History of Architecture II

Arch 323   Prof. Andrew Herscher
Winter 2021   herscher@umich.edu
MW 8:30--9:30

Instruction mode: online, synchronous and asynchronous

"History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. And it is with great pain and terror that one begins to realize this…"
James Baldwin, "White Man's Guilt" (1965)

"To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' … It means to seize hold of memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."
Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1941)

This course is the second in the undergraduate two-course sequence (Arch 313/323) that surveys the history of architecture. This central ambition of the course is to provide you with tools to investigate the complex relationships between architecture and its political, social, economic, and cultural contexts, both historically and at present. The course will pursue this ambition by introducing you to a series of concepts, such as racial capitalism, colonialism, nationalism, and social difference, that provide insight into these relationships and, therefore, into the political, social, economic, and cultural lives of architecture.
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This course will present architectural history to you not as an empirically-verifiable record of the past "the way it really was," but rather as a mediation of present-day concerns, particularly those around racism, colonialism, and environmental catastrophe, and a production of possible futures through historical inquiry: a project that opens up new ways of thinking about our individual and collective selves, as architects and otherwise, and new ambitions for architecture.