

# AHI 279: Contemporary Architecture

## COMMENTARIES



### Assignment Description:

- Reading architectural criticism will be a major feature of this course. Since Ada Louise Huxtable began her career writing about architecture for the *New York Times* in the 1960s, American newspapers have consistently hired critics to comment upon contemporary architecture and the built environment around them.
- Over the course of the semester, you will be required to write **three commentaries** or criticisms of contemporary architecture. Like the critics you will read, your own voice and opinions should be clearly articulated but you will be limited in word count just as any newspaper columnist is restricted in how many column inches they have to use.
  - Careful editing will be required for you to be able to express your ideas in the limited number of words you have for your commentary. Word count will be checked.
- Topics for each commentary are listed in the course schedule. The first commentary is meant for you to explore the relationship between history and criticism, while the topics for the following two commentaries should give you a starting point for a discussion of your choosing.

### Assignment Details:

- For issues of formatting, citations, style, please consult the “**Notes on Written Assignments**” handout.
- Your commentary should model the articles that we read in class (in particular those by Huxtable, Kamin, and Muschamp).
- Depending on your grade, you may be asked to submit a re-write of your commentary. Re-writes are intended to help you improve your writing (and your grade). Re-write grades will be averaged with the original grade you received on the assignment.
- **Commentary #1**
  - This commentary assignment is meant for you to explore the relationship between history and criticism by writing two parallel essays. In your “history” commentary, you should approach your writing by detailing the history of the renovation of New London Hall and can address the building’s history over time. For your “criticism” you should explore the positives and negatives of the project and its design. In your criticism, you can use the first person and articulate your own opinion.
  - History commentary should be between **375 and 400 words**.
  - Criticism commentary should be between **375 and 400 words**.

- Any **outside research** should be cited according to the “Notes on Written Assignments” handout.
  - **Due Date:** Commentary #1 is due at the beginning of class on **Monday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>**. You should bring a **paper copy** with you to class **and** also submit your commentary **by email** (as an attached word document) to the instructor by email ([emorash@conncoll.edu](mailto:emorash@conncoll.edu)).
- **Commentaries #2 and #3**
    - The topics listed in the syllabus should give you a broad starting point for your commentary. You are free to choose whatever topic(s), buildings, projects, architect(s) interest you most. I am available during office hours to discuss your ideas for your commentaries.
    - You must discuss **at least two buildings/projects** in your criticism.
    - Any **outside research** should be cited according to the “Notes on Written Assignments” handout.
    - Each commentary should be a **maximum of 650 words (minimum 625 words)**.
    - **Due Dates:** You should submit your commentary by **email** (as an attached word document) to the instructor by midnight on **Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> and Friday, March 7<sup>st</sup>** ([emorash@conncoll.edu](mailto:emorash@conncoll.edu))
- **Grading:** Each paper is worth 5% (15% total of your final grade in the course). You will be provided with ample comments on your commentary. At the end of this document you will find a grading rubric that breaks down the various components you will be graded on for this assignment. You will receive a completed rubric with comments attached to your commentary.
  - **Note:** Late assignments will be deducted .5 points for each day of lateness.

# RESOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

## BOOKS

- Connecticut College Holdings
- CTW Holdings
- Interlibrary Loan

## JOURNALS (At Conn Coll Library)

- Architectural Design (A.D.) (1992-2010)
- Architectural Digest (1976-1999)
- Architectural Record (1891 through Present)
- Architectural Review (1970 through Present)
- Domus (1957 through Present)
- Dwell (2000 through Present)
- Oppositions (1973-1982)
- Perspecta (1952-2013)
- Progressive Architecture (1945-1995)

## EVERY INDEX TO ARCHITECTURAL PERIODICALS

- This is the best resource for research on architectural history. You will find references to many journals that are not held at Connecticut College and that may be crucial to your research. Most articles can be requested through Interlibrary Loan or viewed at a local library (Yale, RISD).

## NEWSPAPERS

- Newspapers are very useful resources, in particular *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. Be sure to look at both the “Arts” section and the “Real Estate” sections.

## ARCHITIZER.COM

## ARCHDAILY.COM

## ARCHINFORM.NET

## ARCHRECORD.CONSTRUCTION.COM

## DESIGNBOOM.COM

## WEBSITES OF ARCHITECTURE FIRMS

- Some firms have very extensive websites of their projects. You should be aware that these are highly curated and present a given project in the way that the firm wants to showcase their work.

<b>COMMENTARY GRADING RUBRIC</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>	<b>Points Earned</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Length</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets the required word count (min and max)</li> </ul>	1		
<b>Content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commentary is well-organized (has a clear beginning and end)</li> <li>Topic chosen is interesting, contentious, and well-argued.</li> <li>Commentary addresses at least 2 buildings/projects.</li> </ul>	2		
<b>Grammar and Spelling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commentary is thoroughly edited and free of grammatical and spelling errors.</li> </ul>	1		
<b>Citations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correct use of footnotes as needed in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style.</li> </ul>	1		
<b>Total Points:</b>	5		
<b>Additional Comments:</b>			