UNIVERSIDADE LUSÍADA
LISBOA

Course Unit Program
Seminar Architecture Epistemology

Academic Year 2025/2026

1. Organic Unit

Faculty of Architecture and Arts

2. Course

ARCHITECTURE

3. Cycle

3rd

4. Course Unit

Seminar Architecture Epistemology (91102)

5. Scientific Area

6. Curricular Year

1st

7. Type of Curricular Unit / Semester

2nd Semester

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8. Class type and workload (work time)

Theoretical classes:
Practical classes:
Theoretical-Practical Classes
Tutorial Guidance:

9. ECTS Credits

15,00

10. Scientific Area Coordinator

11. Regent

Prof. Doutor Arq. JOÃO MIGUEL FERREIRA COUTO DUARTE

12. Assistants

13. Teaching Language

Portuguese

14. General Objectives

To establish an initial understanding of what epistemology is. To establish an initial understanding of what epistemology is and its scope in the context of architecture.
Accepting epistemology as 'the theory of knowledge and justification' (Audi, 2011), the aim is to foster the ability to reflect on architecture, encompassing the complexity of the epistemological horizon against which the understanding of architectural objects is outlined and established.

15. Specific Objectives

To understand the nature of knowledge in architecture - what is known? how is it known? -, exploring its constitution as representation, and therefore accepting its transience and the permanent possibility of rethinking it. Understanding the notion of 'meta-objectual architecture'.
To establish new ways of interpreting Portuguese architecture, exploring a reciprocity of lesser-known relationships with other architectures - Portugal in the world; the world in Portugal.

16. Skills to be acquired

Ability to identify and understand issues related to epistemology, both in its disciplinary context and, in particular, in the possibilities that these issues offer for understanding and discussing architecture in contemporarity - its conceptualisation, history, and criticism.
Ability to understand architecture as an object of research, implying recognition of the complexity of this object and the ability to validate this research.

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17. Teaching Methodology

The seminar will consist of theoretical sessions, presented orally and supported by multimedia resources. The sessions will be designed to encourage student participation, fostering the critical thinking necessary for conducting research.
A lecture will be given by Raffaella Maddaluno, visiting professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal, and researcher specialising in Fernando Távora.

18. Course Unit Program

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"It is important to grasp the difference between explanation and understanding. Analytic methods that privilege clarity may explain phenomena and become instrumentalized, but understanding comes from genuine questions and a fusion of horizons, enabling a self-understanding. Methods that are important for the positive sciences often assume a dualistic reality that entails the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity, resulting in the authority of statistics, for example, or pseudo-objective research in the social sciences. All matters of stipulations that bypass language and experience and substitute this with experimental research generate misunderstandings ? this condition followed from the scientific revolution instigated primarily by Galileo and Descartes in the seventeenth century."
Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "Architectural theories, and the world of philosophy, science and theology," in Federica Goffi (Ed.), InterVIEWS: Insights and Introspection on Doctoral Research in Architecture (Routledge, 2020), 12.

The words of Alberto Pérez-Gómez, drawn from his long experience in the doctoral program in History and Theory of Architecture at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, prompt reflection on ways of understanding the world, which must necessarily extend to architecture. If epistemology has the task of questioning knowledge and its justification, the words of Pérez-Gómez, by calling into question the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity, raise the possibility of a new questioning of architecture, assuming the transience of what is known about it and how it is known - a new and permanent questioning that will take place on a broad horizon, but where its condition as an extension of being is always present. This possibility is a pertinent challenge for research, even more so when we are witnessing the emptying of architecture itself, both of its factuality through virtualization and, concomitantly, of its meaning. Understanding, in particular architecture, therefore implies immersion in the complexity of a continuum of representations through which the world presents itself to those who think it.
For some time now, understanding Portuguese architecture has focused on its identity, in a position that is not always clear in relation to other architectures, whether close or distant. Recognizing the relevance of Pérez-Gómez's observations, this seminar proposes the challenge of thinking about Portuguese architecture. Without questioning its autonomy - otherwise it would not make sense to talk about Portuguese architecture - Portuguese architecture will be viewed as a network of interrelationships, of variable geometry, with other architectures, that is, from the way in which these architectures have been and are understood by that very Portuguese architecture.

The seminar sessions are thus divided into three parts:
1st moment:
_Establishment of a conceptual framework that allows us to discern: 1) an initial understanding of epistemology and its meaning in architecture; 2) an understanding of knowledge as representation, meaning accepting the subjectivity and fluidity of that knowledge; 3) the scope and limits of the notion of representation, for the comprehention of architecture, based on Michel Foucault and Robin Evans, among others; 4) the relationship between knowledge and understanding of architecture.

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2nd moment:
_Understanding Portuguese architecture based on an approach to the interrelationships established with Japan, the USA, and Finland; the scope of representations of these architectures in the way they were understood - orality, writing, drawing, photography, the experience of architecture, the limits of understanding these architectures, and return to Portuguese architecture.

3rd moment:
_Testing of research avenues.

19. Assessment Methods

Assessment will be based on: 1) participation in sessions (20% of assessment); 2) a written essay (80% of assessment) to be prepared by each student. The written essay should focus on a topic related to the seminar content and should be the result of a research process.

20. Didactic Resources

In addition to oral presentations and multimedia resources, the seminar sessions will also be supported by a wide range of written works covering topics related to epistemology, as well as the history and theory of architecture, with a special focus on those dealing with Portuguese, Japanese, North American and Finnish architecture. There will also be a presentation and discussion of reference texts related to the seminar topics.

21. Sustainability Objectives

Both in terms of content and the way the respective topics will be presented, the seminar aims to understand architecture within the scope of the humanities, recognizing the inalienable value of the subject and the role of cultural sustainability in the constitution of the built environment. This understanding is supported by the following SDGs: 4 (quality education); 5 (gender equality); 10 (reduce inequalities) and 11 (sustainable cities and communities).

22. Keywords

Architecture
Epistemology
Representation
Portuguese architecture
Contemporanity
Meta-ojectual a

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23. Main Bibliography

Author(s): Goffi, Federica (Ed.)
Title: InterVIEWS: Insights and Introspection on Doctoral Research in Architecture
Edition: 1st Year: 2020
Local: Abingdon
Publisher: Routledge
ISBN Code: 9781032081984

Author(s): Audi, Robert
Title: Epistemology. A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge
Edition: 3rd Year: 2011
Local: Abingdon
Publisher: Routledge
ISBN Code: 9780415879231

Author(s): Rodrigues, Maria João Madeira
Title: O que é Arquitectura
Edition: 1ª Year: 2002
Local: Lisboa
Publisher: Quimera
ISBN Code: 9789725890745

24. Complementary Bibliography

Author(s): Tostões, Ana
Title: A Idade Maior. Cultura e Tecnologia na Arquitectura Moderna Portuguesa
Edition: 1ª Year: 2015
Local: Porto
Publisher: FAUP
ISBN Code: 9789898527042

Author(s): Evans, Robin
Title: Translations from Drawing to Building and Other
Edition: 1st Year: 1997
Local: London
Publisher: Architectural Association

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ISBN Code: 187089068X

Ficha técnica MIP / MIP Datasheet	
Título / Title	Course Unit Program 'SEMINÁRIO DE EPISTEMOLOGIA DA ARQUITECTURA': Academic Year 2025/2026
Autor / Author	Prof. Doutor Arq. JOÃO MIGUEL FERREIRA COUTO DUARTE
Classificação / Classification	-
Descritores / Descriptors	-
Colaborador(es) / Colaborator(s)	-
Data Hora / Date Time	
Formato de dados / Data Format	Texto / Text, PDF
Estatuto de utilização / Usage	Acesso público / Public Access
Relação / Relation	Version 1,0

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