



# **CORPORATE AVANT-GARDE:**

**GET YOURSELF TOGETHER**

**Instrumentalization and Disruption in Cultures of Creative Production  
—Or How to Make the Most Intelligent Architecture Office...Ever.**

**A6453 //////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////// Thursdays 5PM-7PM //////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////// 300 BUELL**

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This research and design seminar challenges the dominant contemporary models of architectural production by analyzing the history of the architectural office in relation to other contemporary forms of collective creative production.

With the aim to redefine the systems, protocols and spaces of architecture production, this seminar seeks to reinvent the way we work and ultimately produce architecture.

Starting with the assumption that architectural practice is a form of collective production embedded within a physical, social and technological configuration, the seminar will research, analyze and propose collective forms of creative production which offer alternate modes of instrumentalization and disruption, challenging current models of design practice in a rapidly expanding and constantly shifting design culture.

Implicit in this investigation is the examination of architectural expertise, its transmission to a broad audience, and its perceived value within the mutating contexts of various global digital cultures. By analyzing other cultures of collective production in terms of organization, speed, agency, communication, resistance, mobility, politics, etc., the aim of this research seminar is to discover and propose new forms of architecture practice through the design of the workspace (i.e. "the office").

The course will be organized around a regular series of conversations with a range of practitioners from both inside and outside the architectural profession. There will be a significant primary research component to the seminar, as students will collectively produce a catalog of the last 100 years of American architecture office layouts and office work manuals that will be comparatively analyzed. Ultimately, each student will make use of this research to design a new Architecture Office, potentially radical in spatial, social and technological terms.

# **CORPORATE AVANT-GARDE**

# WEEKLY SCHEDULE

**Week 1 / Sept 5**

Research Methodology

**Week 2 / Sept 12**

Corporate and Beyond / Instrumentalizing Creativity

**Week 3 / Sept. 19**

Research Crits

**Week 4 / Sept 26**

The Tech Incubator / Programmatic MacGuffins and Mass Intelligence.

**Week 5 / Oct. 3**

Student Presentations of Office Catalog

**Week 6 / Oct. 10**

The -capital- Return of Disruption and the Art Wor(l)d / Perversions of Perceived Value

**Week 7 / Oct. 17**

Research Presentations I: Spatial Fundamentals

**Week 8 / Oct. 24**

Creative Agencies / The Nimble Network and the Superficial

**Week 9 / Oct. 31**

Research Presentations II: Social Fundamentals

**Week 10 / Nov. 7**

Formatted Contents & Contented Formats / Content Management

**Week 11 / Nov. 14**

Research Presentations III: Interface Fundamentals

**Week 12 / Nov. 21**

Corporate Consultants, Strategic Thinking / Futurologists and Shrinks

**Week 13 / Dec. 12**

Final Presentation of OfficeUS

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## **Course Structure**

This research seminar should be understood as a semester-long investigation with two equally important components:

### **1. Seminar**

Seminars include introductory lectures by the faculty, 3 lectures by guest visitors, discussions, desk crits and student presentations. Students are expected to intensively engage with all the material presented in the lectures and actively participate in the weekly class discussions and presentations. For that, three weekly readings from the bibliography list are mandatory.

Each week, before Wednesday 11.59pm, students will submit to the instructors via e-mail three definitions of “Architecture Office” in relation to the different readings. Definitions can be direct quotations or abstracted readings. A final compilation of definitions [quotes] from the readings will be compiled. All quoted texts need to be properly referenced.

### **2. Research Project (in lieu of a paper)**

Every second week the seminar will meet as a research think tank.

The research project will follow a threefold strategy during the course:

#### **(Weeks 1-5) OFFICE CATALOG or the Madness in Rigor**

Week 1. Each student will select and research fifteen workplaces: five architecture offices from the last 99 years, five contemporary architecture offices (US based and five alternative work places (historical or contemporary).

Week 3. The research will be presented in a pre-given template in order to comparatively analyze the different structures and spaces of innovation for each particular case. During this week, students will be given feedback on their research methods and findings.

Week 5. Students will present their Office Catalog and choose a “Fundamental” element of the office for further investigation from one of these three spaces of inquiry: Spatial Research, Social Research and Interface Research.

## **(Weeks 7-11) FCK FUNDAMENTALS or an ODE to the Sketch Activated Water Cooler**

Each student will be asked to investigate their particular fundamental through different architecture spaces, their context and precedents in formal, political, ideological and economic terms in order to identify possible points of inflection and creative reinterpretation.

Each student will have to write a manifesto about the future of the architecture office that articulates new social, spatial, economic and creative desires.

## **(Weeks 1-12) OFFICEUS or WWAHH (Why We Are All Here)**

Students will be given a specific site, the US Pavilion in Venice, as a hypothetical site for a hypothetical office: OfficeUS, the most radical proposition in architecture workspaces.

Each student is asked through this research seminar to develop and present a manifesto and a design strategy that articulates the spatial, social and technological aspects of a future projection of the architecture office with its subsequent labor and conceptual structures. The final presentation will consist of a digital presentation.

### **Course Requirements**

As previously indicated, students need to do satisfactory work for the two components of this course: seminars and research projects. As part of the necessary requirements for this course, every student needs to submit a paper (letter size) and a digital copy of the work produced during the semester, which will be due at noon on Wednesday December 18, 2013.

This includes:

- Office Catalog (15 offices)
- Compilations of Definitions (18 Definitions)
- Fundamental Research Project (1 Fundamental )
- Manifesto (1 Manifesto)
- OfficeUS Design Proposal (1 Proposal)

Since this course is taught as part of OfficeUS, an ongoing project, student work may be exhibited and/or published. For this reason, some further work on your part might be needed. To avoid any copyright infringement, please redraw all non-authored drawings (diagrams, plans, charts, etc.)

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that you use, keep references of all the images that you scan, and properly reference all quoted texts.

### **Course Grading**

Students taking this course will be evaluated as follows:

- Seminars: 30% of the grade
- Research projects: 70% of the grade

The evaluation of the student's performance in the seminars includes (but is not limited to):

- Insightfulness of the questions delivered.
- Ability to capture and synthesize, in a rigorous and clear manner, different definitions of "Architecture Office".
- Attendance and class participation.
- Clear understanding of the material (visual presentations and readings).
- Original contributions to the class.
- Poignancy of the arguments posed during discussions.
- Capacity to accept counter-arguments and to engage in a discussion.

The evaluation of the research projects includes (but is not limited to):

- Consistency and progress during the development of the project.
- Originality, thoroughness and quality of the ideas presented.
- Development of self-criticism.
- Dead-Pan humor.
- Final product and presentation during reviews.

### **Course Attendance**

Attendance to every class is mandatory. Students are allowed two (2) unexcused absences without penalty. Three unexcused absences constitute a failing grade. The only acceptable excuses for absence are a death in the family or personal illness, which must be validated by the University Health Service or by your personal physician. Students must notify the instructor via e-mail before the instance of any and all absences. Verbal notifications are not acceptable and will not be recorded.

Extraordinary circumstances (such as medical or physical problems that might occur) where absenteeism becomes inevitable, may require intervention by the Department Chair, Dean, or other appropriate administrator, and may require course withdrawal or an incomplete status on the final grade. Class will be automatically cancelled (and consequently rescheduled with the consent of the whole class) when Columbia

University is closed due to severe weather. Classes might exceptionally be rescheduled if the dynamics of the seminar require it.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are reminded of Honor Code Policy.

### **Special Needs**

Students with specific needs that require attention should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. If you have a disability (physical, learning, or psychological) which may make it difficult for you to carry out the course work as outlined, and/or requires accommodation such as recruiting note takers, readers, or extended time on assignments, please contact the Disability Support Services.