



from Auschwitz to Zapruder: mapping the mid-century
arch4205/5205 - 3 credit cultural history seminar
fall 2019 – tuesdays thursdays 10–11:15 am
jeff balmer, instructor

To gain a sense of the present, one must brave a glance toward the past.

This seminar will examine pivotal cultural and architectural developments within the histories of the mid-Twentieth Century. From the origins of the Second World War to the events of Spring, 1968, the course will chart both the primary political, cultural, and architectural arcs of the period, and examine architectural case studies within these broader contexts. Through texts in various media, students will gain a deeper understanding of the context, the achievements and the catastrophes, of this critical period. Ultimately, the primary objective of the course is to ground students in a comprehensive and comprehensible understanding of the recent past, a past which has set the stage for our present.

The seminar will be organized topologically rather than strictly chronologically. Over the course of the semester, students will examine the mid-Twentieth Century from the vantage point of eight cities, chosen as a set to reveal and reflect overarching themes and instructive case-studies. Because this period witnessed the advance of non-traditional media, this course will employ film, television, and popular fiction as supplements to 'traditional' texts of history and theory. All required texts should be considered as thresholds for further readings and research. Buildings, projects, and urban settings that illustrate general issues explored will be studied in detail. The following schedule indicates the general framework of the semester, and the specific iterations within each of the eight city-sites of investigation.

The course will meet twice a week. Lectures, discussions, and student presentations are to be conducted according to the preceding time-table. Students must complete the readings prior to attending corresponding discussion sessions.

1. Lectures: The lecture given by the instructor at the beginning of each city will provide an overview of the historical and cultural themes under review.
2. Readings & Films: A set of required readings and films will be assigned for each eight city-sites of investigation.
3. Discussions: Discussion of the required readings and films will form the bulk of each thematic cycle, with participation by all members of the seminar a requirement. Students are required to prepare questions for discussion, and be prepared to be called upon to both ask and answer questions. Pop quizzes to be given at discretion of instructor.
4. Research Synopsis: A short written summary of a chosen subject for research, due end of class, Sept. 3. Synopsis must contain a subject outline, a proposed thesis or argument, and a selected Bibliography. 500 words min. (750 for grads).
5. First Draft + Presentation: Each student will be responsible for giving a concise 10 minute powerpoint presentation that outlines the first draft of the paper. First draft will be 2500 words (3500 for grads) in length, and will include complete endnotes and bibliography.
6. First Draft Comments: Each student will be responsible for making annotated proof-reading of a classmate's first draft, including comments on content and structure of paper.
7. Second Draft: Each student will be responsible for submitting a second draft by the end of 14th week of classes.
8. Final Paper and Presentation: Due for the 3-hour class held during final exam week. Final documentation requirements to be confirmed before mid-semester.