



Radical Architectures,
Relational Ecologies, +
Local Spatial Practices
Within Our Island

ARQU 6336 + 6313
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ARQU 6336, ARQU 6313

Professors: Dr. Regner Ramos & Arq. Ernesto Rodríguez

Course Hours: Five (5) credits, Monday, Wednesday, Fridays 4:30PM–8:20PM

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2PM–4:20PM, with scheduled appointments

Pleasures by Water:

Radical Architectures, Relational Ecologies, + Local Spatial Practices Within Our Island

Ethos

This studio is rooted on research and the production of knowledge in the form of concerns, questions, and arguments related to the built and natural environments. It prepares students to enter the work force, but to become flexible and adaptive; to use architecture as part of a skill set and as a tool, not simply an output; and to see architectural research as a powerful mode of operation within the discipline. Students are encouraged and required to ask questions, generate answers, and propose alternate ways of understanding and making sense of the social, cultural, political, economic, and/or spatial realities of Puerto Rico.

This is an architectural laboratory, not a simulation of an architecture office. Architectural education here is approached as experimental and fluid, opening possibilities for architecture. In this way, this course questions architecture's boundaries, rethinks what is established, and intersects with other disciplines.

The projects that will be produced in this course are each architectural in nature, stemming from interdisciplinary, research-based arguments; they will be reflections, proposals, and provocations that deal with complex variables in Puerto Rico. You will fluctuate between fantastic escapes, alternate scenarios, cultural critiques, and architectural speculations. Together, we will bring forth substantial arguments and intelligent provocations pointing to an architecture which is research-driven and socially responsible. The course will finalize with re-imaginative propositions about who we are and the spaces we inhabit, guided by various research methods: bibliographical research, writing practices, visual representations, conceptual mappings, three-dimensional explorations, and making/craftsmanship.

Objectives

1. Apply diverse research methods to develop a creative and critical approach for architectural and spatial problems.
2. Develop clear and concise research questions.
3. Integrate writing as a key part of an architecture proposal's development.
4. Explore the relationship and deep connections between an architectural proposal and its geographic, cultural, social, environmental, historic, and/or economic context.
5. Propose thoughtful, radical modes of inhabiting a locale in direct dialogue with what the place means at a cultural or social level.
6. Develop a unique architectural program and typology that responds to the theoretical underpinnings of your research.
7. Approach architectural research and design through an interdisciplinary lens.
8. Create an architectural project with theoretical rigor, as well as technical ones, in response (and perhaps challenging) to codes and regulations.
9. Develop a project rich in theoretical substance and in visual representation, using physical and digital models, drawings, illustrations, renders, and collages.
10. Produce a substantial research publication that includes your design proposal as well as the theoretical component in essay form.

Structure

We will be employing various formats for this course: theoretical discussions and seminars (once a week); design tutorials; lectures by guests; presentations and crit sessions; site visits and excursions. We will be using Google Meet as our primary virtual classroom and Skype as a backup. Students must create a Skype account. Reading and discussion is *compulsory*—they are inherent to producing a substantial, research-based design output.

This semester will have four exercises. The brief for each project will be assigned at the beginning of each assignment along with their evaluation criteria and the reading list for the weeks the project will be running. You must use studio time to bring in work for informal pin-ups and tutorials. For lectures and seminars, you must read the assigned text and participate in an active discussion as part of your grade. Although we will be

conducting group readings, as your individual research questions develop, you are required to find additional bibliographical references on your own.

This semester will be conducted online. However, final presentations will take place at the School of Architecture, while taking into consideration precautions and safety protocols—if any changes are issued by the government, we will make the necessary changes to the format.

We will begin promptly at the established class time. You must have your camera and audio enabled, unless otherwise stipulated. The design material must be uploaded before class begins to the agreed platform (we will discuss options together) and sent by email to the whole group (unless previously agreed).

The final product of course (in 2021), in addition to the architectural proposal, will be a document in which each student will have a chapter. The nature and medium of this document—whether an interactive website, book, magazine, pamphlet, conference, touristic guide, podcast, vlog—will be decided throughout the semester collectively, and will be coherent and reflexive of the year's theme. Your final project will be presented alongside the launch of this document at an exhibition we will put together.

Projects

Project 1: Pleasure by Asking, 15% grade

Project 2: Pleasure by Seeing, 20% grade

Project 3: Pleasure by Making, 25% grade

Project 4: Pleasure by Water, 40% grade

Description

This year's theme is "Pleasures by Water"; it will bind us together as a unit, but allow each of you to explore it through your own individual sites, arguments, research methods, and questions. Keeping in mind the formal and material tensions between those spaces where lands meets bodies of water, "Pleasures by Water" is informed in part by Antonio Benítez Rojo, Derek Walcott, and Edouard Glissant's ideas on *archipelagic studies*, where they conceptualize the Caribbean as a space in which the network of islands are constitutive of *particular* ways of thinking. This is to say, due to the relationships between islands and their larger colonizers (in the case of Puerto Rico, the USA)—and the relationships between each other— islands make up their own models of knowledge and intellectual production. How might archipelagic thinking inform the way we produce Puerto Rican architectural discourse?

We will be conducting research through various sites on our own island, exploring the relations that exist between people, identity, buildings, landscapes, traditions, rituals, economies, and spatial politics, through particular instances where land and water meet. In this way, this course is rooted in what architectural and feminist theorist Peg Rawes calls “relational architectural ecologies”. For Rawes, beyond the current design literatures that explore the relationship between architecture and ecology (such as discourses on sustainability), relational architectural ecologies are inseparable from dynamic social, spatial, political, economic, and ecological concerns. They are web of relations and connections in which knowledge and discourse are produced.

But apart from the environmental, geographic, and political thematic of bodies of water—which are inseparable from understanding Puerto Rico, the gateway to the Caribbean and the subject of centuries-long colonization—there is another quality that cannot be ignored: pleasure. What can be said about our experience of pleasure in spaces in or proximate to water in Puerto Rico?

As architectural designers, we tend to want to always to build as close—and opening up—to the water: rivers, streams, waterfalls, bays, the Caribbean sea, the Atlantic Ocean. The culture of water in Puerto Rico involves road trips to locations such as Gozalandia; healing typologies like the thermal baths at Coamo; *chinchorreos* in kiosks at rural coasts; jazz festivals at Ventana del Mar; concert venues at beach-side spaces such as Vivo Beach Club; religious baptisms in rivers; birthday celebrations at pools in the suburbs; exercise activities such as paddle boarding in the Bahía de Condado; international surf tournaments in Rincón; kayaking at bioluminescent bays in Vieques, Fajardo, and Lajas; and even political protests on kayaks surrounding the cliff on which the Governor’s Mansion, La Fortaleza, sits on.

What is there to be said about the pleasures granted by water, through the lens of architectural discourse? In Grant Hildebrand’s *Origins of Architectural Pleasure*, he argues that the pleasure we experience in some architectural spaces is directly linked to our instincts. Undoubtedly some of these have to do with our conditions of humans: we have evolved to survive outside of water but our origins always return us to it, even in the maternal womb when we floated in amniotic fluid. In her book *Sanatorium*, performance artist Abi Palmer writes of an ad in the 2000s, “Flotation, the ad explained, is like finding yourself in a pre-birth dreamspace. It’s a good way to recover from trauma, because it’s a memory of what it’s like to exist before trauma can hurt you. The argument goes that flotation eases physical pain because you have reminded your body

what it is like to live without it.” And while pleasure can be performative and embodied, it can also be visual and aesthetic, as argues architect Bernard Tschumi in his text “The Pleasure of Architecture”. In it, he begins reminding the reader that “the ancient idea of pleasure still seems sacrilegious to contemporary architectural theory.” As such, will be turning the taboo of pleasure into a design tool. These texts, among others we will be studying, will help inform the theoretical underpinnings of the course, along with each student’s individual explorations of their own case studies and arguments.

In this way, “Pleasures by Water” will produce architectural projects which are heavily informed by interdisciplinary crossings between the fields of architecture, social studies, anthropology, urbanism, environmental studies, and art and performance. Through incorporating *pleasure*, not just as the object of study, but also as a design process, a relational artifact, and a research methodology, ARQU 6336 will present a series of speculative architectural proposals which celebrate, critique, and rethink Puerto Rico’s relationship to the water that flows through and surrounds it.

Punctuality and Presence

1. Your presence in the course is compulsory, as is participation.
2. Class begins at 4:30PM, therefore all students should be online and ready by 4:15PM. Students who log in at 4:35PM are considered tardy.
3. We will be using Google Meet as our primary virtual classroom and Skype as a backup. Students must create a Skype account.
4. Being tardy three times results in one absence.
5. Three unjustified absences will result in the deduction of one whole grade from the course final grade.
6. Any student absent from a presentation without a valid medical excuse will receive a 0% in the total project grade.
7. Any student tardy to a presentation without a valid medical excuse will be deducted 20% of their total project grade.
8. Every project must be ready to be presented by 4:30PM (or the hour previously stipulated)—which is to say, the project must be finalized, printed, and mounted on the wall. In case of virtual presentations, the project must be available to be viewed and downloaded by the stipulated presentation hour.

9. Absences must be notified to the professors at least four hours in advance.
10. Students who are absent six or more times will be referred to the Administration.

Submission Requirements

For final presentations: every project must be submitted physically (unless otherwise stated) and digitally via a Dropbox folder. Students are responsible for creating each submission folder. There will be *one* folder per exercise. Inside that folder, you will each have your individual folders where you will drag and drop your texts and images onto.

For digital pinups: every project must be submitted by email to both professors, as well as to the class. In addition, they must be uploaded to the agreed and specified virtual platform (i.e. Conceptboard) prior to the start of class.

General Timeline

This is a general and provisional timeline to help provide structure. However, adjustments will be made as needed throughout the semester. In addition, each project brief will provide weekly details of the itinerary.

Week 1

Introductions and Initial Thematic Discussions

Weeks 2-5

Pleasure by Asking (Exercise 1): Definition of Problem + Argument Proposal

Weeks 6-8

Pleasure by Seeing (Exercise 2): Graphic Representation of Argument

Weeks 9-12

Pleasure by Making (Exercise 3): Three-dimensional Representation of Argument

Weeks 13-16

Pleasure by Water (Exercise 4): Typological Proposal and Development of Architectural Program
(Research-based Argument Conclusions)

Política Institucional

Cumplimiento de la Ley 51 del 6 de Junio de 1996:

Los estudiantes que reciban servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional deben comunicarse con el(la) profesor(a) al inicio del semestre para planificar el acomodo razonable y equipo asistido necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimento (OAPI) del Decanato de Estudiantes. También aquellos estudiantes con necesidades especiales que requieren de algún tipo de asistencia o acomodo deben comunicarse con el(la) profesor(a).

Integridad académica:

La Universidad de Puerto Rico promueve los más altos estándares de integridad académica y científica. El Artículo 6.2 del Reglamento General de Estudiantes de la UPR (Certificación Núm. 13, 2009-2010, de la Junta de Síndicos) establece que “la deshonestidad académica incluye, pero no se limita a: acciones fraudulentas, la obtención de notas o grados académicos valiéndose de falsas o fraudulentas simulaciones, copiar total o parcialmente la labor académica de otra persona, plagiar total o parcialmente el trabajo de otra persona, copiar total o parcialmente las respuestas de otra persona a las preguntas de un examen, haciendo o consiguiendo que otro tome en su nombre cualquier prueba o examen oral o escrito, así como la ayuda o facilitación para que otra persona incurra en la referida conducta”. Cualquiera de estas acciones estará sujeta a sanciones disciplinarias en conformidad con el procedimiento disciplinario establecido en el Reglamento General de Estudiantes de la UPR vigente.

Certificación Número 112 (2014-15) de la Junta de Gobierno:

Según estipulado en la Certificación Núm. 112 (2014-2015) de la Junta de Gobierno, un curso presencial es aquel en el cual 75% o más de las horas de instrucción requieren la presencia física del estudiante y el profesor en el salón de clases. Hasta un 25% del contenido total de este curso podrá impartirse mediante modalidades no presenciales. Esto incluye visita de campo, actividades en línea y otras modalidades alternas no presenciales. Estas actividades deben ser anunciadas durante el transcurso del semestre. No se podrán impartir cursos híbridos o a distancia si no están registrados en el Decanato de Asuntos Académicos.

Certificación Número 39 (2018-19) del Senado Académico:

“La Universidad de Puerto Rico prohíbe el discrimen por razón de sexo y género en todas sus modalidades, incluyendo el hostigamiento sexual. Según la Política Institucional contra el Hostigamiento Sexual en la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Certificación 130, 2014-2015 de la Junta de Gobierno, si un estudiante está siendo o fue afectado por conductas relacionadas a hostigamiento sexual, puede acudir ante la Oficina de la Procuraduría Estudiantil, el Decanato de Estudiantes o la Coordinadora de Cumplimiento con Título IX para orientación y/o presentar una queja”.

PLEASURE BY ASKING

The background is a complex abstract composition. It features several overlapping geometric shapes, primarily triangles and quadrilaterals, defined by thin black outlines. The color palette is limited to teal and black. Different areas are filled with various patterns: some are solid teal, others have a fine black dot pattern (halftone), and some have a black line pattern. A prominent diagonal band of teal with a black dot pattern runs from the bottom left towards the top right. In the bottom left corner, there are several black rectangular shapes of varying sizes, some of which appear to be part of a larger, partially visible graphic element.

Exercise 1:

Pleasure by Asking

Context

This course merges architectural research with architectural design. A fundamental part of our research projects is to generate critical research questions that open up possibilities and give speculative, but well-argued propositions. In order to do this, however, it is important to have a narrow scope and hone into a manageable field of study. This is the exercise we will be doing, and it will be the most theoretical of the four, but it will also be developed under the lens of “research by design”. We will be investing five weeks for this project, because this phase needs to be carefully tackled so the rest of the semester can unfold efficiently.

Through group and individual research, you will begin formulating your own questions and cultural concerns, under the topic of “Pleasures by Water”, and parting from the thematic description provided in the syllabus. Although the theme is the same for everyone, each person will develop one primary topic. We will call this “the argument”, and it goes hand-in-hand with beginning to ask the right research question(s). The formulation of the argument will begin this week. But it will continue evolving until the end of the semester, narrowing in scope, while amplifying in complexities.

Brief

For this project you will be researching the relationship between water and Puerto Rico. You will need to look through newspapers, magazines, literature, novels, songs, journal articles, books, and perhaps even film.

- What particular relationships exist between our island bodies of water?
- What is the culture of water in Puerto Rico? What does water mean to us?
- What rituals or traditions are inherent to the presence of water in the island?
- What do the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean do for us?
How do they separate or bind us to the Caribbean archipelago?
- What challenges do bodies of water embody for Puerto Rico?
- How do we inhabit our waters today, and is it different than the way we inhabited them in our past?
- Who does the water displace? And conversely, who appropriates the water?

Although as much guidance as possible will be granted in class hours, you must find additional resources to compliment your search. You can work in teams and brainstorm

and tackle different topics and bibliographical sources. You can also identify key people to contact and set up interviews to ask questions. These findings will be presented in class to be discussed; they will provide speculative directions for your research projects this semester. From your collective and individual research, you will each formulate one argument. And because water is only half of the theme for the semester, you will be presenting your data—your primary argument—in a mode of presentation evocative, exemplifying, and truly tapping into the notion of *pleasure*. This is to say, you will *not* be presenting your argument through a powerpoint presentation or by an oral conversation. Your tool/method of presentation will be *pleasure* itself. It will not be a drawing or an object; it will be a *performance*.

Submission Requirements

1. A pleasurable presentation of your argument: 50%
2. A 500-word essay presenting your argument and listing three research questions: 20%
3. A complete bibliography of your research formatted according to Chicago Style: 10%

*Participation during class: 20%

Presentation Deadline: September 18, 4:30PM-8:20PM

Timeline

August 17: Introduction

August 19: Seminar

August 21: Tutorial

August 24: Digital Pin-up of Research Findings

August 26: Seminar

August 28: Excursion

August 31: Tutorial

September 2: Seminar

September 4: Tutorial

September 7: No class

September 9: Seminar

September 11: Digital Pin-up

September 14: Tutorial

September 16: Tutorial

September 18: Pleasure by Asking - Presentation and Submission

Seminar One Reading List

Benítez Rojo, Antonio. "La isla que se repite: Para una reinterpretación de la cultura caribeña". Referenced PDF. Format missing.

Hildebrand, Grant. *Origins of Architectural Pleasure*. University of California Press. 1999. Pgs XV-13.

Palmer, Abi. *Sanatorium*. Penned in the Margins. 2020. Pgs 7-14.

Rawes, Peg. "Situated Architectural Historical Ecologies" in *Forty Ways to Think About Architecture: Architectural History and Theory Today*. Iain Borden, Murray Fraser, and Barbara Penner (Eds). Wiley. 2014. Pgs 204-209.

Ramos, Regner. "This Fragile Inheritance". *LOBBY* No. 6 '1961'. Autumn/Winter 2017. 102-111.

Seminar Two Reading List

Casey, E. S. "Body, Self, and Landscape: A Geophilosophical Inquiry into the Place-World" in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. University of Minnesota Press. 2001.

Pugh, J. "Island Movements: Thinking with the Archipelago" in *Island Studies, Volume 8, Issue 1*. 2013.

Ramos, Regner. "Sea-Change". *LOBBY* No. 4 'Abundance'. Spring/Summer 2016. 36-41.

Rawes, Peg. *Relational Architectural Ecologies: Architecture, Nature and Subjectivity*. Routledge. 2013. Pgs 1-15.

Rodríguez Álvarez, Angel. *Boriquén: Breve Historia de los Indios de Puerto Rico*. Editorial Nuevo Mundo. 2010. Pgs 1-56.

Seminar Three Reading List

Roberts, Brian Russell, and Michelle Ann Stephens (Eds). *Archipelagic American Studies*. Duke University Press. 2017. Pgs 1-54.

Rodríguez Álvarez, Angel. *Boriquén: Breve Historia de los Indios de Puerto Rico*. Editorial Nuevo Mundo. 2010. Pgs 57-109.

Saint, Andrew. "How to Write About Buildings" in *Forty Ways to Think About Architecture: Architectural History and Theory Today*. Iain Borden, Murray Fraser, and Barbara Penner (Eds). Wiley, 2014. Pgs 33-35.

Uroš Pajović. "Whatever Mattered Wasn't Water". *informa 12 'Site Conditions'*. 2019. Pgs 158-175.

Yarina, Lizzie. "Sovereignty as Currency for Oceania's Island States". *informa 12 'Site Conditions'*. 2019. Pgs 216-231.