

# Special Topics in History and Theory: Learning From Pruitt-Igoe

A46 ARCH 430N 01 | Fall 2019



*Pruitt-Igoe rising in 1954. Photograph: State Historical Society of Missouri.*

**Graduate School of Architecture, Urban Design, and Landscape Architecture  
Washington University in St. Louis**

**Location: Weil Hall 330**

**Time: Mondays, 8:30 – 11:30 AM**

**Instructor: Michael Allen**

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 4:00 – 5:00PM

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## Preface

This seminar examines the design and adaptation of ordinary inhabitation, taking as its starting point the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis. Did this housing project succeed or fail as architecture? The question maybe has been asked for the wrong reasons. We will examine whether Pruitt-Igoe fulfilled the United States' government's goal of creating modern, effective mass housing for working-class Americans. The path to an answer will examine the tangle of architectural modernism (and its critics), vernacular architecture, US housing policies and ideological shifts within architecture itself. The seminar will investigate the career of architect Minoru Yamasaki, precedent tenement housing forms and other social mass housing projects in the United States and Europe. Ultimately, students will complete research on whether or not it is possible to (re)claim Pruitt-Igoe as a successful architectural endeavor by understanding what housing forms it was intended to replace and what has come after.

## Readings

Students should obtain copies of these books:

- Daniel M. Abramson, *Obsolescence: An Architectural History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016)
- Bob Hansman. *Pruitt-Igoe* (Mount Pleasant, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2017)
- Florian Urban, *Tower and Slab: Histories of Global Mass Housing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012)

All other required and suggested readings are accessible on Canvas.

## Aims

The aim of this course is to investigate one of architecture's most notorious case studies through a fresh evaluation. The judgment against Pruitt-Igoe now seems historicized itself, especially since the destruction of the housing towers did not instantiate either enduring architectural solutions to mass housing or a renewed commitment by governments around the world to public housing for their people. This seminar aims to explore Pruitt-Igoe not as legend, but as *architecture* – shelter designed with intention and for purpose. In the attempt, we will engage the longer histories of remaking both housing forms and entire cities to serve egalitarian and modernizing ideals.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify the key design and housing movements advocating mass housing in the twentieth century;
- Articulate the design traits of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project that intersect with and diverge from twentieth century design movements;
- Name the differences in building form and urban design principles between vernacular working-class housing, modern mass housing and post-modern mass housing in the United States;
- Articulate the design principles behind modern mass housing slab towers and critically analyze the outcome of these intentions at Pruitt-Igoe and other case studies from the seminar;
- Identify the ways in which the rise and fall of Pruitt-Igoe's towers shaped subsequent architectural history in the US and worldwide.

# Schedule

## Monday, August 26: Introductions

Introductions

Film in class: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (2011; Chad Friedriechs, director)

## Monday, September 2 – NO CLASS, LABOR DAY

## Monday, September 9: Tenements and Flats: Housing Masses Before Mass Housing

Reading:

Civic League of St. Louis, *Housing Conditions in St. Louis* (1908)

Jacob Riis, excerpt from *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)

Gwendolyn Wright, "Housing Factory Workers" and "Americanization & Ethnicity in Urban Tenements,"  
*Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in the US* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983)

## Monday, September 16: Modernizing Mass Housing

Field Visit:

Neighborhood Gardens (1935; Hoener, Baum & Froese, architects)

Carr Square Village (1942; Kilpstein & Rathman and Murphy & Wischmeyer, architects)

Clinton Peabody Terrace (Mauran, Russell, Crowell & Mullgardt with Angelo Corrubia, architects)

Guest: Bob Hansman, Associate Professor of Architecture, Sam Fox School

Reading:

Catherine Bauer, with introduction by Barbara Penner, "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing," *Places Journal* (October 2018)

<https://placesjournal.org/article/catherine-bauer-and-the-need-for-public-housing/>

Gail Radford, "The Hosiery Workers' Model Development," *Modern Housing in America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

Joseph Heathcott, "In the Nature of a Clinic: The Design of Early Public Housing in St. Louis," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70.1 (March 2011)

Carol Aronovici, editor, essays from *America Can't Have Housing* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1934)

## Monday, September 23: NO CLASS

*Midterm Paper Topic Proposal Due*

## Monday, September 30: NO CLASS

## **Monday, October 7: Modernism, City Planning and Slum Clearance**

### Reading:

Eric Mumford, "Toward Urban Design, 1947-54," *Defining Urban Design: CIAM Architects and the Foundation of a Discipline, 1937-69* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009)

Lawrence J. Vale, "Urban Renewal and the Rise of Cabrini-Green," *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013)

Francesca Russello Ammon, "Armies of Bulldozers Smashing Down Acres of Slums," *Bulldozer: Demolition and Clearance of the Postwar Landscape* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016)

### Recommended Reading:

City Plan Commission, *A Comprehensive Plan for St. Louis* (1947)

## **Friday, October 11**

*Midterm Paper Due by 5:00PM*

## **Monday, October 14: NO CLASS, Fall Break**

## **Monday, October 21: Tower and Slab**

### Field Visit:

Plaza Square Apartments (1961; Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, Harris Armstrong and Alexander Girard, architects)

Guest: Bob Hansman, Associate Professor of Architecture, Sam Fox School

### Reading:

Florian Urban, *Tower and Slab: Histories of Global Mass Housing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012)

### Recommended Reading:

"Beginnings, 1968-1980," *Housing After the Neoliberal Turn: International Case Studies* (Berlin: Spector Books, 2015)

## **Monday, October 28: Pruitt-Igoe: Form and Function**

Field Visit: Pruitt-Igoe Blueprints

### Reading:

Katherine Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44.3 (May, 1991)

Alexander Von Hoffman, "Why They Built Pruitt-Igoe," *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000)

Dale Alan Gyure, "Yamasaki's Regret," *CityLab* (March 27, 2018)

<https://www.citylab.com/design/2018/03/yamasakis-regret/556175/>

### **Monday, November 4: Inhabiting Pruitt-Igoe**

Film in class: *More Than One Thing* (1969; Steve Carver, director)

Reading:

Bob Hansman, *Pruitt-Igoe* (Mount Pleasant, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2017).

### **Monday, November 11: Evaluating Pruitt-Igoe**

Reading:

Lee Rainwater, "Pruitt-Igoe Community," "Madison Family" and "Daily Life in Pruitt-Igoe," *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Families in a Federal Slum* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970)

Nicholas Dagen Bloom, "High-Rise Public Housing is Unmanageable," *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality and Social Policy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015)

### **Monday, November 18: Repairing, Repossessing and Repudiating Pruitt-Igoe**

Field Visit:

Pruitt-Igoe Site and the Murphy Park HOPE VI Project

Reading:

George McCue, "\$57,000,000 Later," *Architectural Forum* (May 1973)

Oscar Newman, "Territoriality," *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* (New York: Macmillan, 1972)

Yonah Freemark, "Public Housing Ended in Failure in the 1970s," *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality and Social Policy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015)

Edward Goetz, "Dismantling Public Housing," *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013)

### **Monday, November 25: The Question of Obsolescence**

Reading:

Daniel M. Abramson, *Obsolescence: An Architectural History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

Recommended Reading:

Kenneth Frampton, "The Evolution of Housing Concepts, 1870-1970," Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, 1973.

### **Monday, December 2: The Fate of Global Mass Housing**

Guest Lecture: Sal Martinez, former chairman, St. Louis Housing Authority

Guest Lecture: Eric Mumford, Rebecca and John Voyles Professor of Architecture, Sam Fox School

Reading:

Jelena Prokopljjevic, "Do Not Throw Concrete Blocks: Social and Public Housing in New Belgrade and their Representations in Popular Culture," *Fusion Journal* 6 (2015)

<http://www.fusion-journal.com/issue/006-fusion-the-rise-and-fall-of-social-housing-future-directions/do-not-throw-concrete-blocks-social-and-public-housing-in-new-belgrade-and-their-representations-in-popular-culture/>

Robert Fishman, "Reconsidering Public Housing," *Places Journal* 16.2 (2004)

Giulia Ricci, "Robin Hood Gardens is a Lesson for Future Cities," *Domus* (December 18, 2018)

<https://www.domusweb.it/en/speciali/domus-paper/2018/robin-hood-gardens-is-a-lesson-for-future-cities.html>

Recommended Reading:

Jelica Jovanović, "Mass Heritage of New Belgrade: Housing Laboratory and So Much More," *Periodica Polytechnica Architecture* 48.2 (2017)

Audrey Petty, "Lloyd 'Peter' Haywood," *High-Rise Stories* (Chicago: Voice of Witness, 2013)

**Friday, December 13**

*Final Paper Due by 5:00PM*

## **Assignments**

### **Response Papers**

Students will submit short essays (two or three long paragraphs, no longer than 500 words altogether) summarizing the key themes of readings each week, demonstrating familiarity with each source and presenting points of interest and uncertainty. These will be submitted via email to the instructor. The essays are graded pass-fail and count toward the Attendance and Participation grading quotient.

For each session after the first, one or two students will start the session discussion by reading their response paper at the start of class. During the first session, students will sign up to claim a week.

### **Midterm Paper**

Students will develop a midterm research paper on a topic of their choice. The midterm paper will be at least 10 pages in length. The paper shall have a title, citations in the Chicago or MLA styles and a bibliography.

### **Final Project**

The final project will be an extended research project on a case study mass housing project, tenement district or aspect of Pruitt-Igoe's history determined in consultation with the instructor. The final project should be 15 pages with illustrations, and will be presented at the end of the seminar.

## Evaluation and Grading

The required work in the seminar will include attendance and participation, response papers, a midterm paper and a final project. The final grade will be based on this formula:

Response Papers	30%
Midterm Paper	20%
Final Project	30%
Attendance and Participation in Discussion	20%

Papers and work will be graded numerically out of 100 points. Final grades will be letter grades based on the following grading scale:

	Conceptual Considerations	Methodology	Craftsmanship	Integrative skills
<b>A</b>	New concepts are explored in original ways. Conceptual basis of project demonstrates clear grasp of complex issues (histories, social contexts, ecological issues). Project is fully developed and expresses a high level of investigative rigor.	Analysis demonstrates rigor and highly developed understanding of scope. Sophisticated and attentive design decision-making apparent throughout process. Logical, confident and iterative procedure generates design outputs that can be described and evaluated in terms of the process.	Clear connection between ideas and their investigation through careful manipulation of design representation and materials. Excellent craftsmanship displays thought and care. Clear demonstration of the importance of the artifact in design production. Attentiveness to the aesthetic of making.	New and complex issues are successfully integrated. Seamless integration of depiction and depicted. Comprehensive marshaling and conjoining of the physical, the conceptual and the representational.
<b>B</b>	Complex issues are adequately integrated. Project is well-developed and design outcomes show understanding of issues.	Process demonstrates adequate grasp of problems and issues. Clear use of iterative method. Source data employed throughout. Project process remains within the confines of the known.	Good quality work, with moderate appeal. Engagement with materiality of representation needs further work. Outputs would improve with greater attentiveness to quality of craft.	Design production shows real understanding of issues, problems, resources and process, but does not quite bring them all together in a unified articulation of design intent.
<b>C</b>	Project exhibits an inherent lack of conceptual engagement. The necessary components are gathered but are related and explored only superficially.	Clear and effective process never fully developed. Tentative and ill-defined methodology. Tendency to change from approach to approach without fully investigating any one method, suggesting uncertainty with respect to iterative procedures.	Crafted dimension of production distracts from design intent. Sloppy, ill-managed articulation of the artifact as an object. Ideas remain untransformed by the act of making.	Project remains on the level of a collection of disparate ideas and forms, weakly integrated or developed, and only marginally related to the singularity of the site, situation or program.
<b>D</b>	Project is inadequately developed in all areas. Heavy reliance on found materials. Project shows little or no regulation by means of conceptual thinking.	Inadequate development of project. Muddled thinking about process. Little or no clear methodological procedure utilized. No connection between design output and design process.	Poor quality or negligible craftsmanship. No sense of the development of an aesthetic. Outputs are uninspiring, timid and uncared for.	Little or no sense of the project as an interactive condition. Outcome does not relate to program, site or contexts. Failure of understanding with respect to the nature of design.

## Course Policies and Information for Students

This seminar operates on a pedagogical model of participatory inquiry, where all participants shape the research questions and experiential priorities of the course. The seminar requires a high degree of participation through verbal discussion while also demanding a robust schedule of readings to support exploration of themes. While the instructor will lecture and guide, the seminar is a venue for each student to present questions, findings and connections located in readings and field trips. For readings, students should make every attempt to complete readings before meeting, but if not possible, at least discern authors' key points and

themes. The seminar encourages research as practice; that is, research not for memorization but for critical understanding of subjects to advance students' own educational goals. Design students should have no fear.

**Seminar:** *Oxford English Dictionary* definition 1.1: "A class at university in which a topic is discussed by a teacher and a small group of students." Origin: Late 19th century: from German Seminar, from Latin *seminarium* (see seminary).

**Inclusive Learning Environment:** The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At Washington University in St. Louis, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere, in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, although instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

A range of resources is available to those who perceive a learning environment as lacking inclusivity, as defined in the preceding paragraph. If possible, we encourage students to speak directly with their instructor about any suggestions or concerns they have regarding a particular instructional space or situation. Alternatively, students may bring concerns to another trusted advisor or administrator (such as an academic advisor, mentor, department chair, or dean). All classroom participants—including faculty, staff, and students—who observe a bias incident affecting a student may also file a report (whether personally or anonymously) utilizing the online Bias Report and Support System.

## **1. ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance is mandatory, and will be documented for all course meetings. Sam Fox School students are expected to arrive ready to participate and be fully engaged in the day's coursework during the entire scheduled class period. Participation in major critiques and reviews by all students is essential to the development of all of students. Failure to do so will have an impact on your final grade.

Following university policy, class will begin promptly with the start time listed. Students are allowed two unexcused absences. After two unexcused absences, students will receive one full letter grade penalty for each subsequent absence. Three late arrivals and/or early departures will equal one absence. If a student misses more than 20 minutes of a class, they are considered absent. Missing a review or critique equals two absences. If a student must miss a critique, please inform the professor beforehand. Any student who misses class is responsible for contacting a fellow student to find out what they missed, for making up all work, and for being prepared for the next class. In the case of severe medical or family emergencies, contact the Associate Dean of Students Georgia Binnington as soon as possible at [gbinning@wustl.edu](mailto:gbinning@wustl.edu) or 314.935.6532.

## **2. PENALTIES FOR LATE WORK and REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS**

Late work will lose a half-letter grade for each week that it is late, after being graded (so a B paper turned in one week late is a B- paper). Requests for extensions must be made before the start of the class session before the assignment is due. No explanations submitted along with late work will suspend these policies. Always consult the instructor if in doubt.

## **3. POLICIES ON MISSED EXAMS, MAKE-UP EXAMS OR QUIZZES**

There are no exams in this seminar.

## **4. REGRADING POLICY**

There is no regrading in this seminar.

## **5. REQUESTS FOR INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK ON DRAFTS AND REQUESTS TO REVISE**

Students should make every effort to consult with the instructor before submitting work. The instructor is available during office hours, by appointment and by email to review ideas for the papers.

## **6. GRADE DISPUTE POLICY**

The Sam Fox School aims to provide each student with a fair assessment of their academic work and studio. Students have the right to dispute their overall course grade (not individual assignments) if they believe that grade does not accurately reflect the quality of their work. A grade dispute must be submitted to the faculty member who assigned the grade within 30 days of receipt of the grade. The School stresses that every effort to resolve this dispute be made by the faculty and student involved. A student's eligibility for advancement in sequential coursework requires timely resolution of the grade dispute. For more information visit [https://samfoxschool.wustl.edu/files/Greivance%20Policy\\_Update%202019.pdf](https://samfoxschool.wustl.edu/files/Greivance%20Policy_Update%202019.pdf).

## **7. TECHNOLOGY POLICIES**

Computers or other electronic devices, including "smart pens" (devices with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder that records the classroom lecture/discussion and links that recording to the notes taken by the student), may be used by students at the discretion of the faculty member to support the learning activities in the classroom. These activities include taking notes and accessing course readings under discussion. If a student wishes to use a smart-pen or other electronic device to audio record lectures or class discussions, they must notify the instructor in advance of doing so. Permission to use recording devices is at the discretion of the instructor, unless this use is an accommodation approved by Disability Resources.

Nonacademic use of laptops and other devices and use of laptops or other devices for other coursework is distracting and seriously disrupts the learning process for other people in the classroom. Neither computers nor other electronic devices are to be used in the classroom during class for nonacademic reasons or for work on other coursework. Nonacademic use includes emailing, texting, social networking, playing games, instant messaging, and use of the Internet. Work on other coursework may include, but is not limited to, use of the Internet, writing papers, using statistical software, analyzing data, and working on quizzes or exams. The nonacademic use of cell phones during class time is prohibited, and they should be set on silent before class begins. In the case of an emergency, please step out of the room to take the call. The instructor has the right to hold students accountable for meeting these expectations, and failure to do so may result in a loss of participation or attendance points, a loss of the privilege of device use in the classroom, or being asked to leave the classroom. Visit <https://sites.wustl.edu/insidesfs/it/> for more information.

## **8. LICENSE FOR NON-EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO REPRODUCE AND DISTRIBUTE**

Michael Allen has non-exclusive right to reproduce and distribute work produced in this class as part of a publication or body of work, which may include products from this course or other works. Students retain ownership of all rights held under copyright. This permission is revocable for 3 months following the conclusion of this course via notification in writing to Michael Allen.

## **9. ETHICS/VIOLATIONS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Ethical behavior is an essential component of learning and scholarship. Students are expected to understand, and adhere to, the University's academic integrity policy: [wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html](http://wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html). Students who violate this policy will be referred to the Academic Integrity Policy Committee. Penalties for violating the policy will be determined by the Academic Integrity Policy committee, and can include failure of the assignment, failure of the course, suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any doubts about what constitutes a violation of the Academic Integrity policy, or any other issue related to academic integrity, please ask the instructor.

- Always cite sources when ideas are presented and/or language that was developed by another individual, including material from class lectures and discussions.
- Violation of this policy includes collaborating on assignments where collaboration is not allowed and/or utilizing notes, texts, etc. on any assignment where use of such materials is not allowed.
- Computers and smart phones may aid course sessions by allowing students to pull up readings, websites, images or other materials to share. These devices should not be used for other purposes during class time. Absolutely no use of these devices for personal communications, web browsing or games is allowed. If a student uses a device in such a manner, that student's participation grade will be reduced by three points for each infraction. If a student has an urgent need to communicate, the student should leave the seminar room to call, email or text. There will be no penalty.

## **10. RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

The Sam Fox School recognizes the individual student's choice in observing religious holidays that occur during periods when classes are scheduled. Students are encouraged to arrange with their instructors to make up work missed as a result of religious observance, and instructors are asked to make every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests.