

Berlin: The Capital of Modern Architecture
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Syllabus

Following the Renaissance, the center of gravity of Western architectural discourse shifted permanently from the Mediterranean Sea to Northern Europe. Berlin took a leading role in that context battling against Paris, London, and Vienna to gain supremacy over the continent on cultural and artistic matters. Its ascent on the European scene had in the neoclassical architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel its foremost representative, the first in a series of creatives who shaped architectural and urban culture in Western civilization. This course explores the historical footprint of this city from its birth to the present.

Lesson 1. BERLIN: ITS URBAN HISTORY FROM BIRTH

The unification of Germany in 1871 points to the slow process of developing a national identity for the German people. Berlin was initially part of a network of capitals of smaller states sharing roots in the Roman classical heritage as well as in the revolt against the corruption of the Church of Rome and the embrace of Lutheranism. In being part of what in earlier times was called Prussia, Berlin became the crossroad between Eastern and Western influences. This talk covers the city from its origins and the subsequent development up until the beginning of the 18th century.

Lesson 2. NEOCLASSICISM IN BERLIN

German art historian and archeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann celebrated the art of Ancient Greece in the 18th century. By the end of the Ottoman empire in 1821, archeological campaigns in Greece brought to the discoveries of remains of enormous influence on the visual culture of Europe. The center of that new aesthetic was Berlin with Karl Friedrich Schinkel as its most influential representative. His Altes Museum became the model for innumerable institutions around Germany and the whole Germanic world, as well as a point of reference for the famous architect Mies Van der Rohe. This talk will discuss in depth the architecture and urban development of this extraordinary period in the life of the city.

Lesson 3. MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND BERLIN

Few cities have contributed to Modern architecture as Berlin has done. From the early landmarks of expressionist architect Erich Mendelsohn to the industrial works of Peter Behrens, to the unbuilt glass towers of the 1920s of Mies Van der Rohe, to the resetting of the Bauhaus to Berlin in the early 1930s, the German capital was the theater of unparalleled collective achievements in just a matter of a few decades whose ramifications we are feeling today. While its modernist ethos was crushed during the

Nazi's era, with the subsequent replacement of Albert Speer as the architect of a totalitarian regime supportive of a revised notion of Neoclassicism, Berlin bounced back with the towering figure of Hans Scharoun. This talk will examine the unique dynamic that took place in design as a metaphor for the shaping of a national identity.

Lesson 4. BERLIN TODAY: RECENT TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE

Today, Berlin collects the works of architects from all over the world. From Frank Gehry to Peter Eisenman, to David Chipperfield, to Daniel Libeskind and many more, the international architectural community has chosen Berlin as a primary terrain to demonstrate design theories and leanings at times in conflict with each other, albeit coexisting on the same land. This class will start with discussing the IBA initiative orchestrated by Josef Paul Kleihues who invited architects from all corners of the globe to help rebuild Berlin still carrying the scars of World War II destruction to the reconstruction of Potsdamer Platz by Renzo Piano and more recent large scale architectural interventions,