

URBAN HISTORY I: CONFIGURATIONS OF THE CITY FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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Configurations of the City from Antiquity to the Enlightenment

11AM-1PM

600 Avery Hall

Professor Daniel Sherer

Focussing on the configuration of architecture in urban space, this course traces the evolution the city through a complex series of exchanges between typological, morphological and topographical factors. The first part of the course addresses the typological transformation of the agora and acropolis and the concomitant emergence of paradigmatic urban morphologies from 5th century Athens to the rise of the Roman Republic. We will then examine the formal and functional dimensions of domestic, civil, and sacred architecture in the Roman Empire from Augustus to Constantine, and show how these urban and architectural traditions, in concert with a reticulated network of provincial centers connected by a highly organized system of roads, bridges and aqueducts, and how this effected a reciprocity of topography and politics in North Africa, the Roman East and Constantinople. Turning to a consideration of the medieval period, we will chart continuities and ruptures between classical and Christian conceptions of the *forma urbis*, analyzing the typological refunctionalization of ancient monuments (taking Split as exemplary of this process), the unique morphogenetic development of Venice up to 1204, and the constant interplay of urbanization and its territorial contexts on a European scale. This will provide a prelude to a discussion of new urban strategies, architectural languages, and theoretical categories associated with utopian schemes, aristocratic and communal uses of public space, and the rise of new towns in the Italian Renaissance. Our primary test-cases at this point will be Brunelleschi's interventions in early Renaissance Florence, Alberti's proposal for an ideal city, Pienza under Pius II, Urbino under Federico da Montefeltro, Albrecht Durer's utopian proposals, the urban transformation of Rome from Nicholas V to Paul III, and the humanist *renovatio* of Venice under Doge Andrea Gritti. The second part of the course traces the emergence of new urban models and related architectural propositions from the inception of the Baroque era to the end of the *ancien regime*. Focussing initially on the interplay of street configurations, with their highly ordered axialities, and monumental nuclei from the Rome of Sixtus V to the Paris and Versailles of Louis XIV, we will turn to the role of typological innovation in the urban fabric of London from Inigo Jones to the Great Fire of 1666, the interventions of Perrault, Le Vau, Wren and Hawksmoor in Paris and London, the relation between archeological inquiry and antiquarian fantasy in Piranesi, and the subsequent Enlightenment debate on the relationship between nature, reason and the city--a discourse with a European resonance that affected the directions taken by urbanization in the New World. The course will end with a comparative reading of the effects of Enlightenment rationalism and aesthetics on the urbanism of Western Europe. This was a rupture which, in concert with the demographic explosion of 1800, propelled the city beyond traditional modes of typological, morphological and topographical articulation by contrasting the economic benefits of technical *ratio* to the aesthetic and philosophical values of naturalism and the picturesque.

OBJECTIVES:

In this course students are expected to develop:

- a working knowledge of figures, works of architecture and urban design initiatives from the different historical periods covered by the lectures and readings;
- a grasp of relations of continuity and discontinuity between architectural history, urban history, and other domains of knowledge and practice in the periods under study;
- an ability to describe, analyze and compare urban projects and strategies in formal and material, as well as theoretical and practical terms;
- a mastery of the relevant primary and secondary literature;
- an ability to communicate effectively and clearly within the discourse of urban history and architectural history, both in written and oral formats.

REQUIREMENTS:

Students are required to do all assigned readings, participate in class discussion, submit a paper topic with bibliography and a final research paper of no more than 15 pages. The final assignment is a substantial analysis of a figure or topic to be approved by the professor. The paper should be around 3000-3200 words, plus footnotes, bibliography and illustrations. Its primary objective is to explore the theme of the course--the evolution of the European city from antiquity to 1800, in constant dialogue with the history and theory of architecture--through the critical examination of specific urban artifacts, monuments, city plans, and practices and theories of urbanization and to insert these in their multiple historical contexts.