century criticism, with their dissection of the culture industry, that the term "critical theory" refers explicitly to the tradition they defined. Other parallel mid century strands of critical thinking such as French Structuralism were also dominated by the power of Marxist thought, most notably through the writing of Louis Althusser. Even the theory that displaced this tendency as the dominant theoretical discourse in architecture, Poststructuralism, is deeply indebted to Marx, from Jacques Derrida's late work *Spectres of Marx*, to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, which examines the Capitalism, through an explicit engagement with Marx's work.

As a result of this, the giants of architectural theory of the past 50 years have also been carefully working in a Marxist tradition as well, from Manfredo Tafuri, who opens K. Michael Hays', seminal *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, to Hays himself, who edited the field defining journal assemblage. The recent generation of architectural critics has followed suit with figures as diverse as Kenneth Frampton, Detlef Mertins, Reinhold Martin, Felicity Scott, Hilde Heynen, Mary Mcleod, and Pier Vittorio Aureli, as well as critics in adjacent disciplines who have made substantial interventions into

architectural history and theory such as the Art Historian Hal Foster and the Literary Theorist Frederic Jameson, all working in the Marxist tradition.

In addition to this architectural writing, there has been a resurgence of Marxist perspectives on space and urbanization, led by the American geographer David Harvey and the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Together, their writings have influenced a generation of critical spatial thinkers such as Neil Smith, Cindi Katz, Margit Mayer, Eric Swyngedouw, Mike Davis, Sharon Zukin, Roger Keil, Stephen Graham, Neil Brenner, Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore, that architects avoid at their peril.

Despite this huge debt to Marx, few architects read him in depth. Many are familiar with the concise Communist Manifesto, which Marx co-wrote with his close collaborator Friedrich Engels in 1848, just as he was just beginning his research into economics, but few have studied his mature economic works. Although he wrote many essays and books in his lifetime, there is no more comprehensive statement of his ideas than the first volume of *Capital*, published in 1867.

There are many reasons why architects avoid this book: it is long, it appears to be too technical, and now almost 150 years old, its details seem anachronistic. However these are just excuses given the challenging books that academics are happy to study. More importantly, Marx provides a powerful and reasoned critique of capitalism and this argument is a dangerous one, because it shakes the very foundations of the society that we still inhabit. For this reason Marxism has been marginalized as an explicit discourse within the University in general and schools of architecture specifically. In the 1950s in north America it was impossible to study Marx with McCarthyism terrorizing Communists in the United States, and with the rise of the New Left in the 1960s, other battles such as those over race, gender eclipsed the problem of economic exploitation. As a result of this apparent prohibition, people read Marxist criticisms (without reading Marx) as a superficial cultural critique, failing to understand that this criticism is founded on a detailed analysis of the way in which human labour is exploited and nature is despoiled, through the capitalist mode of production.

The migration of market logic and rhetoric into the all levels of government from the competitive City to the World Bank, under the ideology of globalized neoliberalism has brought the very question of economic exploitation back to the fore. The recent financial crisis of 2008, and the diverse austerity programs that followed in its wake, have made the economic critique of capitalism all the more urgent. So despite its apparent anachronism, Marx's text is more prescient than ever.

Often the world's deepest problems are seen as aberrations or corruptions of democratic market processes. As a result the answers to them appear to act on the symptoms of the problem: to provide aid to impoverished regions, to pursue human rights abuses, to try to rectify the imbalances of the system. While these are each valuable and necessary projects in themselves, what Marx provides in his critique of capitalism, is a way of understanding that it is the system itself which thrives on imbalances, it is a system which only functions the way it does through the production of unequal spaces and citizens. As Eric Cazdyn writes in the introduction to a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* on the subject of disaster: "Crises occur when things go right, not when they go wrong."¹

In many ways this course is a surrealist exercise in juxtaposition. We will be reading critics working in the tradition of Western Marxism beside Marx himself. Often the sublimated ideas of the Marxist critique will appear somewhat obtuse in comparison to Marx's hard work in trying to understand capitalist economics, but the idea is to try to understand the roots of cultural criticism within the unpacking of economic forces.

Marx's Trinity Formula: Land, Labour and Capital

Classical economists, such as Adam Smith, argued that the free market economy functions through the open circulation of three essential factors of production: land, labour, and capital. Karl Marx convincingly argued that labour was the only true source of value in Capitalism and that land and capital were merely its derivatives.

¹ Eric Cazdyn. "Disaster, Crisis, Revolution" in Eric Cazdyn ed. *Disasterous Consequences*, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106: 4, (Fall 2007) 649.

However in this seminar we will examine the relationship between these three, starting from the hypothesis that they are the fundamental building blocks of any contemporary architecture. Architecture is spatial and therefore needs to be built on a site whose specific characteristics are crucial to its design, but whose value is produced through its abstraction and circulation. Architecture is always a result of human labour, in both material and immaterial forms, of skilled and unskilled trades, and diverse consultants. Finally architecture is inevitably a complex production and as a result it requires the accumulation of capital in advance of its planning and construction. At the same time the financial process renders it speculative, taking an apparently solid and material thing and throwing it into the space of circulation.

This seminar will allow students to build a critical approach to the contemporary political economy of architectural production, by asking questions about the property relations of sites, the labour used in design and construction, and the importance of architecture as a financial investment. We are interested in investigating the ways in which architecture can encourage, habitation, human activity and investment in the future, while at the same time resisting or escaping the exploitations enacted over both people and the natural world, through the capitalist extraction of rent, surplus labour and interest. This requires thinking about design as a more ambitious project that imagines a different future. Marx can be a helpful guide in this project.

Four objects of study: capital, *Capital*, architectural production, architectural theory

The course is centrally concerned with four objects of study, each of which is a form of relation between architecture and capital. First it is interested in the form or architecture of the capitalist mode of production. Second it is focused on a modern form, or architecture of criticism, the dialectical method practiced within *Capital*. Third it is interested in the material constraints and desires that capital places on contemporary architectural production. Finally it is focused on the influence that Marx's political economic writing has had on Architectural Theory. Your work this term will examine the matrix of relations between these four.

Course objectives:

This course is designed to introduce you to the relationship of political economy to the practice of design. It will also give you a better understanding of the theoretical background of a wide range of architectural history. Finally it will allow you to criticize Marxian approaches to architectural history and theory.

Course requirements:

The seminar will involve close readings of texts each week. You will be required to have finished the readings and to participate in all class discussions with an informed perspective on each text. Over the term you will investigate these paradoxes through six 500-750 word written reading responses. You will also make two verbal presentations on a reading, which will summarize the thesis and key points of the reading and raise key questions for class discussion. The term project will be a diagrammatic and textual analysis of the relationship between capitalism and architecture as a 4000-5000 word critical essay. This final project has three deadlines: A project proposal of 500-1000 words, an illustrated in class presentation of the key arguments and evidence, and the final written document.

Relative weight and due date for assignments:

1a - Seminar Participation	10% in each class during the term
1b - 5 Reading Responses	5 x 4% = 20% due by 9am the Sunday before class
1c - In class presentations of three readings	3 x 8% = 24% due in class
2a - project proposal	6% - due February 3
2b - In class presentation of research	15% - due on an agreed upon class
2c - Final Hand-in	25% - due April 21

Description of the Course Assignments:

Assignment 1 - Seminar participation and reading

Each class will begin with a short introduction to the day's themes by the course instructor. Then individual students will introduce the two readings, one at a time, and ask the class to answer

specific questions about them. The instructor will moderate and focus the ensuing conversation amongst the class comparing the two readings. The class will finish with the instructor introducing the next week's readings.

1a - Seminar participation

10% in each class during the term

Each Student is expected to have read the week's assigned texts and to participate during the discussion during each class. Carefully read the reading each week, underline important passages, and take notes on its key concepts. Come to class with questions you have about both readings. The primary purpose of the discussions is to engage the content of the readings themselves, in order to explore and better understand the relationship between specific architectural and spatial theory and capitalism. It is important that you engage the content of the readings and not simply your general knowledge of the subjects discussed.

1b - Five reading responses before class

5 x 4% = 20% due by 9am the Sunday

Each student will submit 5 reading responses of 500-750 words each. The reading responses should compare key concepts from the two readings that week. Each response should be framed as a concise essay. The first half should consist of a clear description of the key ideas of each thinker and end with your thesis about the relationship between their ideas. The rest of the response should argue for the points of agreement and divergence between them. All references to the texts should include page numbers. The reading response can make reference to other thinkers with footnotes, but should not contain unsubstantiated conjecture. The days that you will submit reading assignments will be decided on the first day of class.

1c - In class presentations of three readings before class

3 x 8% = 24% due digitally by 9am Sunday

Each student will lead the discussion during two classes of the term. In advance of the class prepare a short hand out of 500-1000 words, illustrating the key theses and arguments of one of the two readings and a series of 2-4 detailed questions about the reading for the class. Questions should make specific reference to ideas in the text and focus discussion on the text itself. A digital copy of your hand out is due by 9:00am on the Tuesday before class. You are responsible for making double-sided copies for the class members. The days that you will do in-class presentations will be decided on the first day of class. The presentations are distinct from the reading responses and will occur on weeks when you are not required to write a reading response.

Assignment 2 – The Architecture of Capital

For the term project each of you will focus on a specific section of *Capital* and a specific factor of production in order to better understand the function of a specific example of contemporary architecture.

2a - project proposal

6% - due February 3

Each student will prepare an illustrated proposal for their term project. The proposal should be 500-1000 words and contain one or more illustrations. The outline should introduce the chosen section of *Capital* and a specific architectural or urban problem. It should then explain how you might be able to use this section of the book to better understand the architectural case.

2b - In class presentation of research

15% - due in an agreed upon class

Each student will present their findings as a 15 minute paper presented to the class. All papers should be accompanied by images of the architectural case. The purpose of the presentation is to workshop your ideas and to rehearse the form of the academic paper. It should have a clear thesis and substantial evidence. Two students will present during the last six classes of the term, the presentation will be followed by 15 minutes of discussion about each presentation.

2c – Final Project

25% - due Monday April 21, 9am

The final document should be an illustrated essay 4000-5000 words in length. The purpose of the project is to use *capital* to unpack architecture and to use architecture as a case through which to investigate the relevance of Marx's theories in a contemporary context. All projects will be posted online by the deadline.

Course Texts:

Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, Trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review Books, 1976)

Karl Marx, *Capital Volume III*, Trans. David Fernbach (London: New Left Review Books, 1981)
David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010)
See also David Harvey's lectures on Capital: <http://davidharvey.org/reading-capital/>

Useful References:

Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar et al., *Reading Capital* (London: Verso, 2009)
Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital* (London: Verso, 2011)

Week 1 - January 6 – Marx, Capital, and its legacy for architecture

General Introduction to the problems of the course

1. Money / Capital

Week 2 - January 13 – The Commodity Fetish: Use Value and Exchange Value

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 125-187.

Part I: Commodities and Money

Ch. 1: Commodities

Ch. 2: Exchange

Reference:

Harvey, *A Companion*, Chapter 1. Commodities and Exchange

b) Walter Benjamin, "Paris Capital of the Nineteenth Century" in *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 14-26.

Week 3 - January 20 – The General Formula for Capital

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 188-280.

Ch. 3: Money, or the Circulation of Commodities

Part II: The Transformation of Money into Capital

Ch. 4: The General Formula for Capital

Ch. 5: Contradictions in the General Formula of Capital

Ch. 6: The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power

Reference:

Harvey, *A Companion*, "Chapter 2. Money", "Chapter 3. Capital to Labour Power"

b) Manfredo Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology", in ed. K. Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, (Cambridge MA.: The MIT Press, 1998), 6-35.

2. Labour

Week 4 - January 27 - The Labour Process and the Working Day

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 283-416.

Part III: The Production of Absolute Surplus-Value

Ch. 7: The Labour-Process and the Process of Producing Surplus-Value

Ch. 8: Constant Capital and Variable Capital

Ch. 9: The Rate of Surplus-Value

Ch. 10: The Working-Day

Reference:

Harvey, *A Companion*, "Chapter 4. The Labour Process and the Production of Surplus Value", "Chapter 5. The Working Day"

b) Mary McLeod, 'Architecture or Revolution: Taylorism, Technocracy, and Social Change,' *Art Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Summer 1983, pp. 132-147

Week 5 - February 3 - Surplus Value I

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 417-491.

Ch. 11: Rate and Mass of Surplus-Value

Part IV: Production of Relative Surplus-Value

Ch. 12: The Concept of Relative Surplus-Value

Ch. 13: Co-operation

Ch. 14: Division of Labour and Manufacture

Reference:

Harvey, *A Companion*, "Chapter 6. Relative Surplus Value"

b) Hilde Heynen, "Constructing the Modern Movement" in *Architecture and Modernity* (Cambridge Ma.: The MIT Press, 1999), 26-70.

3. Capital II

Week 6 - February 10 – Technological determinism?

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 492-639.

Ch. 15: Machinery and Modern Industry

Reference:

Harvey, *A Companion*, "Chapter 7. What Technology Reveals", "Chapter 8. Machinery and Large Scale Industry"

b) Detlef Mertins "Walter Benjamin and the Tectonic Unconscious: Using Architecture as an Optical Instrument", in *Modernity Unbound* (London: Architectural Association, 2011), 114-139.

Reading Week February 17 - 21

4. Labour II

Week 7 - February 24 - Surplus Value II

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 643-761.

Part V: The Production of Absolute and of Relative Surplus-Value

Ch. 16: Absolute and Relative Surplus-Value

Ch. 17: Changes of Magnitude in the Price of Labour-Power and in Surplus-Value

Ch. 18: Various Formula for the Rate of Surplus-Value

Part VI: Wages

Ch. 19: The Transformation of the Value (and Respective Price) of Labour-Power into Wages

Ch. 20: Time-Wages

Ch. 21: Piece-Wages

Ch. 22: National Differences of Wages

Part VII: The Accumulation of Capital

Ch. 23: Simple Reproduction

Ch. 24: Conversion of Surplus-Value into Capital

Reference:

Harvey, *A Companion*, "Chapter 9. From Absolute and relative Surplus Value to the Accumulation of Capital"

b) Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project for Autonomy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008)

5. Capital III

Week 8 - March 3 – The Reserve Army

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 762-870.

Ch. 25: The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation

Reference:

Harvey, *A Companion*, "Chapter 10. Capitalist Accumulation"

b) David Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis" in *The Urbanization of Capital* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 1-31.

6. Land

Week 9 - March 10 - Primitive Accumulation

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 873-940.
Part VIII: Primitive Accumulation
Ch. 26: The Secret of Primitive Accumulation
Ch. 27: Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land
Ch. 28: Bloody Legislation against the Expropriated, from the End of the 15th Century. Forcing down of Wages by Acts of Parliament
Ch. 29: Genesis of the Capitalist Farmer
Ch. 30: Reaction of the Agricultural Revolution on Industry. Creation of the Home-Market for Industrial Capital
Ch. 31: Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist
Ch. 32: Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation
Ch. 33: The Modern Theory of Colonisation
Reference:
Harvey, *A Companion*, "Chapter 11. The Secret of Primitive Accumulation"

b) Alvaro Sevilla-Buitrago, "Territory and the governmentalisation of social reproduction: parliamentary enclosure and spatial rationalities in the transition from feudalism to capitalism", *Journal of Historical Geography* 38 (2012), 209-219.

Week 10 - March 17 - Introduction to Ground Rent and Differential Rent I

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume III*, 751-811.
Part VI: The Transformation of Surplus Profit into Ground Rent
Ch. 37: Introduction
Ch. 38: Differential Rent: General Remarks
Ch. 39: First Form of Differential Rent (Differential Rent I)
Reference:
David Harvey, "The Theory of Rent", *The Limits to Capital* (London: Verso, 2006), 330-348.

b) Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, "Fabrica Mundi: Producing The World By Drawing Borders", in *Scapegoat: Architecture / Landscape / Political Economy, Issue 04 Currency* (Spring / Winter 2013), 6-19.

Week 11 - March 24 - Differential Rent II

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume III*, 812-881.
Ch. 40: Second Form of Differential Rent (Differential Rent II)
Ch. 41: Differential Rent II — First Case: Constant Price of Production
Ch. 42: Differential Rent II — Second Case: Falling Price of Production
Ch. 43: Differential Rent II — Third Case: Rising Price of Production
Ch. 44: Differential Rent Also on the Worst Cultivated Soil
Reference:
David Harvey, "The Theory of Rent", *The Limits to Capital* (London: Verso, 2006), 349-357

b) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Apparatus of Capture" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 424-473.

Week 12 - March 31 - Absolute Rent

a) Karl Marx, *Capital Volume III*, 882-950.
Ch. 45: Absolute Ground-Rent
Ch. 46: Building Site Rent. Rent in Mining. Price of Land.
Ch. 47: Genesis of Capitalist Ground-Rent
Reference:
David Harvey, "The Theory of Rent", *The Limits to Capital* (London: Verso, 2006), 358-372.

b) Fredric Jameson, "The Brick and the Balloon", in *The Cultural Turn* (London: Verso, 1998), 162-189.

General Notes:

Academic Integrity: To create and promote a culture of academic integrity, the behaviour of all members of the University of Waterloo is based on honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4,
<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals,
<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term. Once registered with OPD, please meet with the professor, in confidence, during my office hours to discuss your needs.