

4.616

(RE)CONSTRUCTING MEMORY



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Schedule: Mondays 2-5
Room: 5-216
Units: 3-0-9

Paraphrasing Patrick Lagrange, a fictional historian quoted in Julian Barnes's novel, *The Sense of an Ending*, one can say that "Reconstruction is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation." Indeed, reconstruction of destroyed heritage, whether historic or mundane, depends both on a set of values —economic, historical, geopolitical, ideological, aesthetical, and memorial— as well as the available records of its destruction and its previous, presumably pristine, state. These conditions are contingent, shifting, and subjective. They also have their own historical trajectories and methodical and ethical complexities, which may or may not overlap with the reconstruction act itself.

Accordingly, this class is not about reconstruction as a defined architectural intervention as much as an investigation into the historical, political, and theoretical processes through which the discourses on destruction, restoration, and/or reconstruction have evolved since the notions of collective memory and heritage or patrimony became parts of the conceptual apparatus of both the nation-state and architecture, i.e. the early twentieth century. Following a review of the formative literature on the concepts of ruins, violence, destruction, heritage, conservation, monument, and collective memory and how national identities shape and are shaped by these factors, the seminar will move to analyze and critique some of the pivotal projects in the history of conservation and reconstruction after the Second World War (France, Germany, Lebanon, Uzbekistan, Ex-Yugoslavia and others) and how the profession of architecture tackled them. The last section will focus on the current debates around the reconstruction of the Middle Eastern cities devastated by recent "civil" wars, especially Iraq and Syria, while advocating a robust and dynamic ethics of intervention that are informed by the context of the region. All along, students will be developing their own projects that will both engage the literature and explore specific examples, areas, or approaches.

CONSENT OF INSTRUCTOR REQUIRED. OPEN TO QUALIFIED UNDERGRADUATE UPPERCLASSMEN. LIMITED TO 16.

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
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