MUSEUMS, ARCHITECTURE, CITY RENEWAL:

THE BILBAO GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Mission of the Center for Basque Studies
The primary mission of the Center for Basque Studies is to conduct, facilitate and disseminate the results of interdisciplinary research on Basques to local, regional, national and international audiences.

Course Goals
What strategies should cities mobilize to regain economic prosperity after the demise of their old industrial bases? What is the role of arts, architecture, museums and cultural industries in regenerating urban centers? What is meant by neologisms such as the “disneyfication”, the “mcdonaldization” and the “las vegasing” of society? Why has architecture become such a dominant artistic form in the 1990s, and what are the cultural implications of architecture as spectacle and ideology? What are the positive and negative consequences of the globalization model imposed by the Guggenheim on the museum as a cultural institution? While grappling with such questions, the goal of the course is to learn about cities in transformation and the peoples inhabiting the cities; more specifically, we want to learn from the Bilbao Guggenheim what are the defining features of the new “global postmodern” space in which cities have to compete.

Course Description
During the 1990s the Guggenheim Museum embarked on an ambitious project to create a transnational museum with franchises in Venice, Bilbao, Berlin and Las Vegas. It was the opening of the spectacular Bilbao franchise, designed by Los Angeles architect Frank Gehry, that brought to the world’s attention the true scope of the Guggenheim’s aims under its director Krens. The new building not only put Bilbao on the map, but showed to the world what architecture could do to change the image and the touristic appeal of a postindustrial city. Suddenly every city in the world wanted a Guggenheim Bilbao. Thus, the study of such “Guggenheim effect” has become mandatory in the departments of architecture, museum studies, urban renewal, or tourism. Bilbao’s fin de millennium has become the paradigmatic example of the interdependencies between museum culture, the international art market, spectacular architecture, tourism, the politics of local identities,
urban regeneration discourse, the media, late capitalist strategies, and the promotional selling of national images in a postmodern world.

The approach of the course is multidisciplinary: cultural studies, anthropology, urbanism and architecture, museum and popular culture. These fields will all be brought in for contextualizing the creation, decline and regeneration of cities. The student must read the literature perceptively, get an understanding of the relevant issues, and develop a perspective from where to view and judge the contemporary cultural and political transformations brought about by architecture and the new cultural industries. We will also look comparatively at other American and European cities with similar problems of urban regeneration.

This is a capstone course. As such it relates to **CORE OBJECTIVE 13: Integration and Synthesis**. Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

**BASQ/ANTH/ART 466** helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objective 1 (Effective Composition & Communication) and Core Objective 3 (Critical Analysis & Use of Information) through the readings assignments, written and oral assignments, and class discussions. In addition, the course requires students to evaluate modes of academic inquiry and to apply them to problems in contemporary global contexts (CO11 Global Contexts)

**Student Learning Outcomes**
By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Based on a close study of the transformations of the city of Bilbao, synthesize and analyze complex issues that combine historical, urban, architectural and political realities, and integrate local and Core knowledge around the major themes of what constitutes art, museums, and urban renewal (CO13).

- Contrast and complement regional and international economies and cultures, explain the relevance of tourism in current global culture, interpret the value of art and architecture in the recreation of new city images and urban centers (CO11 & CO13).

- Analyze the continuities and discontinuities in Bilbao and among the Basques between a premodern traditional anthropological culture and a postmodern architecture-based Americanized culture.

- Integrate and synthesize results from course readings and lectures in the class discussions, term papers and mid-term and final exams (CO1 & CO3)

Students will acquire the competencies described in the Core Objectives 1, 3, 11, and 13 through class discussions and through the three required papers that will synthesize their knowledge of the urban processes undertaken in a concrete city as well as of the substantial transformations experienced by the museum, architecture, and art as core modern institutions. Their participation in class discussions will help them integrate and synthesize such knowledge as the semester progresses. The papers and exams are designed to assess the extent of student success in meeting the Core Objectives 11 & 13.
Assessment Methods and Evaluation of Student’s Work

The final grade will be based upon a total maximum number of 120 points.

**20 points will be given to each of the three papers.** The papers must be double-spaced and 5 pages in length, plus the page with the referenced cited. The topics will be given one week in advance. There will be one paper every five weeks.

**20 points will be given to each of the two mid-term and final exams.** Both exams will consist of answers to essay questions that have been debated in class. The student will have to answer to four out of six questions. Study guides for the exams will be provided in class.

**20 points will be given to class participation.** Students will be assessed on their class attendance and participation. Absences will require written justifications.

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Expectations for Graduate Students**

To receive graduate credit for this course, the written essays completed by the students should be 7 pages in length and should reflect a more extensive research than undergraduates. In addition, the graduate student will make a class participation on a topic previously agreed upon with the instructor. The class presentation will be worth 30 points, thus graduate students totaling a maximum of 150 points. One added Student Learning Outcome for graduate students would consist in explaining to the class during the presentation the research database and tools to be used to find the resources for the course papers and exams.

**Statement on Academic Dishonesty**

Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student’s enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog.

**Disability Policy**

Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.
Statement on Audio and Video Recording:
Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording or class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

Statement for Academic Success Services:
Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (775-784-4422), Tutoring Center (775-784-6801), and University Writing Center (775-784-6030). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

Reading Assignments:
Reading assignments are on E-Reserve and in the required textbook, Joseba Zulaika, Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa: Museums, Architecture, and City Renewal (Reno: Center for Basque Studies), which is available at the Center for Basque Studies. This textbook deals with all the basic themes of the course while providing the questions, learning objectives and bibliographies for each week.

Week One. August 25, 27

Presentation and organization of the course
A general overview of Bilbao and the Guggenheim Museum

READING

Paddy Woodworth, “Wow, Bilbao! The Transformation of a Tough City”

We will watch introductory videos to the city and the museum.

Bertold Brecht’s “Bilbao Song” sung by Lotte Lenya and Marianne Faithful

Week Two. September 3,

From Industrialization to Globalization (CO11)

READINGS
Week Three. September 8, 10

Gernika’s Legacy

Seventy years ago, Hitler’s squadrons, coming to the help of General Franco, bombarded the rural town of Gernika. If Bilbao generated Basque nationalism, Gernika is its historical and political center; Gernika’s destruction played a decisive role in Bilbao being “saved” during the Civil War. Gernika’s atrocity was the prelude and rehearsal of World War II. Picasso’s painting immortalized the event. Basques were caught between their mystified past defined in terms of popular democracy and anthropological plenitude, and a present of European horror and mass warfare. Bilbao encapsulates that history.


George Steer, The Tree of Gernika, pp. 11-14, 78-85, 234-257.

Documentary: the bombing of Gernika

Death in the Afternoon: Picasso’s Guernica, Hemingway, and the Minotaur

Hemingway, Chapter 13 of The Dangerous Summer

Gijs van Hensbergen, Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon, 8-53.

Image: Picasso’s “Guernica”
Week Four. September 15, 17

From Ruins to Miracles in Bilbao

The Necessity of Ruins

READINGS
Justin Crumbaugh, “An aesthetics of Industrial Ruins in Bilbao: Calparsoro’s Leap into the Void (Salto al vacio) and the Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa”


Benjamin’s view of history as decay and ruin will be considered as a critical counterpoint to the modern sense of history as endless progress. We will focus on Bilbao’s (and the Guggenheim’s) wealth in ruins and establish the conceptual links between ruins and allegories. We will be asking ourselves: in which sense are ruins “necessary”?

“Miracle in Bilbao”

READINGS


The class will concentrate on the impact of the Guggenheim Museum on the international image of Bilbao and the interaction of local and global cultures in the creation of an emblematic building. It will also examine the role of the Media in defining and promoting the new architecture and the new global museum.

Videos of Bilbao’s ruins and the new Guggenheim Museum will be shown

FIRST PAPER DUE

Week Five. September 22, 24
Urban Renewal as Project, Gentrification, and Ideology

READINGS


We will examine the context and meaning of the new discourse of urban renewal, review the implications of cultural policies for economic regeneration, dwell on the interrelationship between urban renewal and image creation, insist on the links between the politics of building and the politics of national identity, discuss the dilemmas implicit to urban policy development, and distinguish between the practical and ideological dimensions of the discourse.

Week Six. September 29, October 1

Architecture and Desire: Bilbao’s Five Cathedrals

READINGS


The city’s soccer field San Mames (popularly referred to as “the cathedral”), its historic Bank of Bilbao Vizcaya, the basilica of its patron saint Virgin of Begona, the Museum of Fine Arts, and lately the Guggenheim Bilbao –these will be considered to be, ethnographically, the five “cathedrals” that sum up Bilbao’s history of building. Beyond merely historicist or structural approaches, we will take into consideration “desire” as a necessary category to understand the various reinventions of the city.
READINGS

J. Viar, “A view from the Fine Arts Museum of Bilbao” (Learning from the Bilbao Guggenheim, pp. 97-109)

Jeremy MacClancy, “Football” (From his Expressing Identites in the Basque Arena, pp. 44-67)

Week Seven. October 6, 8

Gehry’s Apotheosis

We will watch several videos on Gehry’s life and work.

The discussion will be geared to placing Gehry’s architecture within and beyond the modernist/postmodernist paradigms, and to assessing the significance of Gehry’s architecture and the uniqueness of the Bilbao Guggenheim building. We will examine Gehry’s creative process in designing his buildings, and how the building has affected Bilbao’s city environment.

The Architect as the Cultural Hero

READINGS
Cathleen McGuigan, “Basque-ing in Glory” (Newsweek, January 13, 1997)

Barry Came, “Spain’s New Wonder of the World”, McLean’s, Nov. 97.


Week Eight. October 13, 15

From Oteiza’s Broken Sphere to Koon’s “Puppy” (CO11)

READINGS
Oteiza, “An Experimental Proposal”
We will consider these two works by Oteiza and Koons as emblematic of a Bilbao struggling in between modernist and postmodernist art and their respective discourses of heroic versus ironic connotations.

**Week Nine. October 20, 22**

*“Bilbao as Ruin, Architecture and Allegory—The Soft City”*


*“Bilbao as Ruin, Architecture and Allegory—The Tough City”*

**READINGS**


Jon Bird, "Dystopia on the Thames" (In J. Bird, et al., Mapping the Futures, Routledge, 1993)

**VIDEO**

“The Getty Center and the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum”

We will discuss Gehry’s view of Bilbao as a “tough city” characterized by its “aesthetics of reality”, as opposed to Disney’s aesthetics. At the same time we will consider Bilbao officials’ attempts at making of Bilbao a “soft city.” Our goal is to become aware of the “politics of building” being played out in Bilbao with Gehry’s grand architecture.

**SECOND PAPER DUE**

**Week Ten. October 27, 29**

*The Politics of Seduction,*
READINGS


“Seduction: that’s my business”, Krens boasted. We will consider seduction as central to Bilbao’s success. What can we learn from the paradigm of seduction about contemporary global culture, finances, and politics?

Fetishism and the Passion for Fashion: From Balenciaga to The Zara Effect


"Fetishism" is a key word in Marxist, Freudian and anthropological discourses. Ever since Marx used the concept in a complex manner to describe the magic of the market commodities, fetishization or naturalization has been invoked to examine the social life of capital. More recently, feminists have used the notion to study the historical construction of gender identity and to critique Freudian theories. Postmodern writers have applied it to visual culture. Apart from the fetishism of the art market, so basic for rationalizing the Guggenheim move to Bilbao, there is a dynamic of visual interdiction and fascination in art practice and spectatorship, which has become an object of aesthetic interrogation, and which is crucial to understanding museum culture.

VIDEOS

“The Guggenheim Armani Effect”

Week Eleven. November 3, 5

What is a Museum?

READINGS


VIDEO
“Museo Bellas Artes”

How do we define a museum and what are its roles; its various historical analogies; its relationship with the rest of the culture as representation; the significance of museums in postmodern thinking; the historical novelty of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum.

Week Twelve. November 12

The McGuggenheimization of the Museum (CO11)

READINGS


The Krensification of the Museum

Joseba Zulaika, “Desiring Bilbao: The Krensification of the Museum and Its Discontents” (Learning, pp. 149-170)

A crucial lesson taught by the Bilbao Guggenheim is the impact of globalization on the institution of the museum. Relevant to this is the franchise aspect of the Bilbao Guggenheim. This will lead us to examining the institutional model of the McDonalds chain of restaurants as applied to the museum. Thus we will get a critical understanding of the historical transformations brought about by Bilbao, as well as the relationship between contemporary museums and promotional culture.
Week Thirteen. 17, 19

The Culture of Tourism

READINGS

Jennifer Craik, “The Culture of Tourism”. In C. Rojek and J. Urry, Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory, Routledge, New York, 1997

Dean MacCannell, “The Fate of the Symbolic in Architecture for Tourists: Piranesi, Disney, Gehry” (Learning, pp. 21-36)


And Ethnographic Surrealism

James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism"


Bilbao officials view their museum largely as a bait for turistic attraction. Economic considerations are paramount in tourism but there are significant cultural implications as well. Issues of authenticity, nostalgia, and postmodernism can be raised around the culture of tourism. The romance of nomadism is not free from cultural and political contradictions.

Week 14. November 24, 26

Infinities: From Informational Cities…

READINGS:
Manuel Castells and Peter Hall, Technopoles
Chap. 5 Technology Parks: Inducing the New Industrial Space

The old mines and foundries and steel and iron plants are for the most part gone. There is no smoke in the chimneys. But there must be fire somewhere. Technology parks and information-based industries are seen as the future. A vast change on how to understand economic productivity, labor, and culture in general.
We will look at the relationship between postindustrialism and postmodernism, informational economies and consumerism, as well as to the effects of the postmodern condition on issues of identity and politics. Some of the issues will be: the application of the political economy of local place/global space to Bilbao, the strategies of place-making and how they affect our view of culture, the construction of places through spatial practices, the politics of place and identity for the global selling of a city and Bilbao’s success in this regard. The discourse of “postmodernism” took place originally in architecture. “Learning from Las Vegas” became one of its most prominent and influential texts. Gehry was one of the architects initially described as “postmodern.” The search for a new aesthetics more attuned to contemporary America took place in architecture and the arts. We will examine what is implied by the “las vegasing” of society and the arts.

THIRD PAPER DUE

Week 15. December 1, 3

Is Bilbao a Woman? Gender and the City—Louise Bourgeois’s Spider

READINGS

J. Zulaika, “Is Bilbao a Woman?: From Picasso to Gehry, Ariadne’s Lunar Labyrinth”

We will watch a documentary on the work of Louise Bourgeois. The discussion will examine the various females figures that dominate Bilbao’s history, as well as cover the
subjects of Basque matriarchy and other forms of masculine/feminine subjectivity.