

**Sex and the Single Building**  
**School of Architecture**  
**McGill University**  
**Prof. A. Adams**  
**Winter 2009**  
**ARCH533**

**Course Objectives:**

"Sex and the Single Building," is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural-history seminar on gender, sexuality, and space. The main intention is to explore a series of real places in which diverse body/space relationships are played out. Our starting point will be the study of highly-charged sites of sexuality: houses, bath houses, spas, hotels, shops, and even university campuses, as well as spaces of specialized body care, such as hospitals, beauty salons, and gymnasias. Students will learn how to analyze space through primary-source documentation and fieldwork, while assessing a range of readings on sexuality and space. Interdisciplinary scholars with expertise in prostitution, gendered space, lesbian urban life, and "maintenance architecture" will be as special guests.

Our perspective in the course draws from a feminist architectural history that takes a revolutionary approach to architectural objects and producers. A core aspect of our research method is to understand the arrangements of buildings as statements of normative values. We will pay particular attention to how architectural plans hold *prescriptive* power. Many house plans, for example, reinforce heterosexuality and traditional family values as a social/cultural norm. To the architectural researcher, plans also reveal key assumptions about gender roles and sexuality because they are a compelling means to uncover social resistance. A person may choose to alter his or her house, for example, to suit a different lifestyle. This intellectual position of assessing architectural use as a form of resistance holds potential for studying LGBTQ places, and those designed for "single" people that occupy marginalized, ad hoc structures, as well as those that are purpose-built.

The focus of each class meeting will be one real place or artifact, represented in plans, video, virtual reality, or experienced by the class on a field trip. Our discussions will then explore the relationship of the readings to the actual building or thing. How do feminist/queer theories on architecture play out in reality? What observations can we make in person that may not be visible in drawings, photos, or other forms of documentation?

An important assumption of the course is that all buildings are used in more ways than intended by their designers. The methods of analysis we explore in this course may thus inspire students to re-visit places with no obvious gender/sexuality link, but that support "secret" or invisible functions. How do we as researchers uncover the secret lives of buildings? What does the study of architectural typologies – the "single building" – tell us about gender and sexuality?

**Course website:** See <http://www.mcgill.ca/architecture/courses/>

**Class meetings:** Fridays, 8:30-10:30 am, room 207

**Contact:** annmarie.adams@mcgill.ca, (514) 398 6706

**Requirements:** Weekly participation (10%), 250-word proposal due Feb. 6 (10%), poster due Apr. 3 (30%), research paper due Apr. 14 (40%), brief (5 min.) presentation on Apr. 14 (10%).

**Research project:**

The research assignment for this course has three parts: a proposal, a poster and a final paper. The assignment asks you to choose a place, likely a house, closely linked to the private life of a Montrealer and to try to reconstruct his/her private life based on spatial evidence. It is likely that the richest papers will be those with subjects who have left an abundant archival legacy, but any person and place is possible. Students are also encouraged to study non-house types, such as convents, brothels, hotels, or hospitals, as long as there is a focus on an individual. The intention is to write a spatial biography with an emphasis on sexuality/gender. In order to share your research process, you will produce a poster (11" x 17") and give a brief presentation to the class at our final meeting on Apr. 14. The following famous individuals had close connections to their well-documented homes in Montreal and its surrounding region: Pierre Trudeau, William Notman, Amy Redpath, Anna Dawson Harrington, Lady Meredith, Mabel Hersey, Hugh Allan, Stanley Ryerson, Maurice Richard, Celine Dion, Wilfred Penfield. Ideas for less famous people might include a nun, prostitute, physician, decorator, architect, fashion designer, dancer, or a writer. How were their sexual or gendered lives borne out in architecture?

This assignment is intended to be fun, but there's a risk: if we know something about the person, we're likely to make the architectural evidence fit the biography--rather than the other way around. In terms of method we will explore the thin line between the person and the place -- who fits what? Can one study the private life of nurse Mabel Hersey based only on the floor plans of the Royal Vic? How did Pierre Trudeau's house on Pine Avenue boost his political career? Are celibacy and desire inscribed in the design of convents and brothels? We will explore several good models for this type of study among the readings (Friedman, Bonnevier, Colomina). Guidelines will be distributed for the design of posters.

**Readings:** Please check the website regularly as our schedule may change and readings for guest discussants will be posted.

\*PDFs posted on website or eBook

Jan. 9: **Introduction**

Jan. 16: **Home I: The feminine mistake**  
CASE STUDY: POSTWAR SUBURBAN HOME

- \*Adams, Annmarie. "The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbia," *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V*, ed Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, 164-78.
- Harris, Dianne. "Clean and Bright and Everyone White," in *Sites Unseen*, ed Dianne Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles, 241-62.
- Isendstadt, Sandy. "Four Views, Three of them through Glass," in *Sites Unseen*, ed Dianne Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles, 213-40.

**Jan. 23: Home II: The bachelor pad**

CASE STUDY: HAVENS HOUSE

- \*Bonnevier, Katarina. "A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027," in *Negotiating Domesticity*, ed Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar, 162-80.
- Colomina, Beatriz. "Battle Lines: E.1027," in *The Sex of Architecture*, ed Diana Agrest et al, 167-82.
- Friedman, Alice T. "People Who Live in Glass Houses: Edith Farnsworth, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson", in *Women and the Making of the Modern House*, 126-59.
- Wagner, George. "The Lair of the Bachelor" in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed Debra Coleman et al, 183-220.

**Jan. 30: Home III: Domestic reform**

CASE STUDY: BEECHER HOUSE

- Adams, Annmarie. "Female Regulation of the Healthy Home," in *Architecture in the Family Way*, 73-102, 179-84.
- Hayden, Dolores. "Catharine Beecher and the Politics of Housework," in *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective*, ed Susana Torre, 40-49.
- Lefkowitz Horowitz, Helen. "Hull House as Women's Space," *Chicago History*, 12 (Winter 1983), 40-55.

**Feb. 6: Women Architects Proposals due**

FIELD TRIP: JOHN BLAND CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE COLLECTION

- \*McNeill, Karen. "Julia Morgan: Gender, Architecture and Professional Style," *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 2 (May 2007), 229-68
- Van Slyck, A. "Women in Architecture and the Problems of Biography," *Design Book Review* 25 (Summer 1992), 19-22.
- \*Forsyth, Ann. "In Praise of Zaha. Women, Partnership, and the Star System in Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 60, no. 2 (Nov. 2006), 63-65.
- \*Birmingham, Elizabeth. "The Case of Marion Mahony Griffin and the Gendered Nature of Discourse in Architectural History" *Women's Studies* 2006 35: 87-123.

**Feb. 13: Home V: Same-sex spaces**

CASE STUDY: ROYAL VICTORIA COLLEGE

- \*Adams, Annmarie. "Rooms of Their Own: The Nurses' Residences at Montréal's Royal Victoria Hospital," *Material History Review* 40 (Fall 1994), 29-41.

\*Lefkowitz Horowitz, Helen. "Designing for the Genders: Curricula and Architecture at Scripps College and the California Institute of Technology," *Pacific Historical Review* (1985), 439-461.

\*Sanders, Joel. "Cadet Quarters, US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs" in *Gender Space Architecture*, ed Rendell et al, 353-7.

\*Urbach, Henry. "Closets, Clothes, DisClosure" *Assemblage* 30 (Aug. 1996), 63-73.

Feb. 20: **Guest discussant Mary Anne Poutanen: Prostitution**

Readings TBA

Mar. 6: **Guest discussant Cynthia Hammond: Home '53 design competition**

Readings TBA

Mar. 13: **No class**

Mar. 20: **Guest discussant Hilary Sample: Maintenance Architecture**

Readings TBA

Mar. 27: **Public Space: Guest discussant Julie Podmore**

CASE STUDY: BOULEVARD ST-LAURENT

\*Reed, C. "Imminent Domain " *Art Journal* 55.4 (1996), 64-70

\*Podmore, Julie A. "Lesbians in the crowd: gender, sexuality and visibility along Montreal's Boul. St-Laurent" *Gender Place and Culture* 8, no. 4 (Dec. 2001), 333-55.

Dubrow, Gail Lee. "Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags: New Directions in the Preservation and Interpretation of Gay and Lesbian Heritage," *Historic Preservation Forum* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1998), 31-44.

Apr. 3: **No class: Posters due**

Apr. 14: Presentations [please be prepared to stay beyond 10:30]

*SPECIAL NOTE concerning changes to the normal class schedule: Tuesday, April 14, 2009* - The normal Tuesday schedule of course activities is cancelled for April 14, 2009. In its place, all lectures, labs, conferences and other course-related activities that are normally held on Fridays will be held on Tuesday April 14, 2009 as well. This change in schedule is to make up for activities that are cancelled on Friday April 10, 2009 due to the Easter holiday. Some course activities such as stages or field placements may not be affected by this schedule change; please verify with the instructor/coordinator of the course.

**Notes on additional readings:**

For students who have no background in gender/feminist/queer theory, there are several good review essays:

Ahrentzen, Sherry, "The Space between the Studs: Feminism and Architecture," *Signs* 29, no. 1 (2003), 179-206.

Kwollek-Folland, Angel, "Gender as a Category of Analysis in Vernacular Architecture Studies," *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V*, ed Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, 3-10.

Marcus, Sharon, "Queer Theory for Everyone: A Review Essay," *Signs* 31, no. 1 (2005), 191-218.

Rudy, Kathy, "Queer Theory and Feminism" *Women's Studies* 29 (2000), 195-216.

Walker, Lynne, "Home Making: An Architectural Perspective," *Signs* 27, no. 3 (2002), 823-35.

A rich bibliography on women and architecture is available at:  
<http://bwaf.org/bibliography.html>