

Course guide

210769 - PP - Design and Thought

Last modified: 16/05/2025

Unit in charge:	Barcelona School of Architecture	
Teaching unit:	756 - THATC - Department of History and Theory of Architecture and Communication Techniques.	
Degree:	MASTER'S DEGREE IN ADVANCED STUDIES IN ARCHITECTURE-BARCELONA (Syllabus 2015). (Optional subject). MASTER'S DEGREE IN ARCHITECTURE (Syllabus 2015). (Optional subject).	
Academic year: 2025	ECTS Credits: 5.0	Languages: English

LECTURER

Coordinating lecturer:	ALESSANDRO SCARNATO
Others:	Segon quadrimestre: ALESSANDRO SCARNATO - CP2

PRIOR SKILLS

Good proficiency in English language at academic level. Good knowledge of history of architecture, bases of philosophy and construction technologies.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

The course is structured through lectures, discussions, visits and the individual assignment. The idea of architectural heritage will not be studied in a conventional way, since we want to develop the participant's skills in terms of architectural intelligence, rather than provide some specific technical knowledge on the topic.

In order to do so, we will explore some fundamental antinomies particularly important for the general theory of architecture and beyond: past-future; destruction-construction; urban-rural; intimate-collective. Each concept will be examined both from a theoretical point of view and under its practical applications. We will observe the existing architecture in urban and rural territory and we will discuss its possible development playing with the abovementioned concepts. Like in many aspects of human life, the balance between these antonymies is crucial in order to acknowledge and, maybe, understand the dynamics of reality around us. In other words, our philosophical journey through architecture will be successful not because of a certain destination we will reach, but because of how we will be able to properly set and enjoy the journey.

Therefore, we will also encourage watching movies that forecast some kind of light onto our concepts and we will discuss them in class. We will also examine and visit some significant places in the area of Barcelona. The texts we will suggest to read won't be taken as a learning tool in the classical way, since they shall be considered as a source of theoretical inputs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF THE SUBJECT

Every action of architecture is an action on materiality. We might face a decaying terrain vague, a strongly defined historic environment, a beautiful natural scenario, a smart and modern urban area or a wasted suburban slam: we will always act on materiality and we will do it in a material way, regardless of the level of abstraction of our start.

Such observation could make us think that architectural space could be intended as incapsulated within the boundaries of a materiality which determines the width of possibilities for design.

What we propose in the course is to look at the apparently irreconcilable struggle between ideas and matter with a vision which combines complexity, unorthodoxy, disciplinary secularism and ludic awareness.

During the course, technical and material considerations are, therefore, integrated with others of social, urban and ecological nature, within the framework of a more sustainable vision of the reality of our cities and landscape. History never reaches a defined ending and each new project does nothing but add another layer and, maybe, move one further step. Therefore, we will also play with the concept of "heritage" as a structural component of any materiality and we will try to investigate through all the complexities intertwined within such a concept.

The subject proposes a theoretical journey through the most recent evolution of the debate, with specific approaches on concrete architecture and public space projects.

STUDY LOAD

Type	Hours	Percentage
Hours large group	37,5	30.00
Self study	87,5	70.00

Total learning time: 125 h

CONTENTS

CONVENIENT AMBIGUITIES: MATERIALITY AS A FLEXIBLE PLAYGROUND FOR ARCHITECTURE

Description:

ORIENTATIVE CALENDAR

Lecture A CONCEPTUAL JOURNEY

Lecture PAST

Lecture FUTURE

Lecture DESTRUCTION (first hand-in: proposal of topic)

Lecture CONSTRUCTION

First round-trip

Participation in midterm review of "Design scales" course.

Lecture URBAN

Lecture RURAL (second hand-in: abstract; structure; bibliography)

Second round-trip

Lecture INTIMATE

Lecture COLLECTIVE

Third round-trip

FINAL PRESENTATIONS (upload in Atenea)

FINAL EXAM, for those who either didn't achieve a sufficient grade during the course or want to improve it.

Specific objectives:

Information not provided

Full-or-part-time: 125h

Theory classes: 15h

Laboratory classes: 30h

Self study : 80h



GRADING SYSTEM

Regarding the assignment for the course, this will be in form of an academic paper, it will be individual and it will mandatorily follow the template uploaded in Atenea. This paper will be a short essay on one of the topics of the course.

EXAMINATION RULES.

Individual presentations in class and upload of individual papers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Basic:

- Stoner, Jill. Towards a minor architecture. Cambridge, Massachussets: MIT press, 2012. ISBN 9780262517645.