

# LESS IS.

**ARC 694**      **Architectural Design | Vertical Studio**  
University of Texas School of Architecture   Francisco Gomes   Spring 2019

**Class:** MWF 1pm-5pm  
**email:** fgomes@utexas.edu  
**office:** GOL 2.310, by appointment



## Course Description

The *LESS IS* studio will investigate approaches to architecture which begin with strategies of restraint. Sometimes constraints are extrinsic and imposed from the situation of a project, be it a limitation of site, construction, or economics. Nearly always, the author of an architectural work formulates intrinsic limitations that steer composition, experience, and architectural expression.

Rather than taking “less is more” and “less is a bore,” the judgements disposed as metaphors, made famous by Mies van der Rohe and Robert Venturi respectively, at face value the studio will instead begin with the *how* of designing with less and move toward the *why*. Buildings cost a literal fortune, making limitations a necessity at times, but even in the most expensive projects expressions of less are used for their cultural value.

There is a strong lineage of doctrines of restraint in the histories of many cultural endeavors, variously addressing interests of equitable access, local culture, materiality/physicality, and human-centeredness; more often reacting against abstraction than pursuing it. In film, the Dogma movement; in cuisine, Farm-to-Table and the New Nordic Kitchen; in music composition, phase and process music; and in the fine arts, Arte Povera, all bound possibilities to define value.

The studio will undertake two architectural design problems, each aimed at a different aspect of working with less. The first project will focus on architectural expressions arising from the extrinsic constraint of severely limited resources. The second project will examine the role of intrinsic constraint in architectural invention within a complex physical environment. Each project will be preceded by a precedent study.

The studio will have a particular emphasis on visual communication. Design inquiry through model making (principally by hand) and *two-dimensional* drawing (principally with software) will be a strong focus. The crafting of exquisite and compelling drawings and physical models will be required.



La Congiunta, Peter Markli

**Project One: KINDER (6 weeks)**  
**Constraint in service of Limited Resources**



Competition title page

Sited in an existing settlement in the peripheral La Arboleda de Fatima district of Santa Cruz, Bolivia's largest city, this project is a competition for the design of a kindergarten. Organized by ARCHsharing in collaboration with TECHO Bolivia, a humanitarian association that seeks to overcome poverty in Bolivia, the competition posits the reinhabitation of a site with three derelict buildings to serve as many as 500 underserved children between the ages of 2 and 5 in the surrounding neighborhood. The project site is located adjacent to a school, allowing students there to accompany their younger siblings to the kindergarten rather than miss school days to look after them when parents can't.

Following a model-based precedent study of contemporary architectural projects for the care and education of young children, the design of the architecture (inclusive of demolition, renovation, and addition) as well design of the site and a social strategy will be undertaken individually. The project is resource limited: construction costs are low, the projects will be phased, and the design must presume construction by low-skilled labor. In addition to a conventional final review presentation, students will prepare a board to enter their design into the competition (at a cost of 60 Euro per student). The competition organizers intend to build the winning entry and have committed to providing each entry with feedback from the international jury, which includes Eugenia Concha of Equipo Mazzanti and Manuel Cervantes.



Site Vicinity



Preschool in Haro, Taller Básico de Arquitectura



Novartis Campus Visitor Center study, Peter Markli

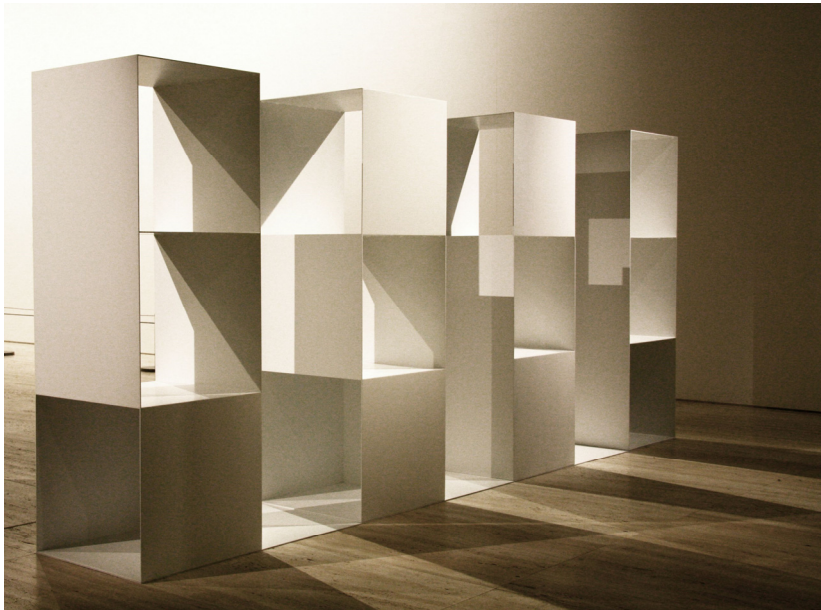


## Project Two: ELDER (8 weeks)

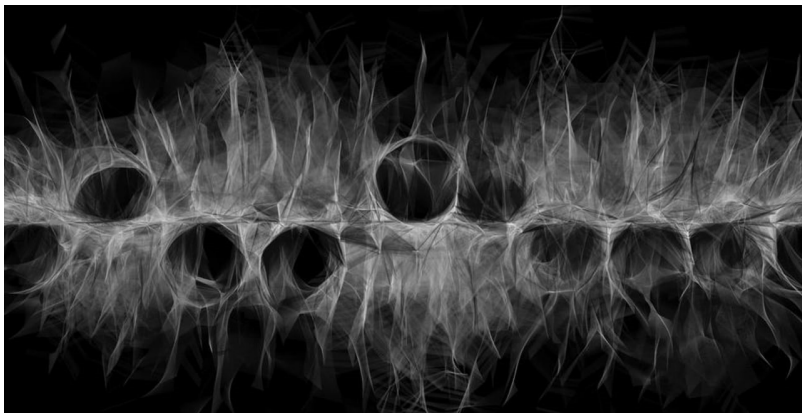
### Constraint in service of Culture

The second project examines the role of self-imposed limitations in the creation of the architectural work. Additionally, the influence of the situation/context of architectural space/object on both form and representation will be explored.

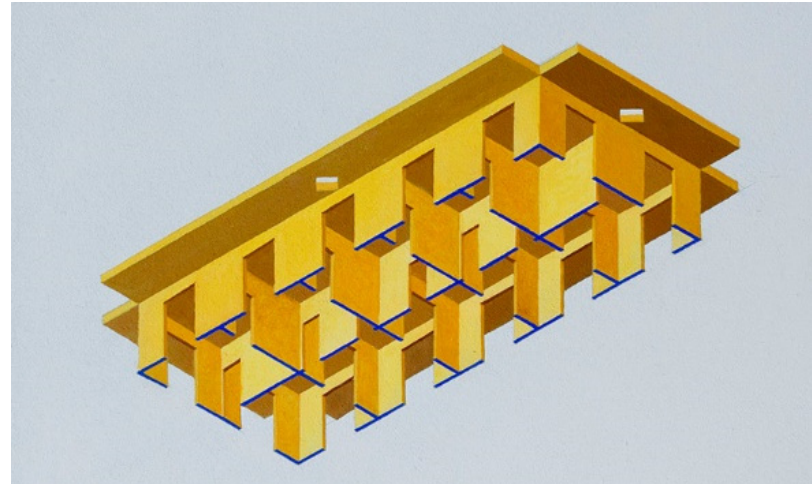
Initial studies of precedent from beyond the architectural milieu will culminate in each student writing a brief Manifesto and Vows for their upcoming project following the Dogme 95 structure (which reportedly took 30 minutes to author).



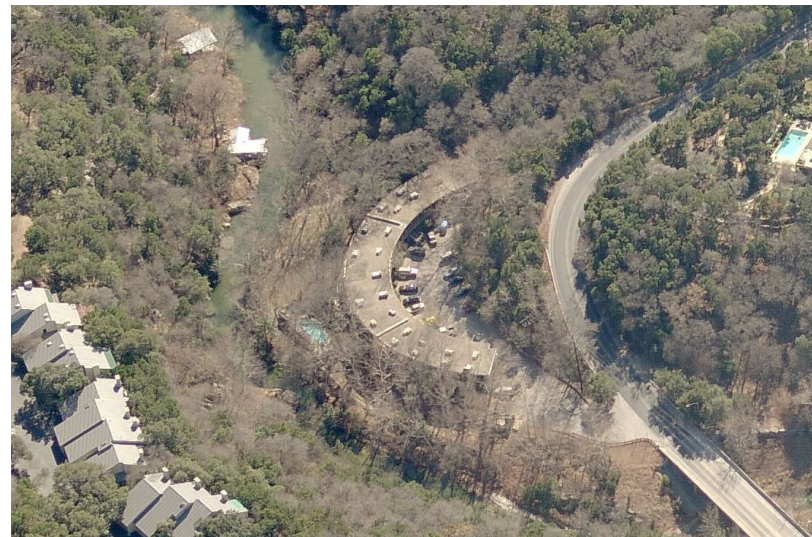
Three Part Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes, Sol Lewitt



Process 13, Casey Reas



Meri House, Pezo von Ellrichshausen



Bee Creek (West Austin) Site

The project program is elderly housing and care sited west of Austin between an active road and Bee Creek. Both interior and exterior communal spaces as well as auto parking will be required.

Representation exercises during this project will focus on how drawings can manifest the rich environment qualities of architectural projects.

*We want to belong rather than only use. Sick at killing the cow, yet having to eat, we make rules of propriety and economy governing the slaughter. We must eat the whole cow; we may not kill extra cows; we may never take pleasure in the kill. In a bare existence, economy is necessary for survival. But it is also, in any existence, an ethical act that regrets the taking; imposing itself as a respectful, if insufficient, act of atonement.*

– W.G. Clark

### **‘The Four Streams’**

Contexts:	40%
Construction:	30%
Ordering Systems:	15%
Human Factors:	15%

Site/context and construction/material are inescapable conditions of the architectural project. These two streams will be emphasized by this studio: construction more in the first project, and context more in the second project. Exercises in visual communications will be interspersed within the two major projects; you will be expected to make sublimely beautiful drawings and models.

### **Studio Course Grading Policy**

Establishing grades for projects of a creative nature is a more complex matter than grading in other academic areas. While each project contains certain quantifiable elements by which it may be evaluated, a significant portion of each grade is derived from a broader, more subjective set of issues.

Grading for studio courses is broken into three components:

1. *Grasp* (the ideas and understanding of the project at hand, combined with an appropriate process of inquiry),
2. *Process* (the consistent and rigorous development and testing of ideas)
3. *Resolution* (the demonstration of competence, completeness, and finesse through representation).

Your work will be evaluated on its rigor and evolution over the semester.

### **grade descriptions**

#### **A/A- : excellent work**

Project surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, verbal and visual ability, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. Project is complete on all levels.

#### **B+/B/B- : good work**

Project is thorough, well researched, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in effort to resolve required projects. Project is complete on all levels and demonstrates potential for excellence.

#### **C+/C/C- : required work**

Project meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication or rigor. Project is incomplete in one or more areas.

#### **D+/D/D- : poor work**

Project is incomplete. Basic skills including graphic skills, model-making skills, verbal clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required design skill and knowledge base.

#### **F : unacceptable work**

Project is unresolved. Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. Note that this grade will be assigned with excessive unexcused absences.

#### **X : excused incomplete**

Given only for legitimate reasons of illness or family emergency. Incomplete assignments are not a cause for assigning this evaluation. An incomplete is assigned after consultation with the Associate Deans' offices and with an agreement as to a new completion date. Incomplete coursework must be completed prior to the beginning of the following semester.

ALL GRADES ARE SUBJECT TO DEDUCTIONS FOR ABSENCES, LATE WORK AND LATE ARRIVALS.



## Attendance

Punctual and regular attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to work on their project *in the studio*. One unexcused absence during the term of the semester will be forgiven if it does not coincide with a scheduled pin-up or review. Absences after the first will impact the final grade for the course. The minimum penalty for more than three absences is a full letter drop in your final grade for the course. Please contact the instructor prior to class if you expect to be late or miss class.

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given the opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. You must notify each of your instructors as far in advance as possible prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.

## Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require special accommodation should obtain a letter documenting the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 or 471-4641 TTY). Present this letter to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed will be discussed at that time. Please remind the instructor of any testing accommodations required five days prior to upcoming exams

## Security, safety and the studio

The studio is an exceptional learning environment. Since it is a place for all, it necessitates the careful attention to the needs of everyone. Please see your instructor if there are problems that you are unable to resolve on your own. All spraying of fixative, spray paint or any other substance should be done in the shop. Security is a necessary component for a studio that is accessible to you and your colleagues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please be mindful not to admit any uninvited visitors.

## Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

## Policy on Academic Integrity

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, visit the SJS website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs> or call 471-2841.



Organ study - Basel Church, Peter Markli

# ARC 694

Instructor: Francisco Gomes

# Architectural Design | Vertical Studio

LESS IS

Spring 2019

schedule is subject to change - please do not make other commitments during class time

Week	Topic			Lectures	
1	23-Jan	W	Lottery		
	25-Jan	F	Assign Project One Precedents		
2	28-Jan	M			5pm: Agre lecture [Goldsmith]
	30-Jan	W			
	1-Feb	F			
3	4-Feb	M	Pin-up (internal) - Precedents	Assign Project One	GOL 2.110
	6-Feb	W			
	8-Feb	F			
4	11-Feb	M			
	13-Feb	W			5pm: Berke lecture [Jessen]
	15-Feb	F			
5	18-Feb	M	Mid-Review - Project One	GOL 2.110	
	20-Feb	W			5pm: Stih/Schnock lecture [Goldsmith]
	22-Feb	F	Post-review design responses due	GOL 2.110	
6	25-Feb	M			5pm: Busquets lecture [Goldsmith]
	27-Feb	W			
	1-Mar	F			
7	4-Mar	M			5pm: Murphy lecture [Jessen]
	6-Mar	W			
	8-Mar	F	Final Review - Project One	GOL 2.110	
8	11-Mar	M	Assign Project Two   Site Visit		5pm: Krimzi/Kyriakou lecture [Goldsmith]
	13-Mar	W	Vertical studio discussion forum		
	15-Mar	F	Pin-up (internal) - Project Two	Assign Precedents	GOL 2.110
	18-Mar	M	SPRING BREAK		
	20-Mar	W			
	22-Mar	F			
9	25-Mar	M			
	27-Mar	W	Pin-up (internal) - Precedent Manifesto/Vows	WMB 5	5pm: O'Brien lecture [Goldsmith]
	29-Mar	F			
10	1-Apr	M			
	3-Apr	W			5pm: Manfredini lecture [Goldsmith]
	5-Apr	F	-- Cisco out --		
11	8-Apr	M			
	10-Apr	W	Mid-Review - Project Two	WMB 5	
	12-Apr	F			
12	15-Apr	M	Post-review design responses due	WMB 5	
	17-Apr	W	Assign representation exercise		
	19-Apr	F	-- Cisco out --		
13	22-Apr	M			
	24-Apr	W	Vertical studio representation forum (drawings due)		
	26-Apr	F			
14	29-Apr	M			
	1-May	W			5pm: Leon lecture [Goldsmith]
	3-May	F			
15	6-May	M			
	8-May	W	Final Review - Project Two: date TBD		
	10-May	F			
	15-May	W	Exit Interviews (AM); Vert Portfolio Reviews (PM)		