SEMESTER: GOVERNMENT CENTER, BOSTON

Art and Art History (FAH) 290/198-05 • Fall 2015 • Fridays, 9:00—11:30am
Professor Daniel M. Abramson
Office Hours: Thursdays 12:00-1:30 p.m. or by appointment
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Summary
A project- and research-based seminar on Boston’s most famous modern renewal project. In the 1960s, the burlesque Scollay Square district was replaced by a spacious ensemble of mainly governmental buildings, focused upon a new Boston City Hall. With a master plan by I.M. Pei and individual buildings designed by renowned architects like Paul Rudolph and Walter Gropius, Government Center is one of the finest collections of mid-century buildings in the world. Students will visit and conduct in-depth research on Government Center’s spaces and buildings, seen in the context of mid-century American urban, social, and architectural history.

The seminar is divided into two parts. The first will focus upon a collaboration with Wentworth Institute of Technology (WIT) architecture students to study and produce an adaptive reuse re-design for the State Services Center building. In the second part of the seminar the class will produce together a website on Government Center’s architectural history, design, and future.

This course may be used to fulfill the post-1700 requirement for the Art History major and an elective for the Architectural studies major. Note: Undergraduate Students register for FAH 0198.

Texts
Thomas H. O’Connor, Building a New Boston (1993); available in the Tufts bookstore and on reserve at Tisch Library. Other readings will be posted as PDFs on the course Trunk site.

Requirements
Attendance and participation in every class meeting (25% of grade); preparation of all readings; completion of all assignments on time. The two main assignments will be: 1) a workshop project with Wentworth Institute of Technology architecture students (25%); 2) contributions to a class-built website on Government Center (35%). Three are also three short assignments due the first weeks of class (15%).
Schedule

Sept. 11  INTRODUCTION

Sept. 18  NO CLASS
Readings due:
• Lawrence W. Kennedy, "Collins, Logue, and the 'New Boston'" (1992)
• O'Connor, Building a New Boston, chapter 1, 3, and 7
Assignment due: Visit Government Center area; submit to Professor Abramson by email some photographs and comments on what's interesting you most.

Sept. 25  SITE VISIT TO GOVERNMENT CENTER AREA, WITH WIT STUDENTS
Readings due:
• State Government Center Commission, News Release, 1963
• Harry C. Solomon to E. H. Roemer, [Mental Health Center], 1962
• Phillip Herrera, "Government Center," Architectural Forum (1964)
• Lizabeth Cohen, "Building Government Center," Heroic (2015)
Assignment due: Based on this and last week's readings, in a 1-page paper list the questions you have about Government Center and its architecture.

Oct. 2  URBAN RENEWAL AT GOVERNMENT CENTER, W/WIT STUDENTS, @ TUFTS
Readings due:
review readings from two previous weeks
Assignment due: A 2-3 page, double-spaced typed paper summarizing the salient historical, functional, urban, and architectural aspects of the Government Center urban renewal area.

Oct. 9  ARCHITECTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS WORKSHOP W/WIT STUDENTS, @ WIT
Readings due:
• Adrian Forty, "Mud and Modernity," Concrete and Culture: A Material History (2012)
• Mitchell Schwarzer, "Myths of Permanence and Transience in the Discourse on Historic Preservation in the United States" (1993)

(readings for Oct. 9 cont. next page)
(Oct. 9 readings cont.)

- National Park Service, "Rehabilitation as a Treatment,"
  http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/treatment-rehabilitation.htm

Oct. 16  PRESERVATION, REUSE, HISTORY, AND DESIGN

Oct. 23  ARCHITECTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS PRESENTATION, w/WIT, @ WIT

Oct. 30  A GOVERNMENT CENTER WEBSITE: PLANNING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Nov. 6   NO CLASS

Nov. 13  SITE VISIT 2 AND WITH ASSIGNMENT PRELIMINARY REVIEW

Nov. 20  ASSIGNMENT DRAFT PRESENTATIONS AND REVIEW

Dec. 4   WEBSITE DRAFT REVIEW

Dec. 11  WEBSITE PUBLICATION AND CONCLUSION