

BERLIN: The Life of a City

Fall Semester 2023 :: 3 Credits :: ARCH 7120 :: ARCG 7070 :: EVDS 3710

Wednesday 17:30 – 20:15 :: Education Room 224

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Office Hours :: Zoom or in-person by appointment



Zaha Hadid

Berlin: The Life of a City focuses on the complex history of one city. Through this, however, the course serves to unveil a multitude of approaches to understanding the built environment in other contexts, serving to provide students with a greater understanding of deep urban history and challenging urban futures contending with climate change, immigration, and opportunity.

Why Berlin ??? Why not New York, or London, or Paris ??? Why not Rio, or Lagos, or Delhi ???

For one, in Berlin one can start to list of architects who have worked there: Zaha Hadid, Norman Foster, Walter Gropius, Rem Koolhaas w/OMA, David Chipperfield, Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, Oscar Niemeyer, Le Corbusier, Peter Behrens, Erich Mendelsohn, Renzo Piano, Hans Scharoun, Bruno Taut, Hans Poelzig, Frank Gehry, Hugh Stubbins, I.M. Pei, Herzog & de Meuron, Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, Santiago Calatrava, Aldo Rossi, Jean Nouvel, Sauerbruch and Hutton ... this is a sampling of Berlin's incredibly rich and varied architectural heritage.

For another, Berlin's architectural heritage is, however, not just simply placed 'somewhere' within an urban ensemble, but is part of an equally rich '*Experimentierfeld*' of urban morphologies reaching from a fortified Baroque City through the democratizing 'Athens on the Spree'; from speculative perimeter block morphologies through '*aufgelockerte*' garden cities; from Weimar's 'City of Light' through the dark National Socialist dreams of world domination and a Berlin reframed as 'Germania'; from a postwar 'city of ruins' through to a socialist utopia and monumental undertakings such as the Stalin Allee, from occupied houses through the repair of the 'urban fabric'; from the division of the 'Wall' to reunification of East and West; from the 'poor but sexy' of a Techno-club city through the production of Elon Musk's Teslas; from the locus of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees to testing a car-less city geared towards meeting the 2050 European Union targets of a carbon-neutral metropolis.

In short, Berlin is an urban as well as an architectural laboratory. Berlin is a city in which a great deal of modernist art and literature was created; it is a city with an immensely important film history. It is a city of both the Berlin Philharmonic and Techno clubs such as the Berghain. Berlin has been, with some notable exceptions, a tolerant city fostering life-style experimentation of all kinds.

Furthermore, as Berlin is both an architectural and urban laboratory, it also engages sophisticated theoretical frameworks to understand how spaces of various scales interact and support the myriad of social and cultural configurations that the city's four million inhabitants exhibit. *Zwischenräume*, *Freiräume*, *Besetzteräume*, *Grenzüräume*, *Spielräume*, *Bewegteräume*, *Zeiträume*, *Kinoräume* ... roughly translated as 'in-between spaces', 'free spaces', 'occupied spaces', 'border spaces', 'play spaces', 'movement spaces', 'time spaces', 'cinematic spaces' are some of the theoretical constructs deployed to conceptualize various ways of understanding the complex spatial matrix of Berlin.

In order to make this course as widely accessible as possible, it is offered in three formats: A) as a graduate history/theory course fulfilling CORE Departmental of Architecture requirements (**ARCH 7120**); B) as a graduate history/theory course fulfilling ELECTIVE requirements (**ARCG 7070**); C) as an undergraduate history/theory course fulfilling ELECTIVE requirements (**EVDS 3710**).

Finally, this course may be taken in conjunction with the FS 2023 BERLIN STUDIO, which will be offered as a vertical ED4/M1 Studio ... i.e., a vertical Studio will be comprised of BOTH ED4 & M1 students !!! The Department of Architecture, for many years, offered Studios in the format and we will return to this for the coming year. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email (above).



Ralph Stern

FINAL 23 March 2023