

GE-009-145

ARC 111 - An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Description Geometry

According to CPP guidelines to new GE courses:

Courses in **[C2] area** will provide students with an understanding of the **values that make a civilized and humane society possible**.

Courses will enable students to **examine critically the philosophical ideas and theories around which different civilizations have been organized, and to explore complex developments of those civilizations.**

In the study of philosophy, students should come to understand and appreciate the principles, methodologies, and thought processes employed in **human inquiry**. Courses should promote the capacity to make informed and responsible moral choices. Moreover, they should **encourage broad historical understanding** enabling students to see the past in the present and the present in the past.

What is ARC111 and why it is a GE subarea C2 course:

focusing on the **history** of descriptive geometry

Introduction to the notion that **our ways of perceiving the world have been culturally constructed**.

The Western-European **model of beauty and truth** have disproportionally relied on vision-based paradigms (ref. Heidegger)

The course discusses the rules of descriptive geometry and their history as an illustration of Heidegger's postulate that the post-Renaissance "hegemony of vision" has produced a **deep impact** not only on visual arts, but **on virtually every aspect of our civilization**.

Chronologically, the discussion starts with the Renaissance "invention" of perspective and parallel projection. Then it passes to the times of the **Counterreformation**, when **the discourse of vision and representation** became part of **deeply spiritual and mystical pursuits**.

After that, it shifts attention to the time-period of the late 17th and early 18th centuries **when the newly developed representational techniques** became **a weapon of Western Europe's colonial pursuits**.

Finally, it discusses the the impact of the **Enlightenment thought and of post-French Revolution practices**, which lead to visual literacy spreading over the entire world via. cultural and political institution of the Western powers.

Responses to recent criticism:

Critique 1: The course is too specific of architecture

(this was the official explanation regarding the GE Committee's decision not to recommend the course for approval, given by the Committee's Chair)

Critique 2: The course is too broad, and therefore, would work better if dedicated as a C4 course

(our reflection over the Committee's deliberations made by one of its members on the Senate floor)

Response:

These two lines of criticism seem to contradict each other.

The second point effectively supports our argument that if, indeed, ocular-centrism is a feature that is characteristic of our entire culture, the course should present interest to a very broad sector of our student population.

However, in response to the proposal to dedicate the course as a C4 course, we would like to note that the courses in this category engage synthesis—which ARC 111 does not - It introduces philosophical concepts in the historical context, as do all other courses in this category.

Critique 3: The course is about technical drawing—and, therefore, does not belong to Humanities sector of General Education

Critique 4: The course is focused on visual aspects of our culture—and, therefore, it belongs to C1 (Arts)

Response:

These two lines of criticism also negate each other. In combination, they support our argument.

Following Heidegger's famous dictum that ocular-centrism in Western-European culture cuts across all its fields, this class aims at teaching representation not as technical skill, not as an art-historical analysis tool, but as a philosophical problem.

Critique 5 (*informally expressed on one of the GE Committee's meeting with ARC 111 ECO's author*):
"...The students that take it will miss another important Philosophy class"

Response:

The current offered GE courses in C2:

ANT 112 - World Cultures via the Internet (4)
HST 101 - History of World Civilization: The Ancient Period (4)*
HST 102 - History of World Civilization: The Middle Period (4)*
PHL 201 - Introduction to Philosophy (4)**
PHL 204 - Ethical Problems of Contemporary Life (4)**
PHL 205 - Business and Professional Ethics (4)
PHL 206 - Philosophy through Children's Literature (4)**
PHL 220 - Religions of the World (4)
PHL 221 - Introduction to Religious Studies (4)
STS 201 - Introduction to Science, Technology, and Society (4)

* Required Core Courses for History

** Required Core Courses for Philosophy

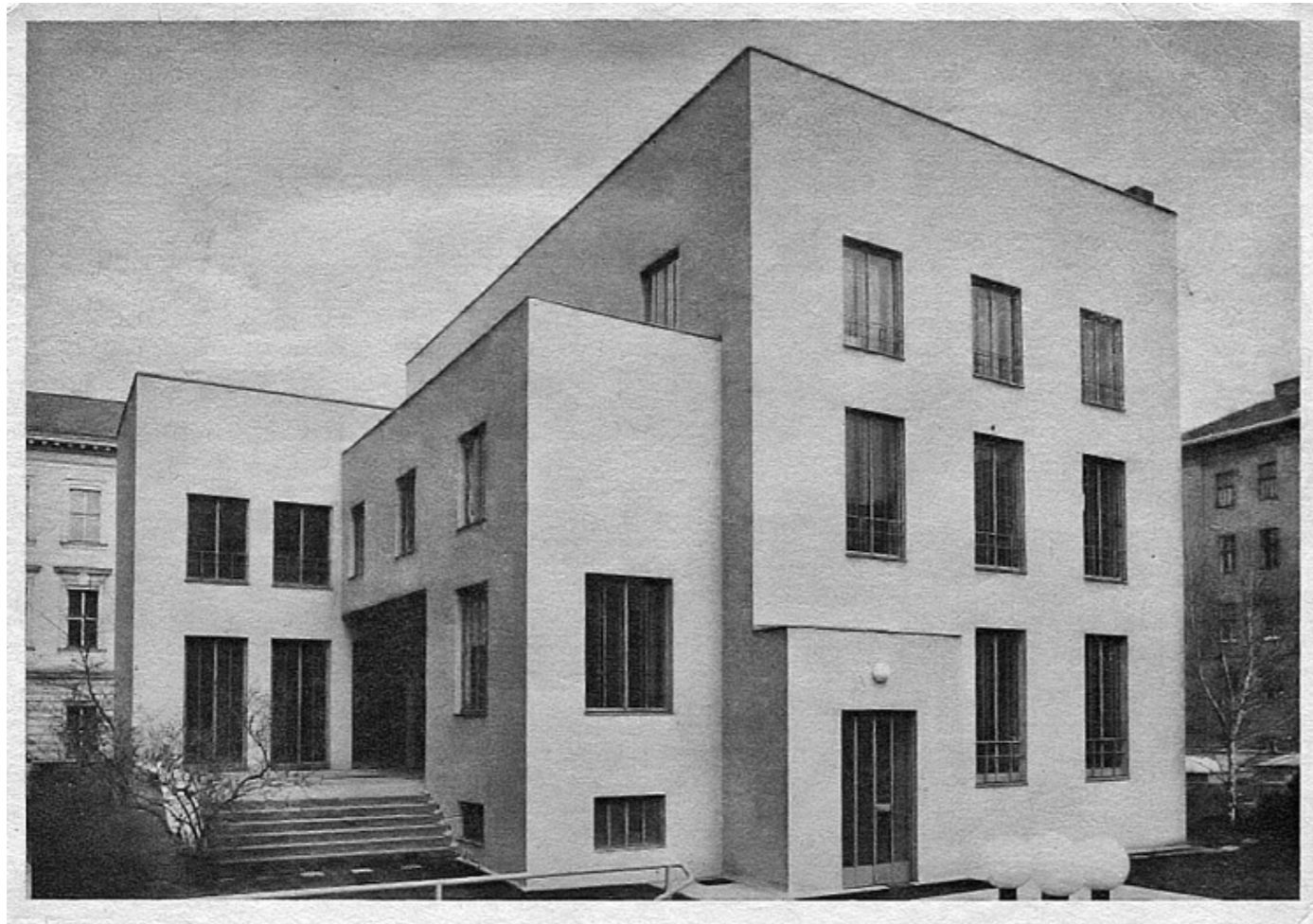
Even in a "best case scenario" students can typically take only 1 or 2 courses in C2

This list is hence meant to provide our students with multiple choices based on their interest to broaden their educational outcome.

**So why not enable more diversity
and offer interdisciplinary variety
without eliminating any of the existing ones?**

Critique 6: (never voiced—but, surely, on everyone’s mind): **Why should architects teach a philosophy class?!?**

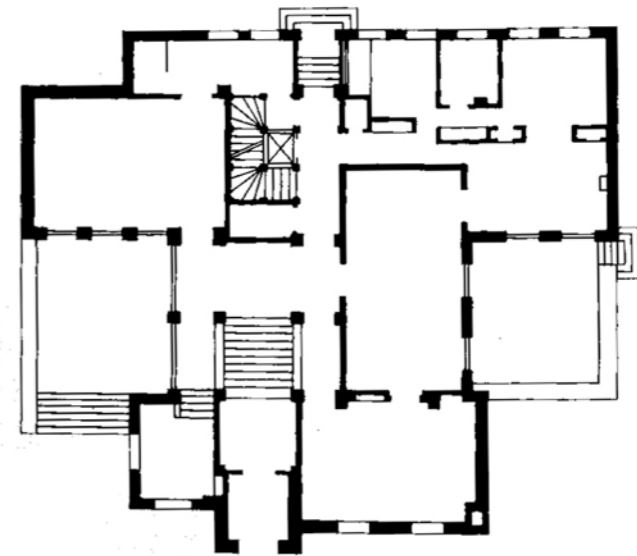
Response:



House Wittgenstein, Vienna 1926-29,
Arch. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Paul Engelmann
today part of the Bulgarian Embassy to Austria

The Architecture of LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

BERNHARD LEITNER



ACADEMY EDITIONS

“Theory’ as a code of framework for architectural thought has existed for centuries, often cited as originating with Vitruvius in the first century BCE. Yet the ‘theory’ [that emerged in American and English academia starting with the late 1960s] ... strives to reconstitute the architectural discipline through mediatory concepts - derived from fields such as philosophy, linguistics, psychology and anthropology”

Constructing a New Agenda: Architectural Theory, 1993-2009
A. Krista Sykes, editor, afterword by K. Michael Hays

At least since the late 1970s leading architects, architectural theorists, and philosophers have recognized that they shared a number of intellectual pursuits.

Below are just a few of very many examples:

Cultural critic and philosopher **Paul Virilio** (trained as an architect) writes about public space in the late-capitalist culture

Architect Bernard Tschumi's collaborates with **Jacques Derrida** on the architectural design competition for the Park de la Villette near Paris, France

Architect (and architectural theorist) Peter Eisenman's and Jacques Derrida's share podia at numerous symposia and exchange letters that were published in a number of recent architectural theory books

Collaboration between architect Steven Holl, architectural theorist **Alberto Gomez-Perez**, and philosopher **Juhani Pallasmaa** produces a number of books and informs a number of buildings

Philosopher Karsten Harries (Yale University, honorary Master of Architecture) works extensively on philosophy of architecture (most notably, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* book), much of it in collaboration with architect and architectural theorist Dalibor Veselý

Architecture+Phenomenology 2009 symposium features philosophers **Hubert Dreyfus, Karsten Harries, and Juhani Pallasmaa** as keynote speakers
(Sasha Ortenberg and Axel Schmitzberger deliver a paper)

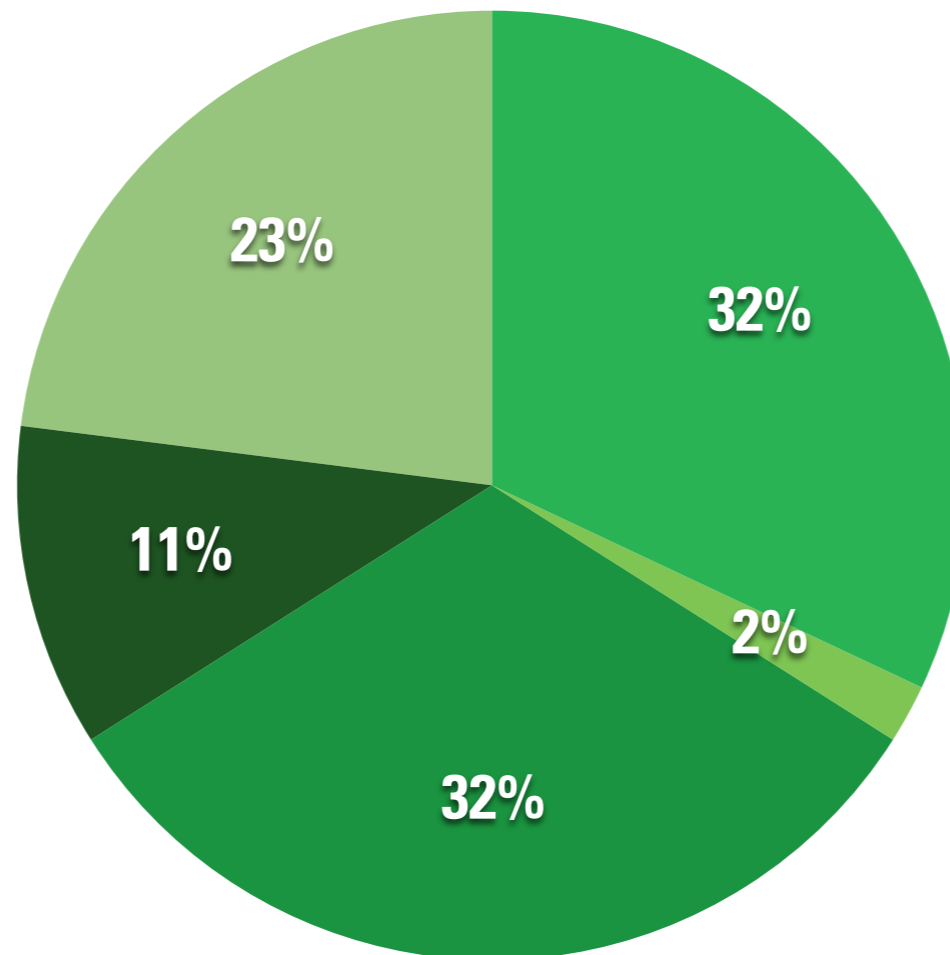
Annual Meeting of Merleau-Ponty circle 2009 feature architectural theorist **Alberto Gomez-Perez** as a keynote speaker
(Sasha Ortenberg delivers a paper)

UCLA's Urban Humanities Initiative (directed by architectural theorist Dana Cuff) brings together architects, philosophers, sociologists, geographers etc.

Architecture as part of Humanities curricula in US Academia

Architecture courses offered in Arts (C1) and Humanities (C2) in universities where the two subareas are not separated
23% = 14 universities

Architecture courses are offered in the equivalents of C1, D2 and D3 subareas, but not in the equivalents of the C2 subareas
11% = 7 universities



Architecture courses are offered in multiple GE subareas including the ones that are similar to CPP C2 subarea**
32% = 20 universities

No Architecture course is offered as a GE course
32% = 20 universities

Universities, where Architecture programs offer courses in the same subareas of GE curricula as the Department of History and Philosophy total 55% of surveyed * universities that offer majors in both architecture and Liberal Arts

* There are 74 US universities or Polytechnic Institutes that offer majors in both Architecture and Liberal Arts (there are only 2 in the 23 CSU campuses). There is no data accessible on 11 of them.

** A number of universities, e.g. UC Berkeley, list architecture courses in the GE subarea entitled "Philosophy".