This seminar will look critically at current models of practice in architecture and urban design in the context of a broad intellectual landscape that includes art and literary theory, geography, environmental studies, social sciences, media studies, economics and engineering. The seminar will be organized thematically around key methods in the transformation of the discipline and the practitioners who have effectively engaged them.

Theory, in this case, will not be considered as a supplement to architectural practice, but rather a methodology inextricably bound to techniques of design and construction. We will focus on strategies for formulating critical practices of architecture – praxis – that contend with the full complexity of contemporary conditions and thereby re-formulate the basic problems of the profession. To this end, this seminar will be envisioned as a laboratory for testing the efficacy of these strategies through the consideration of built and unbuilt works. These assays will take the form of in-class presentations and end-of-semester analytical projects.

At root, the basic question of this course is what comprises an architectural practice? How does one define a critical territory in which to operate? What are the basic problems? And how does one develop a methodology as a response? This course will parallel the studio sequence closely, and is intended to equip students with critical tools necessary for developing methodologies to be applied to their own work.
TRANSFORMATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Week 01: (9/2) Introduction: Praxis & the Avant-Garde

02: (9/9) Program/Rem Koolhaas + OMA

03: (9/16) Diagram/UN Studio
van Berkel, Ben and Bos, Caroline, “Diagram Work,” ANY 1998, No. 23
Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix, excerpts from A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1987)

04: (9/23) Topology/Foreign Office Architects
Zaera-Polo, Alleandro, Moussavi, Farshid, Phylogenesis FOA’s ark: Foreign Office Architects (Barcelona : Actar, 2004)

05: (9/30) Animation/Greg Lynn

06: (10/7) Body Politics/Diller Scofidio

07: (10/14) Material/Office dA

08: (10/21) Versioning/SHoP

09: (10/28) Structure/Cecil Balmond
10. (11/4) Ecology/Ken Yeang

11: (11/18) Field/Field Operations

12: (12/2) Globalization/Toyo Ito

13: (12/9) Morphogenesis/Peter Testa

*indicates recommended reading, on reserve at library
TRANSFORMATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Expectations:
- Come to class. Be on time. Two missed classes will yield a failing grade.
- Do the reading. Come to class with questions, observations, talking points.
- Participate in class discussions.

Grading:
- 33% Class Participation
- 33% Seminar Presentation: Analysis & Assay
- 33% Final Project: Mini Manifesto

Project 01: Analysis + Assay
- Research & analyze the work of the architect/firm in question.
- Articulate a position, make a proposal for a contextual/analytical reading of this architect’s work and their methodology.
- Present in-class using slides to back up your argument.
- If necessary, produce analytical diagrams, illustrations, tables, charts, etc.
- Interrogate the available rhetoric and compare to visual documentation of built/unbuilt work to assess efficacy, performance, etc. Alternate readings are encouraged!
- Provide supporting information from other disciplines, architects, historical precursors, etc.
- Prepare a couple of questions for discussion by the class.

CONSIDERATIONS
- How do they present their work? What techniques are used?
- What kind of practice? What is their territory/milieu for working? How have they reformulated the basic problems of contemporary practice?
- How do the above considerations inform their methodology? What are some of the recurring & consistent techniques, devices, memes, forms?
- What does & doesn’t match? (ie: rhetoric to built work, documentation vs. argumentation, etc.)

DETAILS
- Plan on presentations lasting 1 hour, not including discussion (30-40 slides as a target).
- Provide CD with slides/files, or email (if under 10mB).

RESEARCH
- Journals: El Croquis, Domus, A+U, ANY, Assemblage, Ottagno
- Monographs
- Compendia: Phaidon Contemporary Architecture Atlas, etc. (see reading list)
- WWW: what are people saying about them? How widespread is their affect?
Project 02: Mini-Manifesto

- Present your studio project for the semester through the lens of one of the thematic categories we have studied.
- Consider this to be a “mini manifesto,” a position paper backed up with research, with the following characteristics:
  -- Place your work in context: pick up an argumentative, historical thread.
  -- Pose a question or a challenge for the work (in the context of reformulating basic problems of contemporary architectural practice)
  -- Define a territory, milieu, manifold in which your work operates.
  -- Take a position on your practice: propose a way of working, a methodology, that responds to this territory (rather than merely presenting a project)
- Texts should be between 750-1500 words, and should be accompanied by drawings/photographs of your project, explanatory or analytical diagrams, contextual/precursor images and any other graphic material that supports your position and helps to define your methodology. Texts should be short but polished.
- FORMAT: in provided Freehand, Illustrator or InDesign template
  --submit as PDF file (embed all fonts); may be emailed if under 10mB, otherwise on CD
  --submit 2 color hardcopies (1 of which will be returned to you), 1 mounted board (pick up next semester)

Project 03: Collection

- The class’ work for the semester will be compiled into a pamphlet including MArch work from UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design and the California College of the Arts in San Francisco.
- A group exhibit is planned, and participation of all students is mandatory.

General Reference/Reading List

Manuel Gausa, *Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture: City, Technology and Society in the Information Age*

Marie-Ange Brayer and Frédéric Migayrou, *Archilab: Radical Experiments in Global Architecture*

Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng, *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century*

Joseph Rosa, *Next Generation Architecture : Folds, Blobs, and Boxes*

--, *The Phaidon Atlas of Contemporary World Architecture*

Ali Rahim, *Contemporary Techniques in Architecture, Architectural design, v. 72, no. 1*

Neil Leach, *Digital Tectonics*