



Carnegie Mellon University

School of Architecture
College of Fine Arts, CFA 201
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213



Theory books

48-634: Architectural Theory & Contemporary Issues

Units: 6-9

Instructor: Kai Gutschow

This graduate seminar explores the most important theories, issues, and ideas being discussed in architecture today. Theory is framed not primarily as design principle, or as critical and philosophical framing device, but rather as a way to investigate the dominant forces and paradigms engaging architecture today, in the academy, the profession, and the community. Architecture is considered as both material technology and social agenda, a driver of inequality but also potentially a social justice machine, a high-tech, economic, ecological, and political change-agent. The focus is on discourses, processes, and contexts, rather than on the latest buildings or architects.

The seminar examines a different theme each week, with topics that vary annually to acknowledge the dynamic nature of the profession, environment, and global contexts. The course is part of the SoA's and the M.Arch program's efforts to center the agendas of social justice and design ethics in architectural education and pedagogy. This course is required of all incoming M.Arch students and is open to undergrads by permission of the instructor. The work of the seminar will focus on readings, weekly presentations, and discussions about the sources. For additional units, students may elect to do a research paper on a theoretical aspect of architecture that connects to the co-requisite course "Situating Research" and might lead to a thesis or grant proposal.