ARCH 8101
INTRODUCTION TO ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH 2
WEDNESDAY 9:05 – 11:55 AM

GEORGIA TECH SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
PROFESSORS BAFNA & JOHNSTON
SPRING 2017

This course is a core requirement of the Ph.D. Program in Architecture and is open as an elective to all students in the M.Arch., M.Sci., and MSUD Programs. The course addresses "fundamental issues and methods across specializations in architectural research; modules on representation and interpretation."

Module 1: REPRESENTATION (Johnston)

The manner by which we construct the world, both physically and intellectually, affects and is affected by our ability to represent it. Furthermore, our approach to describing the world orders our capacity to interrogate it, to conceive interventions into it, to anticipate their perceptual and otherwise intended effects, and then to realize them all, through more acts of representation and construction.

Today, the drawing as the active site of design has been displaced as well by the rise of digital and algorithmic descriptions of the world. The analogical relationship between representation and construction once maintained through bodily mediation in the production of construction drawings is today replaced by embedded processes of digital modeling which transform the cognitive relation between designing and building. An awareness of these developments begs the question: What are the implications of this change upon the constitution of architectural knowledge?

Keeping this question in mind, the course aims are to: 1) develop student understanding of the changing roles of architectural representation, historically and contemporaneously, in light of the ongoing ideological and instrumental shifts in design technologies; 2) stimulate inquiry on problems of representation, both in the field of architecture and more generally, germane to students' own research interests.

Course assessment will be based upon class preparation, participation, and presentations; and a final writing project that proposes "thick" definitions of keywords relevant to their own research interests within the critical framework of concepts gleaned from the course.

Module 2: INTERPRETATION (Bafna)

According to a popularly held view of interpretation, to interpret something is to find its meaning. But by another view, to interpret something is to give a particular kind of explanation. Under both conceptions, interpretation ultimately leads to understanding, but they have materially different implications.

In this module, we will explore the explanatory conception of interpretation. We will see how according to this conception, interpretation is not merely an intellectual game of discovering clues and discovering a message hidden behind a work, but a fundamental and distinct mode of inquiry in its own right. We will use this conception of interpretation to develop a framework for understanding work in terms of designer's intentions. Finally we will see that interpretation matters to architecture because architectural practice itself is a fundamentally interpretive activity.

Besides the theoretical background to interpretation, the course will help students develop two practical skills: 1) developing critical understanding of what architects bring to their designs, and 2) ability to explain and assess programs of research or reflective practice, through a review of literature.

Students will be graded on quality of writing and understanding of content demonstrated through two short papers, and on the regularity and consistency of participation in class discussions.