



Identity _a ⁱ _d _N_ Architecture

Gender Race and Contemporary Culture

Instructor: Scott Ruff

Course Description:

To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality.

– Bell Hooks

Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.

– Oscar Wilde

It can be said that the creative act is one that is personal and collective and this is most true of design in the built environment. These arenas people aspire to – connect with, and/or draw from are varied and complex. They range from; religion to popular culture, politics, personal abilities to regional resources... The built environment is a physical manifestation of the political, social, and cultural forces that produce them. The intention and meaning of an architecture is often framed as a historically timeless and culturally myopic entity. When considering the concepts of historic continuity, perspective and meaning put forth by theorists such as Hooks, Foucault, Sharpe, Randell, Barthes, Bourdieu and Senghor (to name a few) the notion of historic and cultural continuity/ singularity become disrupted and questioned. This course explores identity and its role in the field of design, with an emphasis on architecture. Although there will be a base set of readings the class will also engage in the reading and discussion of contemporary issues as they relate to the design fields.

This is an introductory course intended that will expose the student to critical observations and discourse on identity issues and their relationship with architecture as a cultural process and product. It will examine three sites of Identity; Gender, Race, and Contemporary Culture. Throughout the semester each student will be asked to discuss and explore their personal identity, what they understand to be their collective identity(s) and what is considered to be "other".

The seminar is a hybrid course as much about the readings as it is about what you make, thus, a large portion of the grade will be assessed through class participation and class discussions. Students will be asked to respond to weekly prompts – questions or small exercises parallel to the readings, these prompts will often be pulled from current events. Students will be expected to complete three projects, one for each section of the semester. The projects will consist of both written and other mediums. Each will respond to a specific section of the course, in relation to where it falls within the semester and the curriculum.