

OLLI @Berkeley
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Paris: City of the Arts for the Arts
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Syllabus

Surveys, atlases, textbooks, all assign a preeminent role to Paris as a hub of ideas, from the political to the technological to the artistic. Its relation to the rest of the nation is unique when seen in comparison to the other European nations. In being a center of gravity, it has attracted genius within its national boundaries as well as from abroad. Its thick artistic and architectural history keeps getting thicker. This course feels the heartbeat of a mythical European capital whose fascination remains unabated under any political climate.

Lesson 1. A SYNTHETIC OVERVIEW OF PARIS ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

The density of artistic content Paris holds on to its ground has few parallels. Its deep connection with Roman classicism in conjunction with being the cradle of Gothic culture gives the city a unique status in the consideration of historians and the general public. In this first lecture, the progressive ascent of Paris from a province of the Roman empire to a center of power is tracked through its architectural and urban transformations. The understanding of its distinct trajectory within European capitals will provide the foundations of the subsequent lectures.

Lesson 2. CITY DESIGN AND CULTURE IN PARIS: GUEST SPEAKER: LEONARD PITT

The form of a city speaks to the culture of its inhabitants. Throughout the centuries, Paris has morphed its urban tissue from a Roman outpost all the way to the massive urban renewal program Georges-Eugène Haussmann implemented in the 19th century for Napoleon III, and beyond. Our guest speaker, Berkeley artist-Paris historian Leonard Pitt, is an expert on the matter possessing scholarship and insights into the past and the present state of Paris. He will review its history through early 20th century postcards, discuss Paris origins of ballet; and review chocolate tasting throughout the city. In his quick email exchange, he references his dismay on current decisions being made in the city design.

Lesson 3. PARIS THROUGH LITERATURE: GUEST SPEAKER: STEPHANIE WELLS

Few cities have attracted more writers than Paris for what it offered in terms of intellectual and artistic stimulation on a daily basis. Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Ivan Turgenev, Oscar Wilde, Milan Kundera, Italo Calvino...the list is truly endless. Paris Exiles was a journal in the mid-80's, featuring English speaking writers and reflecting the days of James Baldwin and Josephine Baker and

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others. This class will offer a discussion on how Paris has inspired and been a refuge for American writers and artists, as well as an inspiration to Alice Waters and many others.

Lesson 4. THE PARIS OF LE CORBUSIER.

The Swiss French architect elected Paris as the intellectual and artistic arena for his revolutionary contribution to the Arts. It is in this city, that Le Corbusier network in the artistic and curatorial circles to assert himself as the dominant figure of the Modern Movement in Europe. From his beginnings as a writer for the magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau*, a magazine he founded together with, poet Paul Dermée, and painter Amédée Ozenfant in 1920, up until his built achievements around Europe, the Americas and Asia, Le Corbusier designed, painted, wrote, and thought in Paris. This lecture delves in his relationship with the city, through his architectural and urban visions.

Lesson 5. THE PARIS OF RENZO PIANO.

The Pompidou Center is a landmark design the then ad hoc studio Piano+Rogers designed in the early 1970s as an entry for a worldwide open competition. While it jumpstarted the careers of both architects, it was especially consequential in the life of Italian born architect Renzo Piano, who made of Paris is permanent home. Since then, his firm Renzo Piano Building Workshop (RPBW) has realized dozens of large-scale projects in the city that cemented his legacy like few other architects have done. This class will provide an overview of 50 years of architectural endeavors this contemporary master has produced for the French capital.

Lesson 6. THE PARIS OF JEAN NOUVEL.

In contemporary France, the towering figure of Jean Nouvel has been a trendsetter in the development of a design language. His approach to building technology, environmental systems, and siting with a distinct French flavor made him a fixture of books on contemporary architecture even since he completed the Institut du Monde Arabe in 1987. His unique blend of spatial ingenuity and reinterpretation of the national heritage continues to captivate the global audience. In this talk, his mentors, Claude Parent and Jean Prouvé, will be discussed to analyze the roots of Nouvel's concepts informing his built milestones in Paris.

Lesson 7. UNBUILT PARIS: GUEST SPEAKER: SAM LUBELL AND GREG GOLDIN.

Architecture is measured both through its built and un-built works. Metropolitan cities are ideal settings for visionary projects, many of which remain on paper, remaining consequential, nonetheless. The more prominent the city is, the more daring these projects are. Our guest speaker Parisian-born and New York-based Sam Lubell, a contributing writer for the New York Times and editor-in-chief of the architectural magazine *Metropolis*, has been working on a book compiling a number of ground-breaking designs for Paris

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that never saw the light of the day. He will share his discoveries and anecdotes behind many of this unique commissions.

Lesson 8. THE URBAN, ARCHITECTURAL, AND DESIGN CULTURE OF PARIS TODAY.

Paris is an ongoing nexus of diverse thinking trends in the arts and sciences. Design, in its broader sense, gives the temperature of any city, this being truer in Paris than in many other parts of the world. On May 22, 2021, the historic Bourse de Commerce 18th century building reopened after an extensive restoration and redesign by Japanese master Tadao Ando. As grand as it is, this is hardly a rarity for the French capital constantly reassessing the fundamentals of its urban fabric. In this class, we will examine where the French capital is heading on matters of environmental policy, adaptive reuse, and new construction.