



Teaching Architecture Through Film: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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Abstract

Architecture is central to understanding the built environment. The most common threshold for people to appreciate architecture is through sensual experience. In college, non-architecture students typically are exposed to architecture in a historical survey course as a series of styles. Survey courses are derived from art history as it catalogues styles. An alternative to the architectural style survey is an interdisciplinary course developed by architecture and cinema faculty that uses the students' own architectural experiences. Through the medium of film, architecture is understood through six experiential elements: Space/Scale; Style/Ornament; Light/Shadow; Color; Sound; Landscape. The course is a weekly seminar showing 14 films in which architecture plays a key role. Each week a film is screened, with readings supporting class discussions. Students use a 'Notes Worksheet' to focus on the architectural experience in the film, then complete a 'Critique Assignment' that emphasizes architecture's experiential aspects. Students build connections between what they learn about architecture through viewing, discussing, and critiquing each film, and their own personal experiences and memories of architecture. Student evaluations of the course indicate that this interdisciplinary course helps non-architecture students to formulate a greater awareness of architecture and appreciation for it, as well as a deeper understanding of the art of film.

Introduction

The built environment, whether carefully designed or ad hoc and haphazard, shapes the way we experience the world at large. The discipline of architecture is central to this understanding of the built environment. The most common threshold for any individual to appreciate the way that architecture shapes one's world view is through the senses--the experience of the built environment as it is seen, heard, felt, even smelt and tasted. It is through our phenomenological engagement with architecture that it becomes most accessible and we become most fully ourselves. As Juhani Pallasmaa writes in his book, *The Eyes of the Skin*: 'Every touching

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experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of space, matter, and scale are measured equally by eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton, and muscle. Architecture strengthens the existential experience, one's sense of being in the world, and this is essentially a strengthened experience of self.' (Pallasmaa, 2014, p. 41) (Through these haptic experiences, human beings can make sense of the built world, through which memories are made. This is central to human socialization, wellbeing, and fulfillment.

Exposure to and instruction in the discipline of architecture and design in higher education is primarily grounded in pre-professional and professional degree programs devised to train individuals who seek careers in architecture, interior design, environmental design, and other fields related to the built environment. Colleges and universities offer courses surveying the history of art and architecture for undergraduates who must fulfill general education requirements through liberal arts electives. In such courses of study, architecture and the built environment is typically presented from an historical perspective—primarily the development of architectural styles through successive periods, tied to cultural and technological contexts. The structure of such survey courses is derived from the field of art history as it catalogues the visual arts through periods of styles.

The goal here was the development of a course about architecture for non-architecture majors that does not rely on the format of the history survey course, but instead on how architecture is experienced, and how such experiences shape one's understanding and appreciation of architecture. Such a course would focus on how the built environment can be understood through its experiential characteristics: its spatial and scalar qualities, its ornament and style, its aural dimension, the effect of color, the power of light and dark, the perception of materials, its setting in the landscape (either designed or natural). These are experiential aspects of architecture shared between human beings, shaped through personal history (namely, memories).

An interdisciplinary course

A few years ago the university where I am on the faculty of architecture solicited proposals for interdisciplinary courses that would be open to all university undergraduates. The university had years earlier instituted an undergraduate elective course curriculum (known as the 'All-University Curriculum') that was open to every undergraduate in order to fulfill required courses across disciplines. In recent years the All-University Curriculum evolved into the University Interdisciplinary Studies (UIS) program, in which courses would be developed across disciplinary lines. As part of their requirements for their baccalaureate degrees, students are required to take at least four UIS courses, which cover four areas: 'Artistic and Creative Expression'; 'Cultural and Historical Interpretation'; 'Social Context and Change'; 'Natural, Scientific, and Technological Exploration' (University of Hartford, n.d.). According to the university, these areas of study are integrated in interdisciplinary courses in which students '...examine in-depth problems, ideas, and issues from multiple perspectives. Since faculty from all schools and colleges of the university create these courses, the curriculum takes full advantage of the diverse resources of the institution' (University of Hartford, n.d.).

The call for new UIS courses asked faculty to collaborate across disciplines to propose courses that would combine aspects of each discipline in a hybrid form. A course about architecture for non-architecture majors would perhaps best be structured as one that focused on architecture's experiential aspects, to which virtually any undergraduate in any discipline has access to. Film studies presented a second discipline—outside of architecture—that would serve as the medium for exploring architecture's experiential characteristics.

The course proposed by a prolific film scholar at the university and myself, 'Architecture in Film,' is structured as a weekly seminar that would allow undergraduates to view a curated series of 14 films in which architecture plays a key role. Each week is dedicated to a single film, with readings supporting the viewing of the film and discussions before and after the screening.

Following each weekly screening, students complete a film critique that focuses on the experiential aspects of architecture as portrayed in the film. It's important to note that this course was proposed in the category of 'Artistic and Creative Expression,' not 'Natural, Scientific, and Technological Exploration.' The former category allows both cinema studies and architecture to coexist as interdisciplinary equals. In this way, both architecture and cinema fulfill the goals of the interdisciplinary category. According to the UIS program: 'These courses examine how individuals and cultures express themselves and provide opportunities for students to actively engage in the creative process.' The focus would be how both architecture and film are creative outlets of expression, according to the UIS program: 'Knowledge of architecture, art, dance, drama, literature, and music opens channels of communication and leads to a realization of the complexities and interrelationships of human society' (University of Hartford, n.d.). The course was approved by the UIS curriculum review board in the Spring 2017 semester, and first offered as a three-credit course in Fall 2017. It has been offered every semester since then and met enrollment targets every semester.

Pedagogy and course content

A course about architecture and film for non-architecture students must strike a balance between the two disciplines. Film allows an access point for non-architecture students to experience architecture as a character within the narrative of the film. Film directors and architects operate in similar ways: they marshal the talents and expertise of large groups of people and bring them together to create an environment to be experienced. In film, of course, architecture is once removed from actual experience. Architecture within the film is most often the product of exacting set design (unless on-site locations are used, but even in such cases the director commands control over what is in the scene. In this way, the director's creation of the experience of architecture (*mise en scène*—literally, what is in the frame of the scene) is very similar to the architect's efforts to shape human experience in the built environment. In architecture, it is the three-dimensional experience of space over time, the places in which people act out their lives. The cinematic experience offers non-architecture majors a way to access architecture in a visceral way: how and what do we experience in the built environment, what does it mean, how is it symbolic, how does it affect our wellbeing? Within film, the architectural experience approaches a state that one could argue is closest to the architect's reasons for being drawn to the profession: to create places that are memorable, symbolic, freighted with human aspirations and emotions—in a word, environments that are 'transcendent.'

In Juhani Pallasmaa's landmark study of film, *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*, he describes the use of architecture in film and the structure of film itself as 'amplifiers' to transport the viewer into transcendent experiences. Pallasmaa writes: 'Cinematic architecture evokes and sustains specific mental states; the architecture of film is an architecture of terror, anguish, suspense, boredom, alienation, melancholy, happiness or ecstasy, depending on the essence of the particular cinematic narrative and the director's intention. Space and architectural imagery are the amplifiers of specific emotions.' (Pallasmaa, 2001, p. 7) Here, Pallasmaa's description of the director's use of architecture in film echoes the goals of architects who emphasize the phenomenological in their architecture.

Echoing Pallasmaa, the cinematic and architectural scholar François Penz contrasts cinema and architecture in their ability to tell stories about human life across space and time. For Penz, architecture's spatial quality is at its most powerful when rendered on the screen, allowing it to further the narrative of the film. He points to an example in Jean-Pierre Melville's film *Le Samourai*, where a twisting, confining staircase mirrors the inner turmoil of a character's own life as he climbs the stairs. (Penz, 2018, p. 189)

For the non-architecture student, it is essential to frame the discussion, screening, and critique of the films shown in the course by focusing on their own personal experiences of architecture.

This is a common human threshold of access to architecture no matter the personal or academic background of the student. The course guides the students in their understanding and critique of each film according to six 'Experiential Elements' of architecture: Space/Scale; Style/Ornament; Light/Shadow; Color; Sound; Landscape (see course handout at end of paper). Each of these elements is discussed at the beginning of the course, in the shared context of their importance in experiencing architecture and also in appreciating cinema—in the architect's creation of the built environment, and in the director's creation of the world within the film. Although the elements are presented as equally weighted regarding their importance in architecture and film, one might argue that the three elements of Space/Scale, Light/Shadow, and Sound are more important to one's experience in both architecture and film; Style/Ornament, Color, and Landscape might be assessed as less so.

It is critical in the course that the student maintains focus on these six elements; this can be a challenge for non-architecture majors. A handout explains each of these elements in the initial class meeting. Examples are shown and discussed, both from the built environment and from some of the films that will be screened in the course. For example, Space/Scale is discussed in the context of the emotional states one might experience in vast spaces, compared to very confined spaces. The symbolic importance of this experiential element is noted—it often denotes the communal value of the architecture, or the financial resources of the people who caused it to be built. In film, it can demonstrate the importance or power of people who command large spaces, such as the character Charles Foster Kane in Orson Welles's film *Citizen Kane* (1941), who lives in a vast mansion, Xanadu. But Space/Scale in film can also signify the emotional relationships between film characters. Kane and his second wife, Susan, must shout at each other in the cathedral-like cavern of Xanadu's living room just to have a conversation (Figure 1). The size and scale of the architecture they co-habit tells the film viewer about the wide emotional gulf that now exists between them.

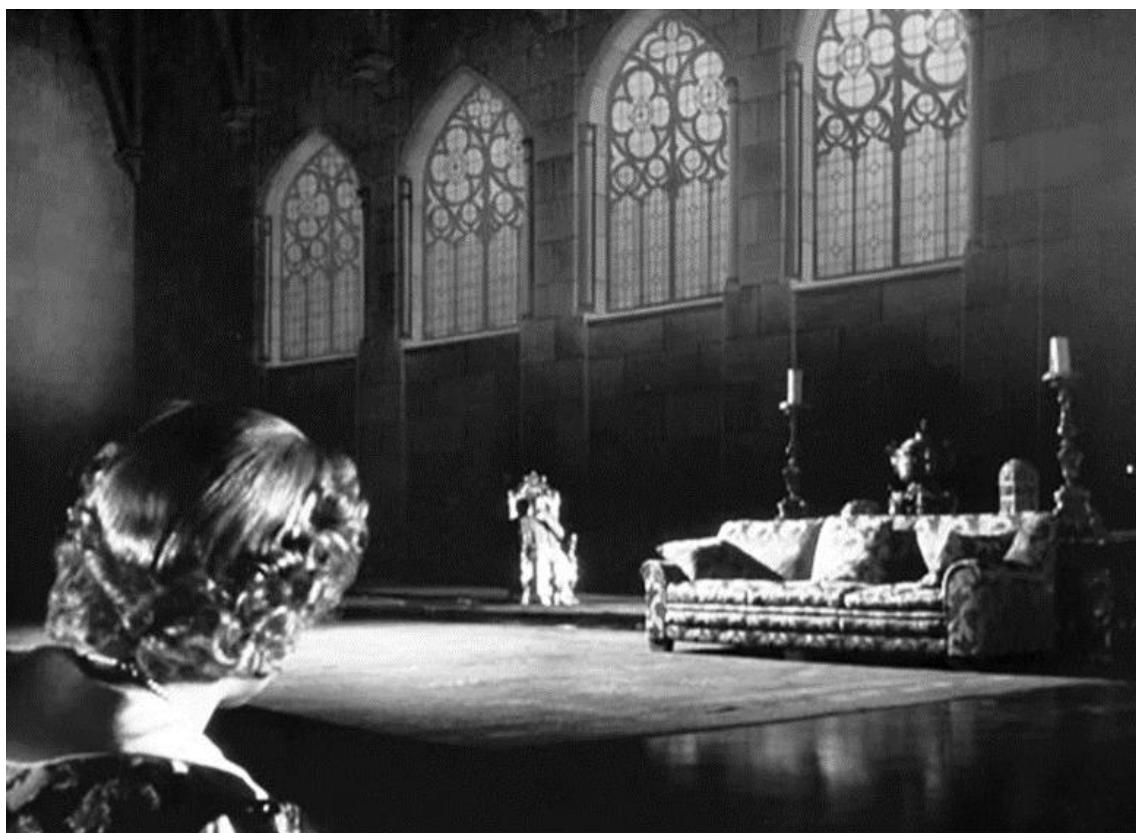


Figure 1. The vast spaces of Charles Foster Kane's mansion Xanadu in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) symbolize the emotional gulf between Kane and his second wife, Susan.

In similar way, Light/Shadow is explained as a crucial element in the experience of architecture, which is, according to Le Corbusier, '...the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light.' (Le Corbusier, p. 29) Within film, light and shadow can telegraph the mental state of a character, trapped in the shadows of a scene. In a film such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), light and shadow are used to symbolize social and economic standing in this utopian/dystopian city of the future (Figure 2).



Figure 2. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) the realms of utopia and dystopia are distinguished primarily through the abundance or absence of illumination: the elites live in light-filled towers, while the workers inhabit a dark world beneath the surface of the city.

Those characters who are powerful are surrounded by light (and light colors), while those who live in subservience are continually in shadow, living and working beneath the surface of the earth. Often within film, combinations of architecture's experiential elements are used by the director and set designers to reinforce the developing narrative. An example of this is seen in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1985), where the deteriorating mental breakdown of one of the characters, hotel caretaker Jack Torrance, is suggested through the assertive, lurid carpet patterns of the Overlook Hotel, which echo the internal spatial tangles of the hotel's hedge maze--part of its landscape (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Jack Torrance, the protagonist of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), surveys a model of the maze at the Overlook Hotel, which mirrors the spatial tangle of his own declining mental state.

In total, the 14 films screened are paired in one of seven themes throughout the semester: Utopia/Dystopia: *Metropolis* (1927) and *Brazil* (1985); The Director Was an Architect: *Rear Window* (1954) and *Citizen Kane* (1941); Haunted Architecture: *The Haunting* (1963) and *The Shining* (1980); Architecture East/West: *Equinox Flower* (1958) and *Code 46* (2003); The Architecture of the Super Hero: *Doctor Strange* (2016) and *Batman* (1989); Architecture, Space, Gender: *A Room With a View* (1985) and *Light in the Piazza* (1962); The Architect was a Real Character: *The Fountainhead* (1949) and *The Belly of An Architect* (1990).

Readings in the course are assigned to help students to think about the connections between the architecture in the film, its symbolism, and the larger narrative elements. Pallasmaa's *The Architecture of Image* is particularly valuable in how it explores these connections, as well as such texts as Steven Jacobs' 'Architecture of the Gaze' (Jacobs) which interrogates the set design of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954); the 'Epilogue' of Donald Albrecht's *Designing Dreams*, (Albrecht) in which the death knell of mid-century Modern architecture as set design is signaled in King Vidor's *The Fountainhead* (1949); and Marc Augé's non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity (Augé) as a context for the non-places depicted in Michael Winterbottom's *Code 46* (2004). Additional readings on film history, production, and critique are drawn from *Film Art: An Introduction* (Bordwell, M. and Thompson, K).

Critical interdisciplinary focus

All 14 films are screened in class, which allows for critical group discussion before and after a film is viewed. Course support materials are designed to assist students in taking notes during the film screening, which are then used to write a 450-word critique on architecture's role in the film. Because these students are learning the language of experiential architecture, they typically need guidance on what experiential details should be noted while watching the film. A 'Notes Worksheet' (see example of course handout) for each film helps the student on what she should pay particular attention to during the screening. One side of the handout is a 'Notes Worksheet'

that provides a prompt for notes to be taken in response to each one of the six Experiential Elements of Architecture as they relate to the film being screened. For example, for *Rear Window*, students are asked: ‘What is the role of architectural style/ornament in the film?’ Or: ‘How do lighting effects, including the absence of light, feature the role of architecture in the film?’ In regard to sound: ‘How are sound effects used to convey architecture’s size/scale in the film?’

The ‘Notes Worksheet’ is accompanied with the ‘Critique Assignment’ in which the students are asked to write about architecture’s role in the film, based on the notes they have taken. But they also need to build a bridge between their experience of architecture in the film, and their own personal experiences of architecture. For the film *Rear Window*, students are asked not only to critique the role of architectural style/ornament, but also: ‘How would describe the style/ornament based on your own experiences of architecture?’ When assessing the use of sound in the setting of the film’s ‘built environment,’ they are asked to speculate on ‘How might the courtyard in the film *Rear Window* affect sound?’ In responding to the critique question about the use of light, or its absence, in the film, students are required to: ‘Describe a personal experience with light and shadow in architecture.’

A key element and goal of the course is to help students in disciplines other than architecture to build connections between what they learn about architecture through viewing, discussing, and critiquing each film, and their own personal experiences with architecture. Among the course’s objectives are that students will learn about: architecture’s narrative power in film; the elements of architecture that are used in film; and (most importantly) that students will ‘integrate their own experiences of architecture with those experienced through film, and describe the connections.’

Conclusion

Student course evaluations have shown that ‘Architecture in Film’ has helped non-architecture students to form a greater awareness of architecture, an appreciation for it, through the medium of film. Student Course Evaluations for the university’s UIS courses are graded on a 5-point scale. One survey question asks students if in the course they ‘...integrated material from outside (for example, from real-world situations, life experiences) and inside (for example, course readings and lectures).’ Over six semesters, student respondents have been between 9 to 12n per semester. The average value of the course mean for responses to this question is 4.41, while the average mean for all UIS courses for responses to this question is 4.28. Among student comments regarding the impact of the course on their understanding and awareness of architecture, one student offered: ‘It allowed me to look at films and the world I had never thought of before as I am not an architecture student,’ while another wrote that the course ‘...expands student knowledge of historic films and ways to think about architecture’ (student comments are anonymous; disclosure/ethics statement was not required).

Because many of today’s undergraduates have grown up on a steady diet of videos, animation, and film, cinema arts are ideal ‘delivery devices’ for architectural content that students might in the past have ignored or been oblivious to. Architecture as the content of film invites students to see the built environment around them in new ways that are potentially symbolic and allegorical (as they often are in film). The course’s interdisciplinary nature allows students to appreciate cinema from a different perspective, introducing them to films that they have not had prior experience with. Likewise, film can create a new awareness of architecture as a character, often playing the starring role.

Disclosure statement

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

References

Albrecht, D. (2000). *Designing Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies*. Hennessey+Ingalls.

Augé, M. (2009). *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Super Modernity*. Verso Books.

Bordwell, D. and Thompson, K (2008). *Film Art: An Introduction*, Eighth Edition. McGraw Hill.

Jacobs, S. (2007). *Architecture of the Gaze: Jeffries Apartment and COURTYARD. The Wrong House: The Architecture of Alfred Hitchcock*. 010 Publishers.

Le Corbusier (1986). *Towards a New Architecture*. Dover Publications.

Pallasmaa, J. (2001). *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Rakennustieto Oy.

Pallasmaa, J. (2012). *The Eyes of the Skin*. Wiley.

Penz, F. (2018). *Cinematic Aided Design: An Everyday Life Approach to Architecture*. Taylor & Francis.

University of Hartford. (n.d.). University Interdisciplinary Studies. Retrieved September 8, 2025, from <https://www.hartford.edu/academics/interdisciplinary-studies.aspx#>

Appendices – description of the courses

University of Hartford, University Interdisciplinary Studies

UISA 155: Architecture in Film (3 credits)
[CRN 43644]

ADT 485: Architecture in Film (3 credits)
[CRN 43664]

Fall Semester 2025

Instructor: Dr. Michael J. Crosbie
(Architecture)

Office: Harry Jack Gray Center, Room
W205A

Phone: 860-768-4755 (office); 860-575-4702
(cell, text only)

Email: crosbie@hartford.edu

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Theodore Sawruk
(Architecture)

Meeting time: Wednesdays, 9:55-12:35,
Harry Jack Gray Center, East 305

UIS mission

The University Interdisciplinary Studies (formerly known as the All University Curriculum) general education courses are designed to provide shared learning experiences for students in baccalaureate programs at the University of Hartford through a core of common studies. Since faculty from all schools and colleges of the University teach these courses, the curriculum takes full advantage of the diverse resources of the institution. In addition to providing students breadth of knowledge in their liberal education, the UIS makes clear the relationships among disciplinary areas of knowledge through integrative, cross-disciplinary courses.

Course description

This interdisciplinary course bridges the arts of architecture and cinema by exploring the connections between them. Architecture, the built environment, expresses cultural values. Film often uses architecture to create a setting for action and narrative expression. Through film critiques, viewing films, and discussing their interpretation, students learn how architecture becomes a “character” in film, employing the experiential elements of architecture.

Course focus

Architecture is the art of creating the built environment as an expression of cultural and personal values. The art of cinema requires the creation of environments within the film as settings for action and narrative expression. Architecture and film converge in the creation of a cinematic setting (the “mise-en-scene”) as a narrative device: what the film shows us to tell the story. This course will expose students to 14 films from over a span of nearly a century in which architecture plays an important narrative “role” as a “character” in the film. Architecture has a sensory presence, expressed through elements such as space/scale, style/ornament, light/shadow, color, sound, and landscape. Students will learn about architecture’s narrative power in film through these six “experiential elements” and how they are used in cinema. Students are required to complete reading assignments related to the films shown, to participate in discussions of the films, to take notes while watching the film, and to write critically about architecture’s role in the films using six Experiential Elements of Architecture (see handout). The course will culminate with a take-home final exam. Course materials will be distributed on Blackboard and completed assignments will be submitted on Blackboard.

Student learning outcomes (SLOs)

By the end of the semester, students who have successfully completed all activities and requirements will:

- Learn about architecture’s narrative power in film by studying how architecture’s experiential elements are used in cinema.
- Learn about the history of architecture in film.
- Learn about the experiential elements of architecture that are used in film.
- Integrate their own experiences of architecture and the built environment to those experienced in films shown during the course, and describe the connections.

Suggested texts

Required readings will be provided, but here are some texts that might be helpful:

Albrecht, Donald. *Designing Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies*. Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey + Ingalls, 2000.

AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Bordwell, David, and Thompson, Kristin. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Eighth Edition. New York: McGraw Hill, 2008.

Clarke, David (editor). *The Cinematic City*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Fear, Bob. *Architecture + Film II*. London: Architectural Design, 2000.

Fortin, David. *Architecture and Science-Fiction Film: Philip K. Dick and the Spectacle of Home*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2011.

Jacobs, Steven. *The Wrong House: The Architecture of Alfred Hitchcock*. Rotterdam: 010Publishers, 2007.

Koeck, Richard, and Roberts, Les (editors). *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Lamster, Mark (editor). *Architecture and Film*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000.

Neumann, Dietrich (editor). *Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner*. New York: Prestel Verlag, 1999.

Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy, 2001.

Toy, Maggie. *Architecture & Film*. London: Architectural Design, 1994.

Course grading breakdown

Letter grade on a 0-4 scale (A=4, F=0) with a pass/no pass option. Final grade is weighted according to student performance in the following course requirements: short written film critiques: 70% (one per film, 5% each, 14 total,); take-home final exam: 20%; informed contributions to discussion: 10%. Grade breaks are as follows: A: 4.0-3.8; A-: 3.79-3.67; B+: 3.66-3.34; B: 3.33-3.0; B-: 2.99-2.67; C+: 2.66-2.34; C: 2.33-2; C-: 1.99-1.67; D+: 1.66-1.34; D: 1.33-1; D-: 0.99-0.67; F: 0.66-0.

Late work deadline

Late/missing critique assignments will not be accepted after November 19, 2025.

Student code of academic conduct

Your work as a student at the University of Hartford is governed by the Student Code of Academic Conduct found in “The Source,” the student guidebook distributed by the university. There is a section in “The Source” that articulates the Student Code of Academic Conduct and the Academic Honesty Policy. It can be found at this link:

https://www.hartford.edu/current-students/_files/6.5_current_students_student_handbook.pdf#page=39

Please read it carefully. It outlines the sequence of events that could take place if you are accused of plagiarism, your rights to an appeal as a student, and the possible repercussions if you are found guilty of plagiarism.

AI policy

The use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools is strictly forbidden in this course. All assignments, including weekly film critiques and the Final Exam, must be completed without the assistance of AI-generated content. This policy is in place to ensure that the work submitted is authentically yours and reflects your personal understanding and capabilities. Violations of this policy will be considered academic dishonesty and will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in the university's academic honesty policy (see above).

Additional information

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability for which you are requesting accommodations, you are encouraged to contact Access-Ability Services as soon as possible by calling (860) 768-4312, emailing tlopez@hartford.edu, or by stopping by the Access-Ability

Services office in Auerbach Hall, Room 209. If your request for accommodations is approved, an Accommodation Letter will be emailed to your instructor(s) upon your request. Please discuss your accommodations with the instructor as soon as possible to make appropriate arrangements. Note that student requests for accommodations must be filed each semester. Visit the website www.hartford.edu/access-ability and click on the “Registering” link for more info and a link to a video to walk you through the process.

Tutoring Availability: Whether it's to get regular extra help in a challenging class or just to schedule time for additional assistance on a particular course assignment, the Center for Student Success is here for you! Students can book appointments directly in Compass through their success networks. (No appointments needed for Drop-In services!) Students can also make one-on-one peer tutoring appointments by visiting, emailing, or calling the Center in GSU 230. **Tutoring Appointment Meeting Location:** Harrison Libraries, up main, center stairs / Outside L 305 **Phone:** 860-768-4999 **Email:** ctctutor@hartford.edu

Title IX and Sexual Harassment/Assault: The University of Hartford and its faculty and staff are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. Title IX makes it clear that sexual misconduct and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and support applied to offenses against protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. University faculty and staff members must report sexual misconduct or harassment to the University's Title IX Coordinator to provide the appropriate resources and support options. Please report any incidents of sexual misconduct and harassment and bias-related incidents at this link: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofHartford&layout_id=4

As your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct and harassment that are directly reported to me or of which I am somehow made aware. See the University of Hartford Title IX Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault Policy at this link: https://www.hartford.edu/about/policies/_files/title_ix_policies-3-24-2023.pdf

To learn more about Title IX on campus, go to: <https://www.hartford.edu/about/policies/title-ix/>

Support and Reporting Options:

On Campus (confidential): Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) 768-4482; Live Safe App (anonymous)

On Campus (private, not confidential): Kenna Grant, Ex. Director for EO/Title IX Compliance: Office (860-768-4880) title9@hartford.edu or mckenna@hartford.edu ; Public Safety (768-7777)

Off Campus (confidential): Sexual Assault Crisis Service (24/7 toll-free hotlines: 1-888-999-5545 for English, 1-888-568-8332 para Español); Interval House hotline: 860-.838-8467; CT Safe Connect 24/7 hotline: 888-774-2900 St. Francis Hospital (860-714-4000)

The Assistant Vice President for Equity & Opportunity serves as the University's Title IX Coordinator and is the designated agent of the University with responsibilities for coordinating Title IX compliance efforts. They oversee the implementation of grievance procedures, including the notification, investigation, and disposition of complaints, ensuring a fair and neutral process for all parties. Additionally, they have been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies, including oversight of 504/ADA and Title IX compliance, and questions regarding the policy.

University of Hartford mental health and wellbeing statement

Mental Health is an important aspect of students' wellbeing and integral to positive academic experience and success. If during the semester you experience difficulties and would like support, consider contacting the University of Hartford's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). CAPS offers a range of short-term counseling services available to full-time undergraduate students and graduate students at no additional cost, and to part-time undergraduates for a small fee. CAPS is located in the Gengras Student Union, room 313, and can also be reached by calling 860.768.4482 or emailing Dr. Jeffrey Burda; burda@hartford.edu. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Course outline

- 8/27: Theme: "Utopias and Dystopias"; Film: Metropolis (1927); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique; readings in film criticism ("Mise-en-Scene" and "Lighting")
- 9/3: Theme: "Utopias and Dystopias"; Film: Brazil (1985); writing/discussion.
- Assignment: Short film critique; readings in film criticism ("Rear Window")
- 9/10: Theme: "The Director was an Architect"; Film: Rear Window (1954); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique; readings in film criticism ("Citizen Kane")
- 9/17: Theme: "The Director was an Architect"; Film: Citizen Kane (1941); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique
- 9/24: Theme: "Architecture of Suburbia"; Film: Radiant City (2006); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique
- 10/1: Theme: "Architecture of Suburbia"; Film: The Truman Show (1998); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique
- 10/8: Theme: "Architecture of the Super Hero"; Film: Batman (1989); writing/discussion with Guest Lecturer Theodore Sawruk. Assignment: Short film critique
- 10/15: Theme: "Architecture of the Super Hero"; Film: Dr. Strange (2016); writing/discussion with Guest Lecturer Theodore Sawruk. Assignment: Short film critique/readings in film criticism ("Haunted Houses")
- 10/22: Theme: "Haunted Architecture"; Film: The Haunting (1963); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique; readings in film criticism ("Shining")
- 10/29: Theme: "Haunted Architecture"; Film: The Shining (1980); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique
- 11/5: Theme: "Architecture, Space, Gender"; Film: A Room with A View (1985); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique
- 11/12: Theme: "Architecture, Space, Gender"; Film: Light in the Piazza (1962); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique
- 11/19: Theme: "The Architect Was Quite a Character"; Film: The Fountainhead (1949); writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique; last day to submit late assignments
- 12/3: Theme: "The Architect Was Quite a Character"; Film: The Belly of an Architect (1990); in-class writing/discussion. Assignment: Short film critique; Take-Home Final Exam
- 12/10: Critique of The Belly of an Architect and Take-Home Final Exam due

Experiential elements of architecture

Space/Scale

Space and scale are the most elemental aspects of architecture. It is what we see and what we experience with our bodies. The vastness of architectural space can make us, as individuals, feel exalted. When we are with other people, large architectural spaces can also make us seem small, as if we are insignificant in comparison to the architecture. A constricted space, like a small room, can make us feel confined—some people react to such confined spaces as psychologically threatening. A great sense of space can be understood with scale elements, such as life-sized statues or windows, or the front of a home, where we understand the size of a brick, a window, or a door. Scale often conveys the size of the architecture in relation to our own bodies. Some buildings lack scale because we cannot relate ourselves to the size of windows or doors. In film, space and scale are often used to communicate the wealth of a character, or perhaps how someone is being threatened or coerced. A great sense of space and large architectural scale can communicate emotional distance between characters. As you watch the films, note how space and scale are used to convey architecture's presence and power in the film and its characters.

Style/ornament

Style and ornament are related to scale. Style can also communicate whether a character is wealthy or poor, depending on the style used. Sometimes style can create a sense of foreboding, perhaps if it is over-scaled and seems more suitable to the needs of the state or a corporation, instead of individual human beings. As you watch the films, note the role of architectural style/ornament. How might the style and ornament reflect your own experience with architecture?

Light/shadow

We experience architecture primarily as the “play of forms under light,” as the Swiss architect Le Corbusier described it. We experience and understand architecture by the way it manipulates, and in turn is manipulated by light. In film, lighting can be used to highlight the architecture, making it more prominent. The lack of lighting (shades and shadows) can also create a sense of mystery, sometimes foreboding. For example, if a character is in pain or is lonely, the film might portray them in shadow, reflecting the way they feel. As you watch the films, note how lighting effects feature the role of architecture, in conveying the narrative, or the emotional relationships between characters.

Color

Architecture is often enlivened through the use of color. Colors can attract our attention, and make the architecture more intense. Bright colors might communicate a lighter mood, while darker colors might convey a sense of danger. In film, color can be used sarcastically, as it might appear to brighten up architecture that is threatening looking. In some films, muted colors can communicate a sense of blandness in the environment as a metaphor of the relationship between characters. In black and white films, the lack of color can provide an entirely different experience of the film, compared to whether it was shot in color. Films that lack color are often seen as being more “artistic,” because we focus more on the director’s composure of solid forms and shadows on the screen. As you watch the films, note how color (or the lack of color) is used in the architecture to support the film’s storytelling.

Sound

Sound in architecture can give us an idea of how big a space might be (which also tells us something about its scale). The behavior of sound also conveys what the materials of the architecture might be: hard materials (such as stone) create echoes, while softer or more porous materials (like fabrics and screens) deaden echoes and make the space seem less vast. In films that are not silent, sound is often used to convey the size of the architecture and its materials. As you watch the films, note how sound is used to convey architecture's role in the film.

Landscape

Landscape may include such elements as plants, flowers, trees, water, pathways, garden furniture. Landscape architecture involves the shaping of nature by the designer to communicate ideas about places where one might feel calmness in tune with living things. Houses set amid nature, integrated with the landscape, can feel organic, part of the natural world, instead of imposed upon it. However, landscape design is used often to tell us about the people who shape the landscape, and how much power they have over nature to bend it to their will. Highly regulated landscapes, such as formal gardens, tell us that this place is the creation of someone with great resources to control nature to this degree. Such designs communicate a person's sense of power that might extend through the landscape as far as the eye can see. In film, landscape design can provide clues about the wealth and power of the characters who inhabit the landscape. The landscape can also convey a sense of being in the natural world. Natural landscapes can prompt characters to behave in ways they would not normally behave. They can be swept up by nature and the landscape and surrender their emotions to it. As you watch the films, note how the landscape setting supports architecture's film role and furthers the film's narrative.

Notes on film screening

Student Name:

Class meeting 9/10: Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954, 112 min.)

1. Space/Scale (how are space and scale used to convey the type of people who live in the apartment complex?)
2. Style/Ornament (what is the role architectural style/ornament in the film?)
3. Light/Shadow (how does the architecture feature lighting, including absence of light, to further the film's narrative?)
4. Color (how is color used in the architecture to support the film's storytelling?)
5. Sound (how is sound used to convey the shared architectural space in the film?)
6. Landscape (how does the limited amount of landscape support the film's storytelling?)

Assignment

Film Critique of Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954, 112 min.)

Based on your notes taken during the film screening and your own experiences of architecture and the built environment, complete a film critique considering the 6 following issues (each of the 6 responses should be 75 words max; format your critique as 6 separate numbered paragraphs). Answer the critique questions completely. Support your critique by describing an example (scene from the film). Submit completed assignment as a Word Document on Blackboard before next class meeting.

- Space/Scale (how are space and scale used to convey the type of people, socioeconomically, who live there? Describe a similar space you have experienced.)
- Style/Ornament (what is the role architectural style/ornament in the film? How would you describe the style/ornament based on your own experiences with architecture?)
- Light/Shadow (how does the architecture use lighting, including the absence of light, to further the film's narrative? Describe a personal experience with the absence of light in architecture.)
- Color (how is color used in the architecture to support the film's storytelling? Describe an example of color used similarly in a building you've experienced.)
- Sound (how is sound used to convey the shared architectural space in the film? Based on your experiences, how might the courtyard of Rear Window affect sound?)
- Landscape (How does the limited amount of landscape support the film's storytelling; what importance does landscape play in this film that suggests your own experience with architecture and landscape?)