COURSE DESCRIPTION CARD - SYLLABUS

Course name
CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO THE HISTORY AND THEORY OF ARCHITECTURE: SELECTED TOPICS [S5AIU>WPHTA]

Course

Proposed by Discipline
–

Year/Semester
3/5

Level of study
Doctoral School

Course offered in
English

Form of study
full-time

Requirements
elective

Number of hours

Lecture
4

Laboratory classes
0

Other
0

Tutorials
0

Projects/seminars
0

Number of credit points

1,00

Coordinators

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Lecturers

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Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of general history. Fundamental understanding of social, economic, legal, and other factors influencing historical processes in Europe and worldwide, beyond the scope of technical or engineering disciplines. Ability to identify and interpret key theoretical and methodological frameworks used in contemporary architectural research. Capacity to critically analyse the relationships between architectural theory, practice, and research contexts. Competence in evaluating interdisciplinary perspectives and their relevance to the study of the built environment.

Course objective

The course aims to introduce students to the key concepts, methods, and perspectives that shape architectural research through an exploration of history and theory. It examines how architecture engages with memory, emotion, and cultural meaning, and how historical knowledge informs contemporary design and interpretation. By addressing topics such as the nature of architectural research, the relationship between design and theory, and the role of history in shaping architectural thought—from the Seven Wonders of the World to Aldo Rossi's The Architecture of the City—the course encourages students to critically reflect on the intellectual foundations of architecture and to develop their own analytical and interpretive approaches within historical and theoretical contexts.

Course-related learning outcomes

KNOWLEDGE
1) global achievements, covering theoretical foundations as well as general and selected specific issues that are relevant to scientific disciplines studied at the doctoral school, to the extent that enables revision of existing paradigms, [P8S_WG/SzD_W01]
2) key developmental trends of science disciplines in which education takes place at the doctoral school, [P8S_WG/SzD_W02]
3) scientific research methodology in disciplines represented at the doctoral school, [P8S_WG/SzD_W03]
4) principles of promoting scientific activity results, also in an open access mode, [P8S_WG/SzD_W04]

SKILLS
1) take part in scientific discourse, [P8S_UK/SzD_U07]

COMPETENCIES
1) critically assess achievements within a given scientific discipline, [P8S_KK/SzD_K01]

Methods for verifying learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning outcomes presented above are verified as follows:

Student performance will be evaluated based on active participation in class discussions and the ability to engage in critical reflection on the topics presented. Assessment will include:
Active participation in classes and seminars – demonstrating preparedness, involvement, and contribution to group discussions (40%).
Critical discussion and analytical reflection on selected readings or case studies – clarity of argumentation, depth of insight, and quality of reasoning (60%).
Active engagement, openness to dialogue, and evidence of independent critical thinking are essential components of the final grade

Programme content

The course begins with an introduction to the idea of history as an interpretative framework for understanding architecture, exploring how historical narratives shape architectural meaning, values, and identity across time. It then examines the nature, aims, and scope of architectural research, distinguishing between scientific, artistic, and theoretical approaches within the discipline. The relationship between design and research is discussed in the context of creative processes as generators of architectural knowledge and theory.

Students are introduced to the main theoretical paradigms in architecture, ranging from formalist and phenomenological to social and critical perspectives, and to the role of theory in framing architectural inquiry and interpretation. The course further presents methods of historical research and historiography, emphasizing archival work, comparative analysis, and critical interpretation of sources. It explores the mutual relationship between architectural history and theory, demonstrating how both contribute to deeper understanding and evaluation of architecture.

Subsequent lectures investigate the origins of architectural ideas and the creative process of transforming concepts into material form, considering the role of imagination, context, and innovation. The emotional dimension of architecture is discussed through examples from the history of architecture, focusing on how built form evokes sensory and affective responses. The notion of architecture as a theatre of memory is then explored, addressing how the built environment embodies collective identity and cultural remembrance.
Further topics include the cultural and symbolic legacy of the Classical Seven Wonders as archetypes of architectural ideals and representation. The course concludes with an analysis of Aldo Rossi’s The Architecture of the City, focusing on his theory of urban form, typology, and memory, and its enduring influence on contemporary architectural thought

Course topics

A Look at History and Its Concept. Introduction to the idea of history as an interpretative framework for understanding architecture. Discussion of how historical narratives influence architectural meaning, values, and identity across time.
What Is Architectural ResearchExploration of the nature, aims, and scope of architectural research.

Differentiating between scientific, artistic, and theoretical approaches within the discipline.
Design and Research
Examination of the dialogue between design practice and research methodologies. Analysis of how creative processes generate knowledge and contribute to architectural theory.

Categories of Theory. Overview of the major theoretical paradigms in architecture — from formalist and phenomenological to social and critical perspectives. Discussion of how theory frames architectural inquiry and interpretation.

Historical Research. Presentation of methods used in architectural historiography. Focus on archival studies, comparative analysis, and interpretation of historical sources in architectural scholarship.

What Is Architectural History and Theory. Analysis of the interrelations between historical study and theoretical reflection. Consideration of how both shape architectural understanding and critical evaluation.

From Nothing to Something. Investigation into the origins of architectural ideas and the creative transformation from concept to material form. Discussion of imagination, context, and innovation in design thinking.

Emotional Response in the History of Architecture. Study of how architecture evokes emotional and sensory experiences throughout history. Consideration of space, atmosphere, and perception as key elements of architectural meaning.

Theatres of Memory. Examination of architecture as a vessel of collective memory and identity. Discussion of how built form preserves cultural narratives and supports social remembrance.

The Classic Seven Wonders. Reflection on the cultural and symbolic significance of the ancient “Seven Wonders.” Analysis of their influence on later architectural ideals, representation, and myth-making.

Aldo Rossi, The Architecture of the City. Critical study of Rossi’s theories on urban form, typology, and memory. Discussion of his contribution to post-war architectural thought and the concept of the city as a collective artifact.

Teaching methods

Conducted in the form of multimedia presentations, supported by visual materials, illustrations, and case study examples.

Bibliography

Curtis W. J R, “Modern Architecture Since 1900”, Phaidon, (1994).
Giedion S, “Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition” Harvard University Press (1967).
Jencks Ch., “Modern Movements in Architecture” Penguin Art & Architecture (1973).

Breakdown of average student's workload

	Hours	ECTS
Total workload	25	1,00
Classes requiring direct contact with the teacher	4	0,00
Doctoral student's own work (literature studies, preparation for laboratory classes/tutorials, preparation for tests/exam, project preparation)	21	1,00