**Arch 4395-004: Writing About the City**

Fall 2014

T & Th 11:00-12:20, ARCH 329

**Instructor**: Mark Lamster

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**Office Hours**: Thurs, 12:30-1:30

**Course Description**

An intensive workshop that will focus the student’s ability to think and write critically about buildings, the city, and the urban landscape, and in the process develop their own point of view. Readings and site visits will promote thoughtful seeing and interpretation, with emphasis on architecture's role is shaping public space.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will be expected to master a variety of formats (basic description, profile, criticism) and journalistic practices, including archival research and personal interview.

**Texts**  
Required: Alexandra Lange, *Writing About Architecture* (Princeton Architectural Press).   
Additional course readings to be distributed in class and on line. Students should understand that reading broadly and deeply is imperative if they are to improve their own writing. Students should be reading architecture and design magazines, journals, and blogs daily. Recommended: Architect, Architect’s Newspaper, Architectural Record, Architectural Review, Cite, Curbed, Domus, Design Observer, Dwell, Icon, and Metropolis. Students are advised to subscribe to the online service ArchNewsNow (free), which distributes architectural news stories daily. Students should also be reading high-quality general interest long and short form writing. Recommended: New Yorker, New York Times, New York Review of Books, Wall Street Journal.

**Attendance**Course attendance is mandatory. In a workshop setting, your fellow students rely on your presence and participation. Your own development is also a function of your presence and active contribution. Unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your grade.

**Assignments**

Students will produce weekly written assignments of 150-500 words (often in class) and two long pieces of approximately 1200 words. Students will be expected to contribute weekly to a class blog/tumblr.

**Grading**  
Students will be graded on the totality of their participation and their written work. Weight will be given to end-of-term assignments that demonstrate improvement over the course period, as follows: 30 percent final project, 10 percent midterm project, 30 percent class assignments, 30 percent class participation. Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**: Introduction  
21 Aug.: Writing about architecture: methods and models  
  
**Week 2:** Fundamentals of Writing & Research  
26 Aug.: Elements of description

Reading: Kidder-Smith; Moore   
28 Aug.: Library visit (Architectural library)

**Week 3**: Fundamentals of Writing & Research II  
2 Sept: Elements of description, workshop   
 Due: Assignment 1

Reading: Lange, Intro

4 Sept: Library visit (Special Collections)

**Week 4**: Biographical Writing  
9 Sept: Art of the Profile

Reading: Caro, Power Broker, Intro; Lamster, Philip Johnson   
11 Sept: Workshop  
  
**Week 5**: Architecture on film  
16 Sept: The Perot Museum: Form vs. City

Reading: Clips; Lange, Chapter 2

18 Sept: Workshop

**Week 6**: Urban Life  
23 Sept: Seeing the city

Reading: Rowe, Lockhart, Texas; Caro, The Meat Ax; Lange, Chapter 6

Due: Choose subject building  
25 Sept: Workshop

**Week 7**: Skyscraper  
30 Sept: Museum Tower vs. The Nasher

Reading: Clips; Lange, Chapter 1

2 Oct: Workshop

**Week 8**: Museum  
7 Oct: The Just City  
 Readings: Clog.

9 Oct: Workshop [Dillon Symposium]

**Week 9**: Parks

14 Oct: Field Trip: Klyde Warren Park

Reading: Clips; Lange, Chapter 6.

16 Oct: Workshop

**Week 10**: Midterm Assignment Due  
21 Oct: Workshop   
23 Oct: Workshop

**Week 11**: Practice  
28 Oct: Writing for Work

Reading: Johnson, Seven Crutches of Modern Architecture; Bierut On Design Bullshit;

Scott Brown, Sexism and the Star System

30 Oct: Manifesto

Readings: Smithsons, New Brutalism; Ingels, Yes Is More

**Week 12**: Preservation  
4 Nov: Dallas Then & Now

Reading: Clips; Lange, Chapter 3   
6 Nov: Workshop

**Week 13**: The Book  
11 Nov: The Monograph:

Reading: Filler; Ingels, Yes Is More;  
13 Nov: The Book Review

Reading: Johnson on Johnson; Sorkin on Wolfe; Lamster on Foster

**Week 14**: Transportation  
18 Nov: The City and the Highway:

Reading: Clips; Vanderbilt, Traffic.  
20 Nov: Workshop

**Week 15**: Final Review  
25 Nov: Workshop  
  
**Week 16**: Final Review  
2 Dec: Workshop

**Drop Policy**Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Americans with Disabilities Act**The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX**The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law “Title IX” such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).

**Academic Integrity**Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents’ Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university’s standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services**  
UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication**UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey**At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week**

A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures**

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located on the second floor. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

**Workshop & Reading Guidelines**

Remember your goal is not to line edit or brutalize each other’s work but to offer specific suggestions for improvement and to identify effective elements or strategies already in place. Be positive, and remember there is not necessarily a right or wrong opinion but that all writing should be supported by clear description and lucid argument.

Think about helping your fellow students get a sense of how a reader perceives his or her work. What do you see as its argument and its structure? Where does his or her persona show? Are you able to get a sense of the building or space without visual aid?

Is the opening successful? Does the first sentence grab your attention? Does it

give you some idea as to what the review will say, or the tone the reviewer will take?

How does the reviewer appeal to the reader? What sort of identity does the author establish? What is the essay’s tone? Are they an expert or a person-on-the-street? Are they writing for a young audience or a more sophisticated one?

How does the review flow? How is the physical description of the building

organized? How is criticism introduced and connected to that description? Is there a logical flow of ideas?

Is the reviewer’s opinion clearly and thoroughly supported by evidence? What

kind of evidence is used—visual, historical, comparative? Would a different kind of evidence work better?

Does the end do a good job of summarizing the argument? Does it end on an up note or a downbeat? Does it end with a zinger? Think about your own writing process. What kinds of notes did you have to take? How do you choose where and how to begin? Did your opinion of the building change while writing?

*Adapted from Alexandra Lange*