

**ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY - CFU 6 – 2023/2024 Fall Term**

**Alper Metin**, Ph.D. Arch.  
([alper.metin@uniroma1.it](mailto:alper.metin@uniroma1.it))

**OVERVIEW**

This course aims to provide the students with the rudiments of Architectural History mainly in Europe and the Mediterranean area, with a special focus on tectonic, structural, and constructive aspects. Starting from the Greco-Roman Antiquity, the scope of the course is limited to the emergence of new building materials throughout the Industrial Revolution. Lectures on chronological periods, specific buildings, architects, and areas will alternate with those on specific architectural elements and construction techniques.

**ORGANIZATION**

The course consists of 60 lessons. Each lesson lasts 1 hour, made of 45 minutes of lecture and 15 minutes of break. The lectures will take place on Thursdays, in groups of 5 lessons between 09.30 and 15.00 (12 days in total). At the beginning of the first lesson of each day, few minutes will be dedicated to organizational matters such as communications. The lesson following the lunch break will be mainly used for debate sessions and in-class exercises, active participation of the students is strongly encouraged. Sketching supplies such as paper and drawing pencils are essential. Moreover, students will be asked for assignments to be done in small groups, which will also be explained and evaluated at the aforementioned final lessons. Once the outcome of an assignment is analyzed and discussed in the classroom, it is to be considered concluded moving forward to the next one. No retrospective critics & debate sessions will be organized on previous assignments. The students can revise and modify the assignments for the final book (see below), both individually or in group.

The course material will be shared via Google Classroom and therefore students are expected to possess a Gmail account, preferably bearing at least their surname. For each assignment the students will have 6 days, submitting it via mail the day before the following lesson, till 21:00. Assignments will be sent to the following address: **arch.history.course@gmail.com**

Attendance is not mandatory but advisable. The comprehension of an infinitely complex human activity like architecture might not be an easy skill to build; thus, the lectures will certainly be helpful to guide the student and ease at the same time the study of the textbooks and the preparation of the assignments. No roll calls will be taken, and the students are not asked to send information on their absence at any moment.

**DESIRED OUTCOMES**

At the end of the course, the student will be expected to:

- Build the basic knowledge of architectural “problems” of the past: design principles, construction techniques, typological patterns, esthetic and decorative characteristics of specific periods and areas
- Develop critical tools for the comprehension and appreciation of the past, such as the capacity of comparing and chronologizing buildings

- Recognize the period of an architectural work and distinguish the layers belonging to different chronological phases of a given building
- Analyze buildings and the built environment as products of both complex cultural processes and personal choices of their architects and patrons
- Become familiar with prominent architects, patrons and theoretical works of Early Modern Europe, especially Italy, within their sociocultural and political framework
- Interiorize the *raison d'être* of specific architectural and structural elements, such as arches, vaults, and domes, as well as the logic behind the column orders in both their Classical and Modern use
- Adopt an appropriate vocabulary for reading, writing, and speaking of the architecture of the past

### THE FINAL EXAM AND THE EVALUATION

Each student will have an oral exam, receiving questions on the content of the course, to be understood as both lectures, textbooks, and assignments. Architectural History is not a mechanical exercise of memory but rather capacity of comprehension and interpretation of the past. Hence, for easing the critical capacities of the student, images and drawings of the buildings analyzed throughout the lectures will be allowed at the exam. The student is free to collect and organize these images in his/her own way; however, writings of any kind (including image captions) and schematic drawings will not be allowed. Therefore, only floorplans, sections, elevations, and photos (interior, exterior, details) shall be brought. Sketching supplies such as paper and pencils are encouraged.

Each student will also be asked to bring the outcome of the assignments printed and attached as a single final book (no printed submission is required during the course). Indications on the evaluation of the assignments will be provided during the lessons. The students who do not attend regularly the classes are equally requested to submit the assignments on time and present the final book at the exam.

As per the exam calendar provided by the university, the first two rounds of exams will take place in the following dates: I round: **11/01/2024**, II round: **22/02/2024**. Dates for the III, IV, and V rounds to be announced on the website.

### TEXTBOOKS

The main textbook of the course is:

**D. WATKIN, *A history of Western architecture* (2005 or later editions), chapters 2-8.**

A useful source with rich images and concise information on single buildings, which can be optionally consulted, is:

F. PRINA and E. DEMARTINI, *One Thousand Years of World Architecture: An Illustrated Guide* (Electa, 2005).

A close relation with dictionaries of architecture is essential. Please refer to:

J. FLEMING, H. HONOUR, and N. PEVSNER. *The Penguin dictionary of Architecture & Landscape Architecture*. Penguin Books (1998 or later editions).

## TOPICS AND CALENDAR

(If necessary for educational and/or organizational purposes,  
the calendar might get modified accordingly).

Week	Date	Lesson n°	Topic
1	28/09/2023	1, 2	Presentation of the course
		3, 4	What is Architectural History for?
		5	Overview on periods and geographies
2	05/10/2023	6, 7	Greco-Roman arch. 1
		8, 9	Architectural orders: form, function, meaning
		10	Greco-Roman arch. 2
3	12/10/2023	11, 12	Greco-Roman arch. 3
		13, 14	City and territory in Greek and Roman civilizations
		15	Debate, Assignment 1 explained (Antiquity)
4	19/10/2023	16, 17	Late Antique and Early Christian arch. Continuity and transition.
		18, 19	Early building materials and techniques. Arches, vaults, domes.
		20	Debate, Assignment 1 reviewed
5	26/10/2023	21, 22	Medieval and Byzantine arch. 1
		23, 24	Medieval and Byzantine arch. 2
		25	The Medieval city, fortifications and urban networks
6	02/11/2023	26, 27	Medieval and Byzantine arch. 3
		28, 29	Islamic arch. and cross-cultural interactions
		30	Debate, Assignment 2 explained (Middle Ages)
7	09/11/2023	31, 32	15th and 16th centuries in Italy 1
		33, 34	15th and 16th centuries in Italy 2
		35	Debate, Assignment 2 reviewed
8	16/11/2023	36, 37	15th and 16th centuries in Italy 3
		38, 39	15th and 16th centuries abroad
		40	Debate, Assignment 3 explained (Early Modern 1)
9	23/11/2023	41, 42	City and landscape in 15th and 16th centuries
		43, 44	Early Modern Military arch. and infrastructures
		45	Debate, Assignment 3 reviewed
10	30/11/2023	46, 47	17th and 18th centuries in Italy 1
		48, 49	17th and 18th centuries in Italy 2
		50	Debate, Assignment 4 explained (Early Modern 2)
11	07/12/2023	51, 52	17th and 18th centuries abroad 1
		53, 54	17th and 18th centuries abroad 2
		55	Debate, Assignment 4 reviewed
12	14/12/2023	56, 57	City and landscape in 17th and 18th centuries
		58, 59	New materials, forms and building types in the industrial society
		60	Conclusions, exam explained