Kyle Dugdale
ARCH S210, Summer 2022, Tue./Thu. 1:00–4:15
Yale Summer Session

CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE

1. 5/31 introductions ELEMENTS EXERCISE 1: BIOGRAPHY
2. 6/2 – ORIGINS
3. 6/7 – TECTONICS EXERCISE 2: ENTRY
4. 6/9 midterm feedback ORNAMENT
5. 6/14 – INSCRIPTION EXERCISE 3: SPOLIA
6. 6/16 Beinecke visit TRANSMISSION
7. 6/21 – ORDER EXERCISE 4: CANON
8. 6/23 proposal due HISTORICISM
9. 6/28 – POWER EXERCISE 5: EXTRACANON
10. 6/30 final submission PRACTICE EXERCISE 6: POSTSCRIPT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to classical architecture in all its diversity and complexity. Reaching back into the narratives of antiquity, tracing the trajectories of its global influence, and extending to the fraught question of classical architecture’s contemporary standing, it articulates a story that is vibrant in its colors and generous in its ambitions.

The course is conceived not as teaching a history but rather as introducing a language, with the understanding that greater fluency allows both for better comprehension and for more constructive critique. It is introductory in nature, but is neither a survey nor a skills course. It is, instead, an attempt to address architectural history, theory, and design simultaneously, approaching its topic through a series of carefully designed experiences and challenges. It engages with structure and meaning both at the largest socio-cultural scale and at the scale of the architectural detail. Sites studied range broadly, from Greco-Roman temple and Afro-Colombian house to the skatepark under the Manhattan Bridge on New York City’s Lower East Side. Each class includes a review of ongoing work, discussion of readings, and a presentation by the instructor, followed or interrupted by conversation. Some sessions will meet outside the classroom.

The core textbook for the class is John Summerson’s Classical Language of Architecture, which provides a loosely chronological but geographically limited narrative. Presentations by the instructor are largely thematic and decidedly more capacious. Diverse supplementary readings and quick, low-stakes exercises provide a foundation for in-class discussion and test the limits of classical architecture’s persuasive power. The buildings of Yale’s campus supply in-person object lessons, and the library’s special collections illustrate the depth of the university’s archival resources.

This is a highly interactive class. Enrollment is capped at 12.
REQUIREMENTS

No prior coursework is required. Students are expected to

- keep a sketchbook;
- complete assignments on time; and
- engage actively and (where appropriate) enthusiastically with readings and exercises.

The course is graded as follows:

- overall participation 20%, exercises 1–5 50%, exercise 6 30%.

Assignments are due at the start of class unless noted otherwise. Attendance is compulsory; in line with summer session policy, no unexcused absences are permitted. There are no extensions and no make-up assignments for missed sessions. Given the intensity of the schedule, withdrawal may be the only viable option for a student who misses class. Yale College does not tolerate harassment, inappropriate behavior, cheating, or plagiarism in any form, and students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Students who are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism should not hesitate to talk to the instructor; for best practices they may refer to ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources.

TEXTS AND EXERCISES

Students should buy a copy of John Summerson, The Classical Language of Architecture (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966), list price $25.00, available at Yale’s bookstore. All other texts are on Canvas.

Readings draw on a deliberately broad range of genres—not only books and articles on architectural history, theory, and design, but also translations of primary texts, works of literary and grammatical criticism, and texts on philosophy and theology, along with newspaper articles, architects’ websites, blog posts, press releases, recorded lectures, presidential executive orders, professional journals, and reviews.

Readings marked + are supplemental to the required materials.

1. ELEMENTS

Classical/classic/class. What is “the classical,” what are the “classics,” and who decides? Style, tradition, or language—does it matter? If words matter, does the linguistic analogy hold? —and what are its implications? Does language constrain expression? Greek, Latin, and English; vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. The classical for and against the vernacular. The classical as an attitude. Elm Street site visit.


James Stevens Curl, Classical Architecture: An Introduction to Its Vocabulary and Essentials, with a Select Glossary of Terms, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), selections. The ne plus ultra of its kind, a visual companion to Summerson.


>> EXERCISE 1: BIOGRAPHY

Summerson’s opening paragraphs assume prior personal experience of classical architecture. By way of introduction, and in lieu of a conventional icebreaker, bring to class—and be prepared to upload to a projected document—two digital images of classical architectures that have prompted your interest in this class or shaped your own experience to date. These may represent memories from your childhood, frameworks of your formation, structures of your imagination, or spaces from your own more recent experience; they may document exterior façades, interior environments, ornamental details, fantastical visions, or any number of imaginary constructs. Aim for images that are visually compelling.

2. ORIGINS


Quinlan Terry, Architects Anonymous (London: Academy Editions, 1994), vi–vii, xiv–xv, and 68–77, on the architecture of Fatehpur Sikri, the Agra Fort, and Humayun’s Tomb, Delhi. A hard-line classicist drawing an architecture that he describes as “classical in all but name.”


3. TECTONICS

An architecture of mud, wood, stone, and concrete, vs. cast iron and glass. Does classical architecture represent a commitment to clarity and simplicity, or to the appearance of clarity and simplicity? Rustication as an example. Vitruvian narratives and the challenge of the contemporary.


Rem Koolhaas, “Junkspace,” in “Obsolescence,” special issue, October 100 (Spring 2002): 175–90. You can read this quite quickly.


>> EXERCISE 2: ENTRY

Using the Yale campus and its immediate environs as your site, assemble and circulate to the class a series of carefully composed photographs of four classical entrances of increasing rhetorical significance—corresponding to what Summerson describes as a “gamut of architectural character.” Pay attention to the elements of tectonic expression made available by the classical vocabulary, and be prepared to speak to the role of material in each instance.
4. ORNAMENT
The relationship between structure and ornament, and between geometry and enrichment. The function of mouldings. The role of the classical frieze, for better and for worse. Classical polychromy. Church Street site visit.


C. Howard Walker, The Theory of Mouldings (1926; repr. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), selections. “Mouldings are honorable things which are not to be treated casually or copied blindly” (7). Walker was also an automobile designer.


James Page, Guide for Drawing the Acanthus, and Every Description of Ornamental Foliage; Illustrated with Upwards of Two Hundred Wood-Cuts and Fifty-Three Etchings on Copper, Descriptive of the Various Characters Alluded To, rev. ed. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1886), selections. “I think I have treated on everything necessary for your instruction, according to my promise” (244).

5. INSCRIPTION
Writing on architecture and writing as architecture. Letterforms as placeholders for larger questions of legibility. The material and the immaterial, and the significance of light and shadow. Trajan’s Column. Memorial Hall site visit.


>> EXERCISE 3: SPOLIA
Construct the name of an individual whom you respect, using a soft (“2B) pencil, in monumental four-inch capital letters centred on the provided page. Do this twice, once using letterforms derived with utmost elegance from the inscription on the plinth of Trajan’s Column (paying particular attention to light and shadow), and once using your favourite contemporary letterforms, perhaps unserifed. In response to the assessment by John Nash, give some thought to the implied relationship between text and material object, and be prepared to address the differences in legibility and rhetorical capacity between your two inscriptions.
6. **TRANSMISSION**


7. **ORDER**

Andrés Duany “Heterodoxia Architectonica,” 2012 lecture, University of Miami, 98 mins. Watch at 1.25x.


+ David Foster Wallace, “Authority and American Usage,” in *Consider the Lobster* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005), 66–127. Intentionally the most impressive—and, for a certain kind of reader, the most entertaining—text on this syllabus.

**>> EXERCISE 4: CANON**
Construct, in pencil, a complete and orthodox Tuscan order, following the instructions provided and documenting your progress with a time-lapse photograph to be distributed to the class. Be prepared to discuss the implications of a canonical, rules-based architectural method in relationship to the heterodox thrust of Andrés Duany’s lecture.

8. **HISTORICISM**
On imitation. De-historicized architectural fragments and architectural clichés. Historical naïveté, or the despair of modernity. The dangers and opportunities of nostalgia. Hewitt Quadrangle site visit.


9. POWER
Architecture and legitimate authority, or the architecture of totalitarianism. Albert Speer and the Third Reich. Also Fascist Italy, 1930s Eritrea, and Washington, DC, again. Architectural conversion and the possibility of redemption. Apple, Inc.


**EXERCISE 5: EXTRACANON**
Building on the examples discussed in class and the case studies assessed in the readings, circulate two captioned architectural images that might not typically be associated with the classical canon but that undermine in productive ways the affiliation of classical architecture with architectural cliché, historical retrogression, or structures of coercive power, and that might therefore warrant inclusion in an intelligently revised edition of Summerson’s *Classical Language of Architecture*. Comment on at least two other students’ submissions.

10. PRACTICE
Fragments of the classical in the contemporary city. What, if anything, can be salvaged from the ruins of history? Reinvention, subversion, or rejection. Classical architecture as practice.

Study—and be prepared to discuss—two of the following projects as presented on their architects’ websites:


**EXERCISE 6: POSTSCRIPT**
Using the template provided, submit an impeccably composed 500-word text accompanied by captioned images, conceived as a postscript to Summerson’s *Classical Language of Architecture*. If Summerson’s text is (predictably) limited, yours should aim to expand its scope chronologically, geographically, or conceptually, while offering occasion to focus more closely and critically on one aspect of the materials discussed in class.