

FORMAL/INFORMAL/UNFORMAL

Course Name: Formal/Informal/Unformal

Course Number: ARCH 503

Meeting Times: tbd • 0:00 pm to 0:00 pm

Venues: Room tbd A&AB

Instructor: Dr Kuukuwa Manful

DESCRIPTION

This course examines and challenges a longstanding dichotomy in which the built environment is either thought of as ‘formal’ (i.e. ordered, produced by, legible to, and regulated by recognized professionals and institutions) or ‘informal’ (disordered, illegible to, and outside the purview of institutions of authority).¹ We will investigate claims of detachment from context and meaning which the concepts of ‘form’ ‘formal’, formalism, and formalization aspire to or emphasize; and interrogate foundational assumptions in architecture and urbanism, asking how, why, and when we get to formal(ized) built forms and typologies. Using approaches and methodologies such as critical fabulation, archival research, and case studies, we will explore contemporary and historical building types towards new and expanded frames of formal, informal, and ‘*unformal*’.

¹ See: [Unformal\(ized\) Architectures. “Informal” Modernisms](#), ARCH+ 262 *African Spatial Thinking | Denkraum Afrika*, 2025; and [On the \(Un\)formalization of Architectural Design in Ghana](#), *Allegories of The Visible*, 8th Triennial of Photography Hamburg, 2022