

*Other World (Another World)*, M.C. Escher, 1947.

# PREPARATION FOR SMARCHS THESIS

**Instructor:**

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**Schedule:** T 9:00 am — 12:00 pm EST

5-233

**Credits:** 3 – 0 – 6 G

## DESCRIPTION

Intended for SMArchS students in the preliminary stages of their thesis explorations, 4.288 is a preparatory research workshop leading to a well-conceived proposition and public presentation. Through weekly assignments, in-class activities, and conversations with advisors, students formulate a written thesis proposal that articulates a clear disciplinary position. The proposal, meant as an early launch into thesis research and not as a postponement of it, will serve as a critical exchange between student interests and conversations impacting architecture, urbanism, and their allied fields today.

## INTRODUCTION THE POINT AND THE UNIVERSE

In Jorge Luis Borges's *Aleph*, a fictional Borges narrates his encounters with Carlos Argentino Daneri, an extravagant poet with a formidable secret. For in his basement on Garay Street hides the rarest of phenomena: a point in space that contains all other points—a dizzying Aleph. Initially wary of the poet's description, Borges chooses to visit Daneri's old cellar. There, drenched in darkness, he centered his gaze on the nineteenth step until, in a shock of panic, he witnessed it. "On the back part of the step," he describes, "toward the right, I saw a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brilliance. At first, I thought it was revolving; then I realized that this movement was an illusion created by the dizzying world it bounded. The Aleph's diameter was probably little more than an inch, but all space was there, actual and undiminished. I saw the teeming sea; I saw daybreak and nightfall; I saw a silvery cobweb in the center of a black pyramid; I saw a splintered labyrinth. I saw a woman in Inverness whom I shall never forget; I saw her tangled hair, her tall figure, I saw the cancer in her breast; I saw my own face and my own bowels; I saw your face; and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon—the unimaginable universe."<sup>1</sup>

Thesis Preparation this semester will begin with a similar 'point' of departure: a tangible *mark* or *moment* through which you may better perceive, and navigate, the universe of your thesis.<sup>2</sup> Whether you choose to start with a building, an object, a street, a creature, a conversation, an encounter, a crop, a material, a document, or any other entity contained in space and time, the aim here is to unpack the ways through which your unique Alephs—their forms and behaviors—engage with critical conversations impacting the role of architecture and urban design today. Making legible this form of engagement, which bridges between your own instincts, interests, and the discourse at large, is integral to expanding the contributions of your thesis. While this is a preparatory class, we will not merely operate in anticipation of a future project. Instead, our goal this semester is to launch into a yearlong exploration of a topic and position, which will be refined both in class and through conversations with your advisors.

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<sup>1</sup> Jorge Luis Borges and Andrew Hurley, *Collected Fictions*, Penguin Classics (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1998) 283.

<sup>2</sup> See illustration on cover page.



To that end, the class will unfold, simultaneously, from the point to the universe, and vice versa. As illustrated by the course diagram on the following page, each week will focus on both expanding the disciplinary scope of your initial observations and focusing the questions that such propositions may raise within contemporary architectural and urban discourse. In the first half of the semester, weekly assignments and activities—or, ‘ties,’ as we will refer to them—will gradually work towards bonding the point and the universe through a focused argument. The resolution of such argument will rely on the distinctive precedents, frameworks, methods, contexts, and audiences that your theses will stitch together. Building on these ‘ties,’ the second half of the semester will concentrate on formulating a detailed thesis proposal and presentation. Central here is a position (note that *thesis* finds its root in the Greek word *tithenai*, as in “to place, a proposition”) that draws, concurrently, on the evidentiary standards of design research and your aspirations for the next thesis semester and beyond. Above all, then, Thesis Preparation is an invitation to “place” firmly and accurately toward a more just discourse.

### **Other Points:**

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*. Mankato, Minn: Creative Education, 1993.

Sloan, Robin. *Ajax Penumbra 1969*. London: Atlantic Books, 2014.

Ghosh, Amitav. *In an Antique Land*. 1. Vintage departures ed. Vintage Departures. New York: Vintage, 1994.

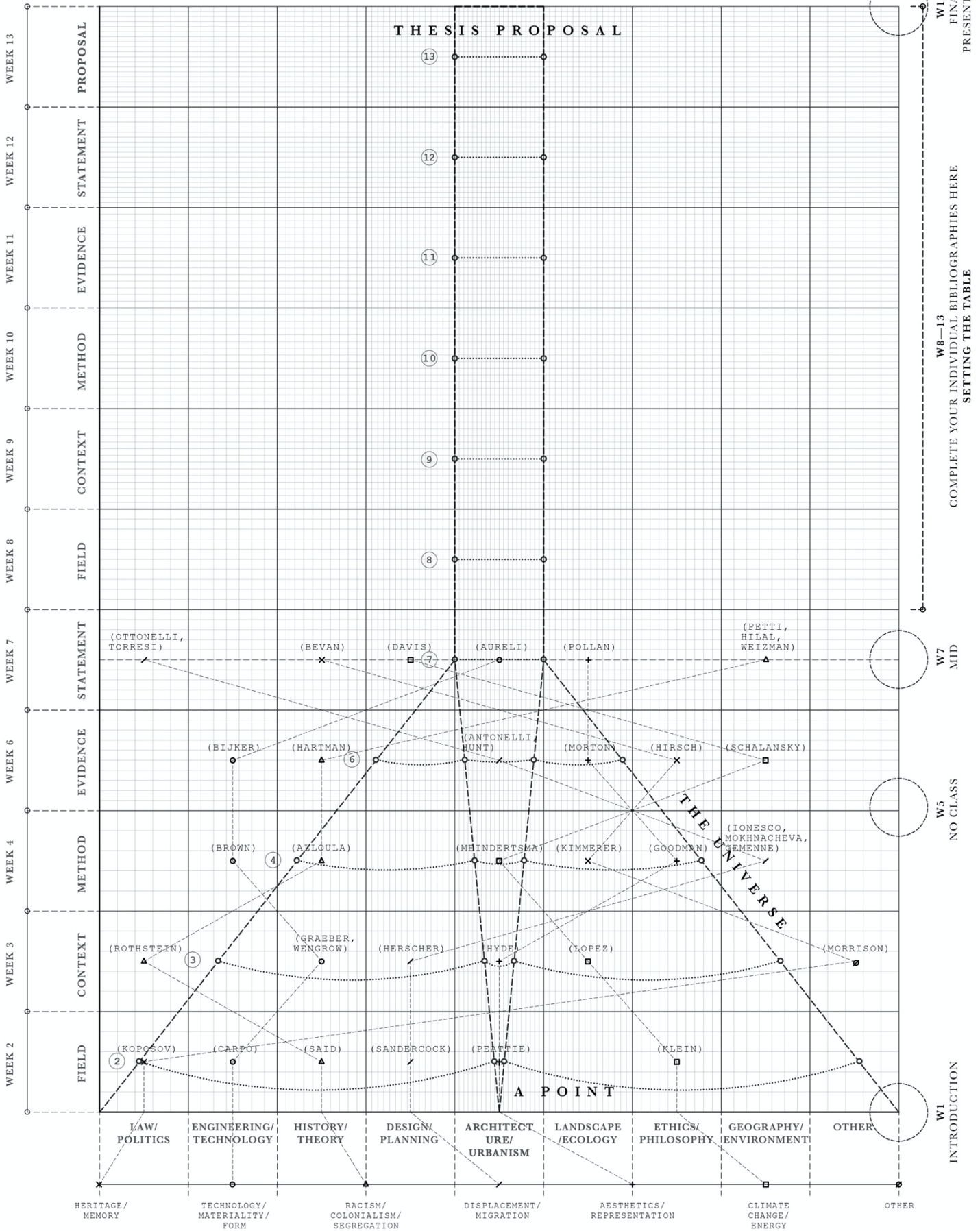
### **Other Universes:**

Borges, Jorge Luis, Erik Desmazières, Andrew Hurley, and Angela Giral. *The Library of Babel*. Boston: David R. Godine, 2000.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Word for World Is Forest*. New York: TOR, 2010.

Sloan, Robin. *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*. 10th anniversary edition. New York: MCD Picador, 2022.

# CLASS STRUCTURE



## RESPONSIBILITIES

**(1) Weekly Assignments and Participation:** In Chapter 1 (Weeks 1 to 7), weekly assignments and (optional) readings will tackle four main elements of your thesis propositions, namely, their field(s), context(s), method(s), and evidence. Through drawing, writing, and a series of other visual and textual explorations, Chapter 1 will culminate in various representations of a well-articulated thesis statement. In Chapter 2 (Weeks 8 to 14), all assignments are targeted toward the production of a comprehensive thesis proposal and presentation. Each assignment here will build on work from the first chapter to formulate a written document that will be shared with the department for final approval. Please upload your assignments to Canvas each Monday by 10:00 PM.

**(2) Setting the Table:** With its gridded desks, front-facing chairs, and purposeful separation between the space of the ‘teacher’ and that of the ‘learner,’ our classroom (5-233) is not ideal for shared reflections on the state of architectural and urban discourse. Besides naturalizing metaphors of spatial hierarchy, the ‘standard’ arrangement of its objects prescribes social exchanges that govern, and are governed by, a desire for (or an indifference toward) stratification. Fixed into place by prevailing narratives of practicality and undisputed rules of civility, these objects seldom deviate from their assigned positions without jeopardizing the systems that have, for centuries, limited their mobility under the guise of rationalism and authority. Much like our discipline, then, our classroom is in urgent need of alternative modes of co-authorship and collaboration.

In Setting the Table, the weekly ritual of forming a collective space out of scattered individual desks becomes a practice of formalizing these alternatives, both physically and symbolically. In Week 8 and onwards, two students will be responsible—weekly—for setting the table and, in doing so, shaping and leading the conversation. The practice of configuring the table (and its function) should not be haphazard but should instead be rooted in the positions, arguments, and methods specific to every thesis proposition. This is not a *presentation* of your progress (as in a conventional slideshow/PowerPoint) but a critical curation of a space that makes it easier to visualize, understand, and discuss the claims of your thesis. This could end up being a collective meal that we share together, a game, a debate, or even a tournament of some sort—anything so long as it animates the conversation and proposes new modes of engaging with (agreeing with or challenging) your arguments. You are encouraged to meet with me or Azania on the week prior to your session to discuss your plans. You will have time during class to configure the table and dismantle it at the end.

**(3) Thesis Proposal and Portfolio:** At the end of the semester, you will each submit a detailed thesis proposal that formulates a position within contemporary architectural and urban discourse. This document, which generally reaches fifteen to twenty pages, will gradually develop through several assignments and conversations with peers and thesis advisors, both inside and outside the classroom.

## SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

### CHAPTER 1\*

**W1:** Tuesday, September 12

INTRODUCTION

**W2:** Tuesday, September 19

FIELD: SEEING THE UNIVERSE THROUGH A POINT

A. Because thesis research is a journey that unfolds over time, its initial stages are rarely smooth sailing. And yet, this week aims to produce a moment of clarity and lucidity—no matter how limited—at a time of uncertainty. This ‘moment’ is not your thesis *topic* (we are not there yet), but a tangible and focused manifestation of your interest, an occurrence or observation of some sort, that could hint at its disciplinary potential. Whether you choose to begin with the particularities of a certain encounter, the account of an urban or natural occurrence, the description of a material or technology, the experience of a space or time, or any other interaction that carries a question *you* find intriguing, the goal here is to uncover the potential of any seemingly inconsequential observation that—for conscious or unconscious reasons—has influenced your thoughts. In one drawing (8.5 x 11 inches), produce a detailed representation of this observation highlighting both the object of study and the specific elements that individualize your understanding of it. On a separate sheet, describe your ‘point’ in 200-250 words.

B. In the same way that the minuscule Aleph granted Borges the ability to peer through larger events and territories, your task now is to bridge your initial drawings/observations (your very own Alephs) with critical conversations influencing the fields of architecture and urbanism today. From the list of themes provided in the course diagram (you are also welcome to propose your own), identify one primary and one secondary conversation that your ‘points’ may engage and contribute to—either by reinforcing or challenging positions shaping their respective fields. For each of these conversations, write a concise paragraph—a bridge—that outlines the alignment of your preliminary observations with the broader discourse. To that end, discuss potential impacts, challenges, and opportunities.

### W3: Tuesday, September 26

#### CONTEXT: TRACING THE THREADS OF INFLUENCE

A SMArchS thesis demands an expansive understanding of ‘context’ that moves beyond its usual associations with a place or an architectural site. The aim of this exercise is to help anchor your preliminary propositions within a lineage of historical, cultural, political, economic, and/or technological processes that have intersected to produce the environment—be it a place, a community, an object, a material, etc.—that your thesis is reacting to. Such processes often operate, unintentionally or by design, across several scales and temporalities. Rendering visible their exchanges is necessary for the formulation of a ‘context’ that situates your current observations as well as your future speculations.

This week, your task is to compose a multi-scalar and cross-temporal timeline<sup>3</sup> that uncovers and maps the various histories and territories impacting the environment of your thesis. To do so, you will begin by identifying the main Points, Periods, and Paradigms that define the magnitude of your contexts. (1) *Points* are specific historical events or pivots, from the shaping of the planet until today, that have significantly shaped the objects of your research. These points, which must have happened at specific moments in time (a particular hour, day, or year, etc.) often begin or conclude larger periods or processes. (2) *Periods* are distinct and identifiable spans of time that are characterized by certain developments, cultural traits, or societal changes. They could refer to shifts in political power, technological advancements, cultural movements, or other notable factors that distinguish them from surrounding timeframes. (3) *Paradigms* are new patterns, ideas, or perspectives that evolve in response to technological or intellectual advancements as well as societal and political developments. Paradigms can cut across several Points and Periods.

On a single page (8.5 x 11 inches), identify four Points, four Periods, and four Paradigms that make up the context of your thesis propositions. For each category, make sure that all four entries refer to changes that have unfolded at different scales—local, national, global, and planetary. Use colors to distinguish the different scales. On a separate sheet (8.5 x 11 inches or other), produce a timeline that situates your observations from Week 1 within this larger exchange of Points, Periods, and Paradigms. The goal here is to map and spatialize how the various threads and magnitudes of influence have evolved to shape your current ‘space of intervention’, no matter how narrowly or broadly you choose to define this space. Use different line weights, types, and colors to clarify the evolutionary and additive nature of your context.

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<sup>3</sup> Examples include: Charles Joseph Minard’s “Figurative Map of the Successive Losses in Men of the French Army in the Russian Campaign 1812—1813” (1869), Olaf Stapledon’s timeline for “Last and First Men: A Story of the Near and Far Future” (1930) <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/arts/sota-research/olaf-stapledon-centre/>, Christoph Weigel’s “Discus Chronologicus” (1720), Girolamo Andrea Martignoni’s “Spiegazione della Carta Istorica dell’Italia” (1721), Thomas Jeffreys’ “A Chart of Universal History” (1753), Luigi Perozzo’s “Stereogram of the Swedish Census” (1879), the Marconi Telegraph Communication Charts (1912), On Kawara’s “100 years Calendar” (2000).



**ATTN:** Wednesday, September 27  
SMARCHS ADVISING LUNCH

**W4:** Tuesday, October 3  
METHOD: BUILDING NEW HABITS

Now that your initial assertions are anchored in a genealogy of historical pivots and processes, your task in this third assignment is to test a series of operations—or research methods—that support your claims with relevant and deliberate forms of evidence. Most research methods in architecture and its related fields fall under one of the following categories: [1] qualitative research methods (interviews, case studies, ethnographic work, archival and historical research, etc.), [2] quantitative research methods (surveys, simulations, experiments, statistical analyses, etc.), [3] design research methods (drawing, mapping, prototyping and fabrication, modeling, etc.), or [4] a combination of several types. Not only do such operations help structure the different stages of your research, but they also provide you (and your readers) with the terms and standards through which your claims are to be evaluated.

In this assignment, you will identify and test two research methods that find in your aforementioned contexts opportunities to best support your disciplinary claims. On one page (8.5 x 11 inches), write a paragraph detailing each of your two choices. In these paragraphs, specify the different categories containing your research methods, discuss their relevance, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as any ethical considerations they may raise (consent, privacy, etc.).

In a separate document, begin to test each of the two methods. Whether you choose to launch into archival research at the library, conduct and transcribe interviews, distribute surveys, build a model, produce a drawing, compose a literature review, or engage in any other mode of inquiry, the goal here is to document the process with precision. Consider different forms of documentation—photographs, time-based media, a logbook, a research notebook or journal, etc.—that can accompany your thesis research this week and beyond. The purpose, then, is to build new habits (or to leverage ones you are already comfortable with) that can help you share your progress with others. Remember that Assignment 3 is about the process (the method) and not the outcome (the evidence). While you will naturally begin to gather preliminary evidence through your chosen methods of documentation, such outcomes will be more carefully assessed in the following week.

**W5:** Tuesday, October 10

NO CLASS

**W6:** Tuesday, October 17

EVIDENCE: DEFENDING YOUR CLAIMS

A. If the previous week centered on the research methods through which you may guide your ‘contexts’ toward new disciplinary propositions, then Week 6 will focus on the outcomes of such methods and their role in informing your thesis statements. These outcomes, whose collection we will refer to as evidence, are the new outputs you will produce and gather to support your hypotheses. They are, ultimately, the foundation of any convincing argument. This week, your task is to direct each of your chosen methods toward a certain resolution. Should you choose to complete a drawing, conclude a literature review, or simulate an urban occurrence (etc.), the aim here is to reach a complete—and not necessarily a comprehensive—outcome. In other words, the scope and magnitude of the evidence is entirely up to you, as long as the result is conclusive and self-contained. Assemble your evidence on a series of pages (8.5 x 11 inches).

B. In a spatial tree diagram,<sup>4</sup> detail the evolution of your main thesis argument—from your early observations in Week 2 to the formulation of a preliminary thesis statement this week. Think of this diagram as both a summary of the work you have produced so far and a means to structure your midterm presentation next week. The aim is to visualize, simultaneously, the evolving complexity of your claims and the different thesis projects that such claims may contribute towards this semester and in Spring. At stake here, then, is the ability to represent how the field, context, method, and evidence have ‘thickened’ your initial interests and transformed them into targeted inquiries within the fields of architecture and urbanism. The diagram, however, need not be chronological (or follow the weekly structure of this class). Instead, you are encouraged to curate your work and detail your progress in a way that may provoke a better and clearer reaction from others. Consider highlighting words, combining text and images or drawings, using color, etc. The extent to which the metaphor of the ‘tree’ is visible remains completely up to you, as long as the diagram narrates the journey of the initial ‘point’—from a single point to a series of possibilities. Present your diagram on a single page (11 x 17 inches) or any other format of your choice.

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<sup>4</sup> Examples include: Hattie Mann Marshall’s “Genealogy of the Lee family of Virginia and Maryland” (1886), Athanasius Kircher’s “The Tree of Life” (1652), Charles Darwin’s “Tree of Life” in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), Robert Peril’s “Genealogical tree of the House of Habsburg” (1540), Daniel Craig McCallum’s “Plan of Organization of New York and Erie Railroad” (1855), Ernst Kleiberg, Huub van de Wetering and Jarke J. van Wijk’s “Botanical Visualization of Huge Hierarchies” (2001), the “Manhattan Project Organization Chart” (1946), Ephraim Chambers’ “Table of Contents” (1728), Arthur Howard Estabrook and Charles Benedict Davenport’s “Genealogical Tree of the Nam Family” (1912), Francis A. Walker’s “Chart Showing the Principal Constituent Elements of the Population of Each State” (1874), Werner Randelshofer’s “Treeviz” (2007).

**W7: Tuesday, October 24**

## STATEMENT: PROVOKING A REACTION

Prepare a 10-minute presentation that articulates your *thesis statement* and (1) explains how it engages contemporary architectural and/or urban discourse (2) contextualizes it within disciplinary and historical frameworks and processes, (3) details its unique research and design methods, (4) describes its reliance on clear arguments and conclusive evidence, and most importantly (5) formulates a clear position. Make sure to expand on the different future projects that such statements may support, as well as any inclination you may have towards a particular approach. The class will split into two concurrent sessions, each joined by guests and thesis advisors. You will have 15 minutes for the discussion (total 25 minutes per student).

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\*Note: Throughout this first chapter, our classes will feature collective workshops meant to contrast and consolidate the themes explored individually. Rarely will we dedicate a full session to individual presentations. Instead, the aim is to question and reflect on certain trends that are emerging, simultaneously, inside and outside the classroom. Each weekly assignment is designed to launch you into independent research *and* produce commonalities that cut across several projects. Naturally, it is imperative that you join every class ready to contribute and participate. To facilitate such collective undertakings, we will begin every class by assembling the desks into a central table. Please bring a printed copy of your assignments to every class.

## SUGGESTED READINGS

### W2

Campo, Mario. "The Second Digital Turn." In *The Second Digital Turn: Design beyond Intelligence*. Writing Architecture. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017.

Klein, Naomi. "Beyond Extractivism: Confronting the Climate Denier Within." In *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, First Simon & Schuster trade paperback edition. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2015.

Koposov, N. E. "The Rise of Memory and the Origins of Memory Laws." In *Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia*. New Studies in European History. Cambridge [UK]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Peattie, Lisa Redfield. "Representation." In *Planning, Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, 111–52. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987.

Said, Edward W. "Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental." In *Orientalism*, 25. anniversary ed. with a new preface by the author. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.

Sandercock, Leonie. "Towards a New Planning Imagination." In *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century*. London: Continuum, 2003.

### W3

Graeber, David, and D. Wengrow. "Wicked Liberty: The Indigenous Critique and the Myth of Progress." In *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, First American edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.

Herscher, Andrew. "The Urbanism of Racial Capitalism: Toward a History of 'Blight.'" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 40, no. 1 (May 1, 2020): 57–65. <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-8186049>.

Hyde, Timothy. "The Profession." In *Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. (architecture)

Lopez, Barry Holstun. "Ice and Light." In *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*, 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

Morrison, Toni. "The Site of Memory." In *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, edited by Russell Baker and William Zinsser, Rev. and Expanded ed., 1st Mariner books ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Rothstein, Richard. "State-Sanctioned Violence." In *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, First published as a Liveright paperback 2018. New York London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.

### W4

Alloula, Malek. "Women From the Outside: Obstacle and Transparency." In *The Colonial Harem. Theory and History of Literature*, v. 21. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Brown, Kate. "Learning to Read the Great Chernobyl Acceleration." In *Current Anthropology* 60, no. S20 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1086/702901>.

Goodman, Nelson. "On Rightness of Rendering." In *Ways of Worldmaking*, 11. pr. Hackett Classic 51. Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett, 2013.

Ionesco, Dina, Daria Mokhnacheva, and François Gemenne. "The Atlas of Environmental Migration." Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. "Skywoman Falling." In *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, First paperback edition. Minneapolis, Minn: Milkweed Editions, 2013.

Meindertma, Christien. *PIG 05049: 1:1*. 3. dr. Rotterdam: Flocks, 2009.



## W5

Antonelli, Paola, and Jamer Hunt. "Operation Sovereign Borders Graphic Storyboard." In *Design and Violence*, edited by Sarah Resnick, 175–82. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2015.

Bijker, Wiebe E. "King of the Road: The Social Construction of the Safety Bicycle." In *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change*, 3. Aufl. Inside Technology. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.  
[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/research/centres/blackstudies/venus\\_in\\_two\\_acts.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/research/centres/blackstudies/venus_in_two_acts.pdf)

Hirsch, Marianne. "Introduction." In *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Morton, Timothy. "Dark Thoughts." In *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge (Mass.) London: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Schalansky, Judith. "Preface" and "Tuanaki." In *An Inventory of Losses*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2021.

## W6

Aureli, Pier Vittorio. "Means to an End: The Rise and Fall of the Architectural Project of the City." In *The City as a Project*, edited by Pier Vittorio Aureli. Berlin: Ruby Press, 2013.

Bevan, Robert. "Terror: Morale, Messages, and Propaganda." In *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, 1. paperback ed. London: Reaktion Books, 2007.

Davis, Diane E. "Reverberations: Mexico City's 1985 Earthquake and the Transformation of the Capital." In *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster*, edited by Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Ottonelli, Valeria, and Tiziana Torresi. "Allegiance and Political Rights." In *The Right Not to Stay: Justice in Migration, the Liberal Democratic State, and the Case of Temporary Migration Projects*, 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Petti, Alessandro, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman. "Decolonizing Architecture." In *Architecture after Revolution*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013.

Pollan, Michael. "Nature Abhors a Garden and Why Mow?" In *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*, Nachdr. New York, NY: Grove Press, 20.

## **CHAPTER 2**

In this second chapter, we will move from a predominantly visual set of provocations to ones tailored to the development of a written thesis proposal. Over the span of six weeks, a series of structured assignments will help expand on your earlier work and shape several components of this proposal (and its related presentation). The final version of this document should contain, at least, the following sections: (1) Title and Abstract, (2) State of the Field, (3) Thesis Statement and Research Questions, (4) Context and Object(s) of Study, (5) Research and Design Methods, (6) Evidence, (7) Work Plan, and (8) Primary and Secondary Sources. Each week will focus, simultaneously, on one such sections as well as its associated sources and visuals. The goal is to reach Week 13 with a final draft of both the proposal and the presentation, and thus dedicate the final week for revisions. You will receive both written and oral feedback throughout the process. The individual nature of this endeavor will be juxtaposed, in class, with the collective exercise of Setting the Table. Each week, two students (approx. 1.5 hours each) will be responsible for curating a table that both advances their research questions *and* invites observations and reactions. This is *not* a presentation of your work but an opportunity to workshop and debate your propositions. The table, ultimately, is a microcosm of the larger discourse.

**W8:** Tuesday, October 31

STATE OF THE FIELD

**W9:** Tuesday, November 7

CONTEXT AND OBJECT OF STUDY

**W10:** Tuesday, November 14

RESEARCH AND DESIGN METHODS

**W11:** Tuesday, November 21

EVIDENCE

**ATTN:** Wednesday, November 22

*SUBMIT THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBERS*

**W12:** Tuesday, November 28

THESIS STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**W13:** Tuesday, December 5

REVISIONS

**W14:** Thursday, December 14

FINAL PRESENTATION WITH GUESTS

## **SMARCHS THESIS CONTACTS**

SMArchS Director: Ana Miljacki ([miljacki@mit.edu](mailto:miljacki@mit.edu)), SMArchS Degree Administrator: Kateri Bertin ([kbertin@mit.edu](mailto:kbertin@mit.edu)), SMArchS Thesis Submission: Kateri Bertin and Tonya Miller ([miller\\_t@mit.edu](mailto:miller_t@mit.edu)). SMArchS Discipline Groups Coordinators: Design—Ana Miljacki ([miljacki@mit.edu](mailto:miljacki@mit.edu)), Urbanism—Rafi Segal ([rsegal@mit.edu](mailto:rsegal@mit.edu)). Thesis Presentation Booklet Coordination: Joel Carela ([jcarela@mit.edu](mailto:jcarela@mit.edu)).

## **ABSENCE POLICY**

Work in the proseminar will build sequentially. Therefore, student commitment to incremental development on a weekly basis is of great importance. The nature and pace of this class necessitates regular attendance and requires that deadlines are consistently met. Attendance in class and for the duration of all formal reviews is mandatory. Greater than two absences from class without a medical excuse supported by a doctor's note, communication from Student Support Services (S<sup>3</sup>), GradSupport, or verifiable personal emergency could result in grade reduction.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology students are here because of their demonstrated intellectual ability and because of their potential to make a significant contribution to human thought and knowledge. At MIT, students will be given unusual opportunities to do research and undertake scholarships that will advance knowledge in different fields of study. Students will also face many challenges. It is important for MIT students to become familiar with the Institute's policies regarding academic integrity, which are available at the [Academic Integrity at MIT: A Handbook for Students](#).

## **WRITING AND COMMUNICATION CENTER**

The WCC at MIT (Writing and Communication Center) offers *free* one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). The WCC also helps with all English as Second Language issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in E18-233, 50 Ames Street). To guarantee yourself a time, make an appointment. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/>. To access the WCC's many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/>. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.

## DIVERSITY

MIT values an inclusive environment. We hope to foster a sense of community in this classroom and consider it to be a place where you will be treated with respect. We welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with us.

## GRADE DISTRIBUTION

1. **Class Participation and Weekly Assignments**.....50%
2. **Setting the Table**.....30%
3. **Proposal and Portfolio**.....20%

## GRADING DEFINITION

The final grade will represent the balance of attendance, participation, engagement in class discussions, incorporating feedback, completion of assignments, individual growth over the semester and quality of work produced in the seminar, with an emphasis on clarity and originality. The following criteria will be used for assessment and evaluation:

- A.** Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.
- B.** Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.
- C.** Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems, and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field.
- D.** Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems, but also demonstrating deficiencies serious enough to make it inadvisable to proceed further in the field without additional work.
- F.** Failed. This grade also signifies that the student must repeat the subject to receive credit.