Hong Kong Island 1952 (Photography: Government Annual Report 1952)

A YEAR IN HONG KONG

INSTRUCTOR
HAN, Man   hanman@cuhk.edu.hk

ISSUE

The history of Hong Kong's architecture and urbanism bears profound significance within the global architectural milieu, owing to its distinctive manifestations of colonial modernism and vertical urbanism in a high-density urban environment. A comprehension of its histories, shaped by complex social, economic, and political forces, is imperative for our graduates to engage in emergent architectural discourses and practice.

DESCRIPTION

This course investigates Hong Kong's post-war architectural and urban history through a focused examination of a pivotal year, serving as a cross-section of the city's urban development at multiple scales. Using a variety of archival sources, we will investigate the key projects, principal actors, policies, regulations, among other factors that shaped the buildings and urban forms. Most critically, we will analyze the causal relationships between these various forces and their material manifestations in the built environment, while assessing their lasting impacts on Hong Kong's urban fabric.

Examining a singular year in history through a variety of sources offers a unique lens to establish connections between various urban processes that are typically viewed in isolation in conventional historiographies. By focusing on a specific year, this method encourages students to explore how different aspects of society, such as architectural production, political developments, and economic histories, are interconnected and influence one another. This concentrated analysis prompts a more integrated and nuanced comprehension of the multifaceted forces shaping urban environments.

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Hong Kong presently stands at a critical juncture, marked by growing challenges encompassing heritage conservation, housing shortages, and the need to address environmental sustainability, among others. It is through a better understanding of the complex layers of architectural and urban histories that our graduates can navigate and contribute to addressing the ongoing dynamics shaping the city's urban landscapes.

This course aims to enhance sustainability by increasing students' awareness of cultural sustainability. By examining the built environment throughout history—an essential aspect of the city's cultural heritage—and its relationship with various contextual forces, students will gain a deeper understanding of the importance of preserving and promoting cultural diversity, ensuring its continuity for future generations.

COURSE SYLLABUS

TOPIC 1: POST-WAR ARCHITECTURE HISTORY IN HONG KONG

The primary topic of this course is to investigate the post-war architectural history in Hong Kong by focusing on a specific year. The key questions we will interrogate include: What significant historical events occurred during this year, and how did they affect urban change? What major buildings and infrastructure projects were proposed and constructed? Who were the principal actors - architects, planners, policymakers, developers - driving these changes? What policies, regulations, and technological innovations were implemented that reconfigure urban forms? Finally, how did these developments give shape to new architectural discourses and professional practice? How did emerging social movements interact with urban transformations and cultural shifts?

TOPIC 2: ARCHIVE/ARCHIVING

The course will primarily utilize a range of archival sources for our investigation. We will also critically explore the questions: "What is an archive?" "Why do we use archives, and how should we utilize them for architectural research?" Additionally, we will examine the different forms of media present in archives and the specific roles each plays.

TOPIC 3: INNOVATIVE MEDIUMS FOR CONSTRUCTING HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Last but not least, the course will explore innovative mediums for constructing historical narratives. Could a collage effectively juxtapose related factors that lead to a historical event? Would mapping serve as a better tool to illustrate the spatial relationship between different contemporary projects? Are there other unconventional means that can help construct a historical narrative?

METHODS

The course will comprise lectures and a research project. Lectures:

1. Introduction of the course and the research project
2. An account of post-war architectural history in Hong Kong
3. Archival study and archival sources
4. On mediums

Research Project:
Students will collaborate in groups of 3-4, and each will pick a year to explore the above-mentioned research questions using archival sources. The instructor will guide the students to carry out the research project and facilitate discussions about their progress by organizing outings to visit archives, conducting tutorial sessions, holding seminars, and arranging pin-up presentations. Each group must develop a specific medium or tool, such as collages, maps, photomontages, or others, to organize the collected materials and aid in constructing a historical narrative.

DELIVERABLES

1. At the end of the term, each study group must curate an exhibition to present their research findings.
2. Each group must submit a process book accompanied by a 3,000-word essay in English (Submission Date: **December 16, 2025**).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

ABILITY
1. Be able to use archival sources for history research
2. Be able to construct a historical narrative with the aid of visual tools.
3. Be able to work cooperatively with others in a team setting

UNDERSTANDING / KNOWLEDGE
1. Acquire knowledge of the histories and theories of regional architecture
2. Understanding of the relationship between buildings and sociocultural contexts
3. Understanding of the profession of architecture and the role of the architect in society

ASSESSMENT SCHEME

1. Participation (10%)
2. Mid-term pinup (20%)
3. Final Exhibition (35%)
4. Process Book and Essay (30%)
5. Peer Review (5%)

Total: 100%

Each assessment result will be released to students upon completion accompanied by written comments based on student progress and performance.

COURSE FORMAT

Teaching Days
1. Students must attend F2F teaching during these teaching hours.
   Teaching Day: Tuesday, 2:30 – 5:15 pm
   Teaching Venue: YIA 511

Student Study Effort_3 credit course (Total: 140 hrs)
1.   Class Contact: 39 hrs (Lecture, Seminar, Tutorial, Outing)
2.   Other Student Study Effort: 100 hrs (Studio / Self Study)

READINGS

On Hong Kong History:
Abbas, M. A. *Hong Kong Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
Al, Stefan, ed. *Mall City: Hong Kong's Dreamworlds of Consumption*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016.
Bristow, Roger M. *Hong Kong's New Towns: A Selected Review*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989.
Christ, Emanuel, Christoph Gantenbein, Hendrik Tieben, and Nele Dechmann, eds. Hong Kong *Typology: An Architectural Research on Hong Kong Building Types*. Zurich: GTA, 2010.
Chan, Nana. *Chungking Mansion: Photographs from Hong Kong's Last Ghetto*. Hong Kong: Blacksmith Books, 2019.
Chu, C.L. *Building Colonial Hong Kong: Speculative Development and Segregation in the City*. Planning, History and Environment Series, Routledge, 2022.
Chu, Cecilia L. and Dorothy Tang. "Infrastructure Imagination." *HKIA Journal* 74 (2018): 118–22.
Chu, Cecilia L. "Revisioning Hong Kong's (Other) Modern Architectural Heritage." In *Hong Kong Modern Architecture of the 1950s to 1970s*, edited by Walter Koditek, 20–21. Berlin: DOM Publishers. 2022.
Cowell, Christopher. *Form Follows Fever: Malaria and the Construction of Hong Kong, 1841–1849*. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2024.
Denison, Edward, and Guang Yu Ren. *Luke Him Sau, Architect: China's Missing Modern*. 1 edition. Wiley, 2014.
Devabhaktuni, Sony. *Curb-Scale Hong Kong: Infrastructures of the Street*. San Francisco, CA.: Applied Research and Design Publishing, 2022.
Dung, Kai-Cheung. *Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City*. New York: Columbia University

Press, 2011.

Fujimori, Ryo. 'Evolution of Urban Form in Hong Kong: A Study of Development Controls and High-Density Housing Models'. The University of Hong Kong, 2015.

Gu, Daqing. *Chung Chi Original Campus Architecture: Hong Kong Chinese Architects' Practice of Modern Architecture.* Hong Kong: Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2011.

Law, Lisa. "Defying Disappearance: Cosmopolitan Urban Space in Hong Kong." Urban Studies 39.9 (2022): 1625–45.

Leeming, Frank. *Street Studies in Hong Kong: Localities in a Chinese City*. London; New York; Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Mathews, Gordon. *Ghetto at the Centre of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Popham, Peter. "The City of Darkness." *Architectural Review* (November 1993): 72–5.

Seng, Eunice. *Resistant City: Histories, Maps, and the Architecture of Development*. Singapore: World Scientific, 2020.

Shelton, Barrie, Justyna Karakiewicz, and Thomas Kvan. *The Making of Hong Kong: From Vertical to Volumetric. Planning, History and Environment Series*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011.

Smart, Alan. *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950 - 1963*. Aberdeen, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 2006.

Tsui, Chung Man Carmen. *Everyday architecture in context: public markets in Hong Kong (1942-1981)*. Xiang gang, 2022.

Tsui, Carmen C. M. "Housing the Nascent Middle Class: The First High-rise Planned Community in Post-war Hong Kong." *Planning Perspectives* 37.4 (2022): 735–59.

Wang, Haoyu. 'Mainland Architects in Hong Kong after 1949: A Bifurcated History of Modern Chinese Architecture'. The University of Hong Kong, 2008.

Wu, Qicong, and Yuanxu Luo. *20th century architects and builders from Shanghai to Hong Kong*. Xiang gang, 2021.

Xue, Charlie Q. L. *Hong Kong Architecture 1945-2015*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2016.

On Archive:

Yaneva, Albena. *Crafting History: Archiving and the Quest for Architectural Legacy*. Expertise: Cultures and Technologies of Knowledge. Cornell University Press, 2020.

Burton, Antoinette M. *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*. Duke University Press, 2005.

On Mediums:

ARCHIGRAM: The Book. S.l.: CIRCA PRESS, 2024.

Buckley, Craig. *Graphic Assembly: Montage, Media, and Experimental Architecture in the 1960s.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Sohei Nishino. Dioramamap.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO STUDENTS

Expectations for Professional Conduct
The motto of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is "Through learning and temperance to virtue". This motto places equal emphasis on the intellectual and moral education of students. In addition to pursuing academic excellence, students of CUHK are expected to maintain and uphold the highest standard of integrity and honesty in their academic and personal lives, respect the rights of others and abide by the law. More information on undergraduate studies can be found in the UG Student Handbook. https://rgsntl.rgs.cuhk.edu.hk/aqs_prd_applx/Public/Handbook/

Attendance
Class attendance is required in all courses. For an excused absence, the instructor must be notified and presented with documentation of illness or personal matter. Please note: **Three (3)** or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course.

Academic Honesty
The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on academic dishonesty

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

With each assignment, students may be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

Third-Party Assistance
All intellectual work essential to the design project must be completed by the student and cannot, under any circumstance, be outsourced to a third party (including, but not limited to a company, consultant, alumni, and/or friend).

In the design studio context, students may utilize external resources, such as printing services for presentation materials, and/or laser cutting and 3D printing services for prototyping purposes. Use of such third-party services constitutes non-intellectual work done by others. It is only permitted with prior written consent from the studio tutor and acknowledgment of such work done by the third party. Assistance from other students or friends for aspects of project production also constitutes non-intellectual work done by others; this is allowed only if declared and acknowledged in a written statement attached to any such work that has received assistance.

Under all circumstances, students must declare all work done by others by completing the school's designated form before assessment. This form must include a detailed explanation of the third party's identity (name and relationship to the student), when and how they were utilized, and the specific tasks they performed in the project. The completed form, signed by the student, must be endorsed by the tutor and presented during the final review. The school will collect and retain this form for record-keeping purposes.

Failure to follow this code of conduct may be considered a case of academic dishonesty, to be reviewed by a disciplinary board, and possible failure of the course.

Artificial Intelligence

Students are allowed to use AI tools only for photo editing and text proofreading, which must be explicitly acknowledged at the final exhibition, in the process book, and in the final essay.

Students may refer to Approach 3 of the CUHK 'Use of Artificial Intelligence tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments' – A Guide for Students.

Student Work

Submission of course work documentation must be complete and correctly formatted. Missing or incomplete submission of the documentation folder will result in the grade for the course being withheld. This will prevent registration for the following term or delay graduation.

External Examination

Of paramount importance to the academic rigour and professional relevance of the architecture programme, the external examination process serves as a critical and impartial review mechanism. An invited panel of distinguished practitioners, academics, and industry experts convenes to rigorously evaluate the school's pedagogical ecosystem. This comprehensive audit scrutinises the fairness and consistency of the internal assessment process, benchmarks the standard and ambition of student work against national and international norms, and provides invaluable feedback on the intellectual and pedagogical direction of the curriculum itself.

As a cornerstone of this process and a mandatory graduating requirement, final-year students from both the Bachelor of Social Sciences (Architecture) and Master of Architecture programmes must present their final project and portfolio work in person. This formal defence before the external panel not only validates the authenticity and depth of their learning but also simulates a professional practice environment, demanding they articulate their design rationale, critical thinking, and technical resolution to an authoritative audience, thereby preparing them for the collaborative and discursive nature of the architectural profession.

Term 1: 2 September 2025 (Tuesday) – 9 December 2025 (Tuesday)

WEEK 01		
02.09	Lecture 1	Course introduction

WEEK 02		
09.09	Lecture 2	An account of post-war architectural history in Hong Kong

WEEK 03		
16.09	Lecture 3 + Tutorial 1	Archival study and archival sources + Year selection

WEEK 04		
23.09	Outing	Visiting archives

WEEK 05		
30.09	Lecture 4 + Tutorial 2	On Mediums + Project Progress

WEEK 06		
07.10	**NO CLASS**	The day following the Mid-Autumn Festival

WEEK 07		
14.10	Tutorial 3	Project Progress

WEEK 08		
21.10	**MID-TERM**	Mid-term Pin-up

WEEK 09		
28.10	Tutorial 4	Project Progress

WEEK 10		
04.11	Tutorial 5	Project Progress

WEEK 11		
11.11	Tutorial 6	Project Progress

WEEK 12		
18.11	Tutorial 7	Project Progress

WEEK 13		
25.11	**NO CLASS**	Review Week

WEEK 14		
02.12	**FINAL**	Exhibition

WEEK 15		
09.12	**NO CLASS**	

WEEK 16		
16.12	**Process Book Submission**	

Grade	Descriptor	Criteria	Points
A	Excellent	Consistent and active participation in the in-class activities. Comprehensively excellent performance on all aspects of the research project. Achieving all learning outcomes with distinction.	4
A-	Very Good	Active participation in the in-class activities. Generally outstanding performance on the research project. Achieving all learning outcomes with merit.	3.7
B+	Good	Satisfactory participation in the in-class activities. Substantial performance on the research project. Achieving all learning outcomes satisfactorily.	3.3
B			3
B-			2.7
C+	Fair	Satisfactory participation in the in-class activities. Fair performance on the research project. Achieving all learning outcomes at a passing standard.	2.3
C			2
C-			1.7
D+	Pass	Satisfactory participation in the in-class activities. Barely satisfactory performance on the research project. Achieving all learning outcomes at a barely satisfactory standard.	1.3
D			1
F	Failure	Unsatisfactory performance on the research project. Not achieving all learning outcomes.	0

School of Architecture
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Written Feedback to Students

Term: _____

Grade: _____

Course Code: _____

Review: _____

Tutor: _____

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Feedback from Course Instructor:

Achievements:

Challenges: