I want to create spaces for people to think without telling them what to think.

- Maya Lin

“Starting in the 1960s, ... theorists attempted to understand the city as a form of writing . . .” - KSU catalogue

Lived experience in cities is tied to representations of urban space. This term’s class will explore the play between expression and experience in designing, constituting and inhabiting useable urban space.

The term “useable space” implies a focus on discourse, or language in use. The class uses spatial theory in order to present urban space as layered and bound to aesthetic and ethical dimensions of urban discourse.

This is a time in which the very notion of urban is being reconceptualized --- in part in response to the unpredictable gestures that are reorganizing urban life itself. Relays between emerging theory and practice are a major theme of the course.
The purpose of this part of the class is to introduce the work of contemporary theorists whose work has direct bearing on why “Discourse”, “Space”, and “Image” are components of useable space.

A. Paradigm - 19 Feb

1) Giorgio Agamben, “What is a Paradigm?” (pp. 9-32) from The Signature of All Things: On Method (New York: Zone Books 2009) please concentrate on sections 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 13

2) Michel Foucault, Images of panoptican space from Discipline and Punish (New York: Random House 1977)


Points to Ponder:

1) Agamben constructs an argument for “paradigms” as an approach to thinking that is neither inductive nor deductive. He explicitly ties paradigms to the power of art to present a reality, in practice. How could architectural space be considered paradigmatic? What are the implications for thinking about the force of architects’ involvement in urban space?

2) Does the panoptican have paradigmatic status? How is it informative about contemporary public or institutional spaces?

3) How does the Berlin case illustrate the politics of paradigms in professional practice?

Activity:
Register the City -- record your unedited impressions of urban space between UDC and the Urban College at CSU on the afternoon of 22 Feb ‘10 -- bring next week
OVERVIEW OF TOPICS

Part I - Building a Framework: Paradigm, Space, Image
This section is an introduction to three concepts that will organize further investigations.
Assignments: Registering the City, Transportation as useable space

Part II - The Purpose of the city: Paradigmatic notions from pre-industrial, industrial, and past-industrial sites.
In this section frameworks which construct cites as particular kinds of spaces, or places within space are explored. Of particular interest is the relationship between abstract visions, technology and the experience of modernity
First Call for Clarification -- Based on an analysis of layered space

Part III - The City at Loose Ends: Considering Themed Space, Loose Space, Negotiated Space, Temporary Space
Theoretical conventions, discussed above, in which the City is designed and planned as a geographically bounded space, have been supplanted by new interest in the local and in anti-paradigmatic views based on the politics of everyday life. This suggests exciting and accessible, if somewhat unsettled urban discourse
Second Call for Clarification -- Based on attention to sites of enunciation

Part IV - Encountering the City in Context: Informality, Contested space, Virtual Politics and Cosmopolitanism
Perhaps predictably, new contestants for paradigmatic status are emerging. With roots in both the unfolding dramas of global cities and encounters of Western cities with the East and South, there is an emerging transnational methodology that recognizes, both the dominance of Western forms and their inherent inadequacies for presenting the present.
Third Call of Clarification --- Based on constructing an urban imaginary

FIRST ASSIGNMENT - DUE 5 Feb - THE IMAGE OF THE CAR

Consider the car as useable space and as a component of personal experience of the urban.
Presentation can be visual, poetic, historical, or research or design based. Be ready to present this in class.
Two page limit.