

**Lingnan University**  
**Department of Philosophy**

<b>Course Title</b>	: Philosophy of Architecture
<b>Course Code</b>	: PHI4273
<b>Recommended Study Year</b>	: 4 <sup>th</sup> Year
<b>No. of Credits/Term</b>	: 3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	: Lecture and tutorial
<b>Class Contact Hours</b>	: 2 hours lecture per week 1 hour tutorial per week
<b>Category in Major Programme</b>	: Programme Elective – Aesthetics Profile
<b>Prerequisite(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Co-requisite(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Exclusion(s)</b>	: N/A
<b>Exemption Requirement(s)</b>	: N/A

### **Brief Course Description**

The course offers an in-depth discussion of one or several issues concerning the practice and appreciation of architecture. (The issues are listed below. The selection of the issues may differ from year to year.) The issues are discussed in terms of the positions that one can adopt towards them; the positions, in turn, are discussed in terms of the arguments one can provide for them. Although 'analytic' in spirit, the course also engages with non-analytic theories of architecture from Vitruvius to the present. Throughout the course, reference is made to concrete architectural designs and realizations.

### **Aims**

The aim is to enable students to understand and evaluate theories about architecture. To some extent, this will also increase their ability to understand and evaluate architectural works.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course, students will

1. Know important facts about the tradition of reflection on architecture;
2. Be able to engage in debates/reflection on the nature of architecture and the quality of particular architectural works
3. Be able to take a reasoned stance on the practices and theories that have shaped--or failed to shape--the existing built environment.

### **Indicative Content**

The list of issues from which a selection is made includes:

1. The nature of architecture: Does architecture have an essence? Is architecture an art? (And is this an important question?) How is architecture to be compared to sculpture?
2. Architectural design: What does designing a building consist in? Are design problems theoretical or irreducibly practical problems? What is a good design?
3. Architectural style: In what style should one build? Is the (correct) answer to this question dictated by the 'spirit of the age' (*Zeitgeist*) or rather by the building traditions that exist at a certain time and place?
4. Understanding architecture: What does it mean to understand a work of architecture? What is required for understanding such a work?
5. Meaning in architecture: Do buildings have a meaning? Can they represent or express? Or do they mean something by other means?

6. Proportion in architecture: Is it possible to give a mathematical definition of rightness of proportion? Should a building be well-proportioned or merely appear well-proportioned?
7. The metaphysics of architecture: Are architectural works to be identified with concrete objects or rather with types? Can a building be resurrected after having been demolished? What is the relation of a building to its site?

### Teaching Method

Lecturing, tutoring, encouraging student participation and using as many examples as possible.

### Measurement of Learning Outcomes

1. The final and mid-term examinations measure students' knowledge and understanding of theories of architecture.
2. Students' ability to engage in debates/reflection on the nature of architecture and the quality of particular works will be tested in tutorial sessions, where one or several architectural works will have to be discussed (by students) in the light of theories presented in lecture sessions.
3. Students' general ability to take a reasoned stance toward theories and practices of architecture may also be measured by the quality of oral presentations and/or written papers.

### Assessment

The assessment mode consists of continuous assessment (50%) and a final examination (50%). Continuous assessment may be made on the basis of a mid-term examination, oral presentation or written paper, but it will always include assessment of the students' participation in the course.

### Required Readings

A selection from:

- Alexander, C. *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964.
- Carlson, A. 'Existence, Location, and Function: The Appreciation of Architecture.' In M. H. Mitias, ed, *Philosophy and Architecture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.
- Goodman, N. 'How Buildings Mean.' Reprinted in Nelson Goodman & Catherine Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988.
- Krier, L. *Architecture: Choice or Fate*. London: Papadakis, 2007.
- Loos, A. *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays*. Trans. Michael Mitchell. Riverside, California: Ariadne Press, 1998.
- Scruton, R. *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Suppes, P. 'Rules of Proportion in Architecture', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XVI (1991), pp. 352-58.
- Watkin, D. *Morality and Architecture Revisited*. London: John Murray, 2001 [1979].

### Supplementary Readings

- De Clercq, R. 'The Legitimacy of Modern Architecture', *Philosophical Forum* XXXV (2004), pp. 135-146.
- De Clercq, R. 'Lopes on the Ontology of Japanese Shrines', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (2008), pp. 193-4.
- Giedion, S. *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1967 [1941].
- Graham, G. 'Architecture.' In J. Levinson, ed, *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Haldane, J. 'Architecture, Aesthetics of.' In E. Craig, ed, *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1998 [Vol. I, pp. 361-66].
- Le Corbusier. *Towards a New Architecture*. Trans. Frederick Etchells. New York: Dover,

1986[1931].

- Lopes, D. 'Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 (2007), pp. 77-84.
- Matravers, D. 'Revising principles of architecture.' *Journal of Architecture* 4 (1999), pp. 39-45.
- Mitrovic, B. 'Paduan Aristotelianism and Daniele Barbaro's Commentary on Vitruvius' *De Architectura*'. *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29 (1998), 667-88.
- Mitrovic, B. 'Palladio's Theory of the Classical Orders in the First Book of *I Quattro Libri Dell' Architettura*'. *Architectural History* 42 (1999), pp. 110-140.
- Scruton, R. *The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Scruton, R. 'After Modernism.' *City Journal* 2000, (Spring issue).
- Wittkower, R. *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. London: Academic Editions, 1988.
- Wicks, R. 'Architectural Restoration: Resurrection or Replication?'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994), pp. 163-9.
- Winters, E. 'Architecture.' In B. Gaut & D. Lopes (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Winters, E. *Aesthetics and Architecture*. Continuum Books, 2007.

### **Important Notes**

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>