

School of Architecture | Georgia Tech | Fall/2026

ARCH 6352: Theory of Architecture II Focus Course (3 credits)

ARCH 8823: Special Topics: History, Theory and Criticism - Professional Elective (3 credits)

ARCH 6352/8823: Syllabus

THE DISCIPLINE AND PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM

Instructor Information

Instructor: Brian Bell, AIA, Professor of the Practice of Architecture

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Office Location: 110 Arch East

Office Hours: email w/ requests

TA Name: TBD

TA Email: TBD

General Course Information

Course Descriptions

An introduction to architectural criticism, aesthetic judgement and the interpretation of buildings, and their contribution to architecture as a discipline.

Course Learning Outcomes

The discipline of architecture is carried through the thought, projection, production and discourse of and about buildings. Criticism (interpretation and judgement) - analyzing and discussing the merits of buildings and the built environment (or their hypothesized equivalents) - is an essential component of this discourse, but one that is rarely considered as a foundational discipline within architectural education, let alone developed to heighten the awareness and understanding between buildings and their audiences. This course provides the opportunity to study various types of architectural criticism and their purpose and utility in different contexts, to engage in conversation with contemporary architects and critics, and to develop critiques of contemporary architecture in Atlanta and Georgia.

Thinking critically, and engaging in a critical discourse, are not the same thing. While the first may lead to the later, taking the step to engage an audience - through analysis, conversation, writing, and documentation, and through a sharable, preservable media - criticism can sharpen the focus of practicing architects, share relevant aspects of emerging (or historic) design practice, or more broadly show us the many ways architecture is relevant within society. Compelling criticism requires both critical thinking and good storytelling.

This course is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- To further establish the School of Architecture as a stage for engaged discussion regarding the role of quality in architecture, space and urban design in the built environment.
- To promote public discourse on architecture among students, faculty and architectural practitioners, in Atlanta and beyond.
- To recognize some of the architects and owners producing work that contributes meaningfully to a public discourse in Atlanta.
- To offer students at Georgia Tech a perspective on the role of discourse as part of life-long learning and engagement in their communities and professional life.

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- Understand architecture as a cultural production, that thrives through a rich engagement with discourse.
- Understand the role of judgment, and the suspension of judgement, in creating criticism, and the role of criticism in sponsoring and improving cultural production.
- Understand the importance of language for communicating discourse and criticism.
- Understand basic types of architectural criticism, and related roles of architectural critics.
- Understand the various audiences for architecture and architectural criticism, and how architects might consider their work relative to these audiences.
- Practice studying and interpreting cities and buildings, and to formulate and apply criteria towards the comparative evaluation of buildings.
- Identify best professional practice and buildings that advance architecture as a discipline given areas of practice (for example: public space, residential, offices, education, or commercial).
- Create written critiques of cities and buildings.
- Present clear arguments about the merits of buildings and space from different points of view.

Note: For all M. Arch courses, see also "Professional Standards Addressed."

Required Course Materials

See Bibliography at the end of this syllabus for a partial list of primary sources, and allocation of specific readings to be augmented throughout the semester. All readings will be posted on CANVAS.

Course Requirements and Deliverables

Attendance, preparedness (timely, completed readings and assignments) and earnest participation in discussions and field trips are primary requirements of the course.

- A final writing assignment will require multiple iterations, with each iteration being graded.
- A final in-class written exam will be administered.

Grading Policy

You are expected to attend class, read assigned materials, be prepared to discuss the assigned materials, and be prepared to participate actively in discussions, workshops and field trips, as appropriate.

Every student should assume they have a **C** (average grade) at the outset of the course and will earn a better or worse grade according to the following:

Obvious and thoughtful effort, visible participation based on consistent preparation, a higher-quality of written response to the course exercises, and spirited, meaningful in-class participation (written and verbal) will be considered for an above average grade of **B**. *Exceptional* levels of the same are required for a grade of **A**.

A grade of **D** is below average and reflects lower than average participation with in-class discourse, poor or disinterested response to writing assignments. A grade of **F** is reserved for *exceptional* lack of participation with in-class discourse, extremely poor or disinterested writings and/or consistent lack of intellectually honest engagement with the concepts of the course.

The third unexcused Absence and/or Excessive Tardiness (arriving more than 10 minutes after start of class) will result in a full grade point deduction.

Grades will be allocated as follows:

<u>Attendance, Participation</u> (readings & in-class discussion)	20%
<u>Weekly Written Assignments</u>	30%
<u>Final Writing Assignment</u> (including iterations)	30%
<u>Final Exam</u>	20%

No incompletes will be awarded without appropriate reason or without a prior meeting, either in person or on Teams, between the student and the instructor. All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in the class. Incompletes will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to periodic revisions; updated schedules will be posted on Canvas.

Course Schedule

28 August 2026 - Friday

Class 1 Introduction to Criticism as Discourse

Reading: Gras, Louise Noelle_The Power to Behold_2022
 Giovannini, Joseph_Take That, Guggenheim!_Dec 2022
 Wainwright, Oliver_Guardian_The disastrous new Orange County Museum of Art_Dec 2022

04 September 2026 - Friday

Class 2 Criticism as a Discipline & The Role of the Critic in Society

Reading: Frug, Stephen_Helen Vendler is the Emperor of Interpretation_2012
 Vendler, Helen_Three Acts of Criticism_1994
 Scott, AO_Better Living Through Criticism_What is Criticism_2016
 Scott, AO_Better Living Through Criticism_Self-criticism_2016
 Scott, AO_Better Living Through Criticism_Practical Criticism_2016
 Scott, AO_Better Living Through Criticism_How to Be Wrong_2016
 Scott, AO_Better Living Through Criticism_The Eye of the Beholder_2016
 Orwell, George_Politics and the English Language_1946

11 September 2026 - Friday

Class 3 Aesthetic Judgement & Subjective Universality

Reading: Kant, Immanuel_The Critique of Judgement_1790 (Pluhar Translation_1987)
 + Kant - Dictionary of Terms

18 September 2026 - Friday

Class 4 Interpretation: Value Determination

Reading: Dworkin, Ronald_Interpretation in General_2011
 Mandelstam, Osip_On the Addressee_1913
 Steinberg, Leo_Contemporary Art and the Plight of its Public_1962
 Baxandall, Michael_The Language of Art History_1979

25 September 2026 - Friday

Class 5 Truth v Truths: The Role of Criticism within the Discipline of Architecture

Reading: Wang, Wilfried_An Outline of Architectural Criticism_2022
 Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_0.0 Preface_2018
 Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_1.1 Non-Referential Architecture

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_1.2 After Postmodernity

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_3.0 Authorship

02 October 2026 - Friday

Class 6 Gossip is the Mother of Culture

Reading: Hickey, Dave_Air Guitar_Unbreak My Heart_1997

Peponis, John_The City as Pedagogic Device_2024

Hays, K. Michael_Critical Architecture - Between Culture and Form_1984

Baird, George_Criticality and Its Discontents_2004

09 October 2026 - Friday

Class 7 Journalistic Modes and Models - Media

Reading: Arieff, Allison_Why We Don't Read About Architecture_2012

Huxtable, Ada Louise_Sometimes We Do it Right_1968

Lange, Alexandra_How to Be an Architecture Critic_2012

Sullivan, Louis_The Tall Building Artistically Considered_1896

Mumford, Lewis_House of Glass & Skyscrapers_1952

Olmsted, Frederick_Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns + Narrative_1870

Jacobs, Karie_The High Line at 10_2018

16 October 2026 - Friday

**Class 8 The Interpretation of Buildings - Part I
The Experience of Space**

Reading: Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_1.3 Genealogy_2018

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_1.4 The Idea

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_2.1 Experience of Space

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_2.2 Oneness

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_2.3 Newness

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_2.7 Sensemaking

Eisenman, Peter & Olgiati, Valerio_Making Sense of the Non-Referential_LOG
59_2024

23 October 2026 - Friday

**Class 9 The Interpretation of Buildings - Part II
Reading Space as Syntax & Spatial Culture**

Reading: Peponis, John_Descriptions of Space_2024

Peponis, John_The Socio-Spatial Imagination_2024

Cobb, Henry_The Ethics of Architecture_1992

Cobb, Henry_The Predicament of Architecture_2018

Cobb, Henry_The Dialectical Pairs_2018

Olgiati & Breitschmid_Non-Referential Architecture_2.4 Contradiction_2018

Venturi_Complexity & Contradiction in Architecture_1966

30 October 2026 - Friday

Class 10 The Interpretation of Buildings - Part III

Reading Form as Syntax & Formal Culture

Reading: Rowe, Colin_The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa_1947

Eisenman_From Object to Relationship II_1971

Eisenman & Iturbe_Lateness_Adolf Loos_2020

06 November 2026 - Friday

Class 11 The Integration of Discourse and Practice: Built Architecture as Criticism (Criticism from Within)

Reading: Loos, Adolf_Furniture for Sitting_1898

Loos, Adolf_Ornament and Crime_1908

Netto, David_Rafael Moneo: Lost in Translation_NYTimes_2013

Moneo_Preface + Our Lady of the Angels, LA Cathedral from Remarks on 21 Works_2010

Koolhaas, Rem_Atlanta

Zumthor, Peter_The hard core of beauty (from Thinking Architecture)_1991

Zumthor, Peter_The magic of the real (from Thinking Architecture)_1988

13 November 2026 - Friday

Class 12 The Integration of Discourse and Practice: Activist & 'Outside Expert' Criticism (Criticism from Without)

Reading: Frampton, Kenneth_Architectural Criticism and the Politics of Architecture_2022

Mo, Kiel_Unless (excerpts)_2020

Jacobs, Jane_Generators of Diversity_from Death and Life of Great American Cities_1961

Date & Time TBD – determined by GT

Class 13 FINAL EXAM

Supplemental Information

Professional Standards Addressed NAAB Conditions for Accreditation For Professional Degree Programs in Architecture (2020)

The accredited degree program must demonstrate that each graduate possesses the knowledge and skills defined by the criteria below. The knowledge and skills defined here represent those required to prepare graduates for the path to internship, examination, and licensure, and to engage in related fields. The program must provide student work as evidence that its graduates have satisfied each criterion.

The criteria encompass two levels of accomplishment:

- *Understanding*—The capacity to classify, compare, summarize, explain, and/or interpret information.
- *Ability*—Proficiency in using specific information to accomplish a task, correctly selecting the appropriate information, and accurately applying it to the solution of a specific problem, while also distinguishing the effects of its implementation.

Program Criteria (PC) and Student Criteria (SC): The NAAB establishes PC and SC to help accredited degree programs prepare students for the profession while encouraging education practices suited to the individual degree program.

For the purpose of accreditation, while this course will cover more criteria than the ones listed below, the following will be actively covered:

1. **PC.4 History and Theory – Student Learning Outcome | PRACTICED**

The student understands the histories and theories of architecture and urbanism, framed by diverse social, cultural, economic, and political forces; nationally and globally.

*This content is **Practiced**, meaning students practice, understand, and are assessed on it.*

2. **PC.7 Learning and Teaching Culture | PRACTICED**

A positive and respectful environment that encourages optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation among the program's faculty, students, administration, and staff.

*This content is **Practiced**, meaning students practice, understand, and are assessed on it.*

Course Policies

SoA Attendance Policy

Active participation at all class meetings is mandatory. Absences will be excused only for medical or family emergencies, Institute-approved events, and religious holidays documented in writing. (Notify your instructor in writing during the first two weeks of the semester about any anticipated religious holiday absences.) Late arrivals (more than 15 minutes) will be counted as absences..

NOTE: Absences due to special and/or unforeseen circumstances must be discussed with the instructor as early as practically possible.

Missing three classes without an approved excuse will result in a letter grade reduction. Missing more than three classes, excused or unexcused, may result in a meeting with your instructor and the Architecture Program Office to determine a course of action, and can result in an incomplete (I) or failing grade (F).

Students are highly encouraged to submit absence verification for documented illness, hospitalization, accidents, family emergencies, or lengthy illnesses to the Dean of Students: <https://studentlife.gatech.edu/request-assistance>

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards.

Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#). Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity.

For expectations of student and instructor conduct, consult [Code of Conduct \(rules/19\)](#) and [Student-Faculty Expectations \(rules/22\)](#).

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body.

[The Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement](#) articulates some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. Simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment, obtain an accommodations letter, and discuss your special needs. Please also schedule an appointment with your instructor to discuss your learning needs.

Other Policies, Expectations, and Resources

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

Use of Generative AI PROHIBITED

Use of Generative AI and/or failure to disclose its use for written assignments may be considered a violation of Georgia Tech's academic integrity policies.

Draft GT AI policy: https://provost.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/2026-10/AI%20Policy_draft_10.14.2026%202.pdf

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

The course has been designed to build sequentially on knowledge from one class to the next. Readings and assignments are intended to be completed on time in order to keep pace, and to reflect the interrelationships between readings and lecture content. Late assignments (unless for reasons related to an excused absence) will be assessed a full grade reduction from what they might otherwise have received.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

With developments and improvements to digital instruction over the past few years, the Institute has developed policies to leverage digital learning as much as reasonably possible. The policy sets forth requirements, procedures, and responsibilities related to the scheduling of digital instruction and/or make-up classes due to the modification of campus operations, closing of campus, or the necessary closing of instructional spaces for any reason (including but not limited to emergencies, such as inclement weather, power outages, or other infrastructure failures). Students should await communications from their instructors regarding delivery of their classes during that period based upon the [Digital Learning Days for Modified Campus Operations Policy](#). Students should follow guidance and/or directions provided by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being regarding student activities, events, programs and services.

Academic Integrity and Conduct

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. All Georgia Tech students should familiarize themselves with and abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code: <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>. Faculty shall report instances of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of Students.

For expectations of student and instructor conduct more generally, consult section 19 of the catalog listed above, entitled "Code of Conduct,"

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/19/>, and section 22, entitled "Student-Faculty Expectations," at <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/>.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

All persons in the classroom are expected to behave with courtesy towards others and in a way that does not interfere with the regular conduct of the class. **Cell phones are to be turned off when students enter the classroom and shall remain off for the duration of class; laptops are to be used only for taking notes;** and students should not engage in private conversations while the instructor or other students are speaking. *Anyone who does not adhere to these basic courtesies will be asked to leave, counting as an unexcused absence.*

CIOS — Course Evaluations

At the end of the term, students are asked to complete the online course evaluation for all courses at Georgia Tech (<https://gatech.smartevals.com>). CIOS scores and comments have different degrees of visibility based on roles:

Reporting access by role	CIOS Scaled Results	CIOS Comments	TA's Scaled Results	TA's Comments
Instructor	Their Own	Their Own	All within their own course	All within their own course
TA Supervisor	N/A	N/A	All within their own course	All within their own course
Teaching Assistant	None	None	Their Own	Their Own
School Administration	All within their own unit	None	All within their own unit	All within their own unit
Students	All – Summary only	None	None	None

More information: [CIOS Student FAQ](#)

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources

A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and advising can be found at [Success at Tech](#). Academic Support (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free tutoring: success.gatech.edu/tutoring.

Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources

A list of resources for graduate students is available on the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education](#) website.

Student Well-Being

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list of wellness-related resources](#) has been compiled by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being.

Library & Archives

Contact your Architecture Library subject specialist, Catherine Mancini (catherine.mancini@library.gatech.edu), for research help and information on available resources.

Contact your Architecture Archives liaison, Jody Thompson (jody.thompson@library.gatech.edu), for assistance with archival research and collections.

Georgia Tech Library: <https://library.gatech.edu/> Georgia Tech Archives: <http://library.gatech.edu/archives>

Approved Communication Platforms

[Georgia Tech Approved Communication Platforms](#)

Georgia Tech Values Statement

At Georgia Tech, we see different backgrounds and perspectives as essential to learning, discovery, and creation. We strive to remove barriers to student success and to build a welcoming community where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to our mission. As outlined in our [strategic plan](#), we want to create an environment of holistic learning where all individuals can grow and learn to lead healthy, purposeful, impactful lives.

SoA & College of Design Policies

Ownership

For the purposes of continuous improvement efforts, such as accreditations and periodic program reviews, the School will select samples of student work submitted to satisfy course requirements. This includes digital files, papers, drawings, models, etc. Collected samples may be returned to students upon request.

College of Design Facility Rules and Guidelines

Please consult the [Georgia Tech Student Handbook](#) regarding the use of facilities and all Institute policies. Aerosol sprays of any kind are strictly banned from the studio and surrounding areas. A spray painting booth is available in the College of Design shop on the ground floor of the East Architecture Building.

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Per the [GT Catalog](#), all work produced in the College of Design as part of a degree program becomes the property of the College; it may be retained or returned at the discretion of the faculty. The faculty of the School of Architecture reserves the right to refuse credit for any project executed outside the precincts of the College or produced without proper coordination with the faculty.

Emergencies

In case of emergency (e.g., fire, accident, or criminal act), please call the Georgia Tech Police at 404-894-2500. Perry Minyard, IT Support Administrator for the College of Design, is also a firefighter and EMT certified in performing CPR.

Bibliography (subject to change)

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