

## **Building Code as Battleground: Building Law & Architect as Advocate**

ARCH502

Friday 1:00-4:00 pm, Room 2213

Instructor: Ann Lui, AIA, Assistant Professor of Practice

This course uses civic participation to explore building and zoning codes as sites of advocacy and change. On one hand, the building and zoning code is an opaque and technical legal document; of constant reference for architects and engineers but rarely of interest to non-designers. However, on the other hand, the building and zoning code can be seen as living, cultural documents. In the century and half since the first model building codes were adopted by major cities in the U.S., the code has been coauthored by professionals, industry representatives, and other lobbyists, and has also been the site of activism and an index of social change.

Students will be introduced to a series of historical readings on building law, a brief introduction to design applications, and explore contemporary issues under debate in the field. Students will also participate in conversations with multi-disciplinary interlocutors with diverse approaches to the topic, including a sociologist focusing on bias in building inspections, an attorney who prosecuted corruption in the department of buildings, and an architect who advocated against requirements for gender-separated bathroom stalls at the national level. Students will work in groups to develop research on specific topics, as well as their own individual arguments for public presentation.

This course invites students to participate in this coauthorship, culminating in a series of 3-minute mini-lectures by students using Chicago as a case study during the public comment period of the Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards on topics in the building code. At the beginning of each monthly meeting of the Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards of City Council, there is an open public comment period. This opportunity is sometimes taken up by residents who disagree with a proposed new building project or community organizers in support of a zoning change.

By bringing together civic participation with a critical review of building law, this course not only brings the classroom to City Hall, but also City Hall into our classroom. It will produce a momentary, but unconventional, agonistic design collaboration between students and elected officials in the opening minutes of a bureaucratic monthly meeting.