



Why do architects always take themselves so seriously...blah, blah, blah...if we're acting out charades anyway let's come out and actually have some fun. The self-referential game of design we supposedly play at, with all its jargon and stern expressions, is so cynically performed that the fun, play, and leisure which feed and nurture creativity become practically subversive.

To start the semester off we present a moment of laughter and light-heartedness, the likes of which exist between the cracks of Rudolph Hall, but that nonetheless bind us to our communities. That's what matters in the end, no? If you're not enjoying your time, you're doing it wrong.

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# The Joke Is on You: The Mythical Dimension of Facemasks Under the Smog

Jane Jia Weng



Fig. 1 Crowd with facemasks 12/19/2016, CNN



Fig. 2 Still from V for Vendetta

On January 17th 2013, a real-time video footage of the sunrise had to be projected onto the LED screen in Tiananmen Square, as the smog in Beijing had become so thick that the natural sunrise was no longer recognizable.

Every child who has grown up in China knows that the national flag in Tiananmen Square has to be hoisted along with the sunrise everyday. Thus, the LED screen was, and still is, a pure time indicator, assuring the public for another normal day. Yet, posing against the dark yellowish smog, the bright sunrise is rendered into something fictional. The most mundane natural event becomes a wonder that can only be observed through the big screen.

Today, 1/7/2017, as I open the web-based real-time air quality monitor, I see that the PM2.5 value of Beijing in general is 306, which is marked as "very unhealthy". In fact, by far the air quality has remained the same unhealthy state for almost a week. Under the smog, facemasks are the most direct device for breath. To most people, wearing face masks under the smog is just as expected as wearing a coat in cold weather or riding the subway to commute. However, the masked anonymous crowd automatically forms an image that can be read as a constant statement against governance.

Since 2013, over a million articles have been published examining the causes of Beijing's smog. However, as the articles also reveal a million causes, the actual actors responsible for the smog remain mysterious until today. Doubts mask the public or private enterprises perfectly into a state of invisibility. The smog acts as the weapon of

an invisible enemy. It is invisible and thus invincible. Therefore, any kind of direct confrontation is impossible; people under the smog have to disguise themselves with face masks. It has been proven that certain "species" of the face masks cannot actually prevent the inhaling of toxic particles efficiently. Yet, people keep wearing them religiously. Thus, the meaning of these masks escapes from pure functionalism, and enters into a mythical state.

Individually, the facemask is a self-comforting device; people believe irrationally that all facemasks can protect them from the polluted air. Collectively, the facemasks are mobile political statements. While the commuting crowd in Beijing has to wear masks, the state locks itself into a dilemma, where the people are forced into a state of anonymity. Since the pedestrians on the street adopt the classical attires of the bandits, covering their noses and mouths with masks, leaving only their eyes, they are no longer recognizable to the state. Since 2008, Beijing has been paranoid about terrorism attacks. The security procedure of entering the subways or Tiananmen Square is unprecedented in China and unseen in other parts of the world. The anonymous masked crowd created by the smog is undoubtedly a security hazard in the eyes of the state.

James. C. Scott in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* wrote that,

"The undeclared ideological guerrilla war that rages in this political space requires that we enter the world of rumor, gossip,

disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity. For good reason, nothing is entirely straightforward here; the realities of power for subordinate groups mean that much of their political action requires interpretation precisely because it is intended to be cryptic and opaque."

Under the protection of facemasks, is the commuting crowd unconsciously participating in "undeclared ideological guerilla war"? Facing invisible enemies, the citizens are forced to become invisible as well. The myth of the face masks is, on the one hand, pointing to disenfranchisement, because without the masks the citizens wouldn't be able to breath without damaging their own health. On the other hand, face masks also form an image of immanent social conflict that is constantly visible and can no longer be dismissed by the force of the ruling class.

The face mask in *V for Vendetta* has become a statement of identity for anonymous resistance since the movie was screened. The photo taken recently in Tiananmen Square by CNN (Fig. 1) is ironically similar to the still from the finale of *V for Vendetta* (Fig. 2) in many ways. Entering the mythical dimension, the identities of the people in front of Tiananmen Square no longer matter. What matters is what the face masks stand for. "He was my father, and my mother, my brother, my friend. He was you and me, he was all of us." Can the state, yet again, use force to make the people take off their masks? Maybe. But then, eventually he will be facing an empty city with no citizen to be ruled.

## Equality in Design Course Shopping List

Harper Keehn and  
Maggie Tsang

Over the break, we combed through the Yale Blue Book and compiled a list of courses that we think make for a useful supplement to the YSOA curriculum. In our search, we tried to identify courses that would be relevant to the study of architecture and urbanism, but that fall outside the standard reach of our school.

Below is a short set of highlights pulled from a longer list to be published by Equality in Design. We hope this serves as a reminder that the wider University is available to us and has much to offer. None of the courses listed conflict with studio. Happy Shopping!

**1. Course Number:** AMST 441 / ER&M 370 / HIST 130J

**Course Title:** Indians and the Spanish Borderlands

**Professor:** Ned Blackhawk

**Time:** Monday, 9:25-11:15am

**Description:** The experiences of Native Americans during centuries of relations with North America's first imperial power, Spain. The history and long-term legacies of Spanish colonialism from Florida to California.

**2. Course Number:** HSAR 456/MMES 456

**Course Title:** Art and Politics in the Modern Middle East

**Professor:** Kishwar Rizvi

**Time:** Tuesday, 2:30-3:20

**Description:** Political ideologies have either unified the modern Middle East, such as Pan-Arabism of the 1960s and Islamism of the 1980s, or caused deep ruptures, such as Zionism and sectarianism. Examination of the art and architectural productions that have gone hand-in-hand with these political developments from the nineteenth century until present day. Poetic, visual, and urban interventions document the profound changes that have defined the countries of this region, while connecting them to political movements throughout the world.

**3. Course Number:** AFST 830/HIST 830

**Course Title:** Urbanism in African History

**Professor:** David Magaziner

**Time:** Wednesday, 1:30-3:20

**Description:** This course considers episodes in African history, from the deep past to the present. We consider archaeology and contested theories about pre-colonial urbanism, the rise of port cities and slaving entrepôts, colonial urban design and planning, and unplanned urbanism in the wake of industrialization and the decline in agriculture. In addition to a range of scholarly works, we will consider digital humanities and the African city, music, art and urban leisure, read novels and memoirs and view a film.

**4. Course Number:** AMST 311/ER&M 311

**Course Title:** Latina/o New Haven

**Professor:** Alicia Schmidt Camacho

**Time:** Tuesday, 1:30-3:20

**Description:** Introduction to the field of Latina/o studies, with a focus on community-based research in New Haven. Training in interdisciplinary methods of social research, including oral history, interviews, archival research, cultural analysis, and social documentation. Students design collaborative research projects.

**5. Course Number:** ANTH339

**Course Title:** Urban Ethnography of Asia

**Professor:** Erik Harms

**Time:** Thursday, 9:25-11:15am

**Description:** Introduction to the anthropological study of contemporary Asian cities. Focus on new ethnographies about cities in East, Southeast, and South Asia. Topics include rural-urban migration, redevelopment, evictions, social movements, land grabbing, master-planned developments, heritage preservation, utopian aspirations, social housing, slums and precariousness, and spatial cleansing.

**6. Course Number:** HIST 416 / EVST 211 / G&G 211 / HSHM 211

**Course Title:** Global Catastrophe since 1750

**Professor:** William Rankin

**Time:** Monday, Wednesday, 10:30-11:20am

**Description:** A history of the geological, atmospheric, and environmental sciences, with a focus on predictions of global catastrophe. Topics range from headline catastrophes such as global warming, ozone depletion, and nuclear winter to historical debates about the age of the Earth, the nature of fossils, and the management of natural resources. Tensions between science and religion; the role of science in government; environmental economics; the politics of prediction, modeling, and incomplete evidence.

**7. Course Number:** HSAR753

**Course Title:** Theories of Imagination and Visual Perception

**Professor:** Margaret Olin

**Time:** Wednesday, 10:30-12:20

**Description:** This seminar traces the role of imagination and visual perception as conceived by philosophers, phenomenologists, perceptual psychologists, and other theorists in mainly Western thought since the seventeenth century. The ways in which perception and imagination are conceived together are informed by changing conceptions of each term. "Imagination" can be seen as a mental power of internal image making that must be considered separately from perception, or it may be considered as an indispensable component of perception, which itself can be conceived as a more or less faithful representation or a creative process.

**8. Course Number:** AMST 348

**Course Title:** Space, Place, and Landscape

**Professor:** Laura Barraclough

**Time:** Wednesday, 1:30-3:20pm

**Description:** Survey of core concepts in cultural geography and spatial theory. Ways in which the organization, use, and representation of physical spaces produce power dynamics related to colonialism, race, gender, class, and migrant status. Multiple meanings of home; the politics of place names; effects of tourism; the aesthetics and politics of map making; spatial strategies of conquest. Includes field projects in New Haven.

**9. Course Number:** HSAR606

**Course Title:** Global Renaissance

**Professor:** Kishwar Rizvi

**Time:** Tuesday, 10:30-12:20

**Description:** This seminar focuses on current scholarship that posits the connected nature of maritime cultures of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Looking from the perspectives of both Europe and the Islamic world, the seminar considers the mobility of ideas and objects and the communities of merchants, artists, and scholars who traveled from Japan to England to the Americas. The mobility brought about profound cultural changes that were reflected and augmented by changes in the urban, architectural, and artistic productions of this period.

**10. Course Number:** AMST 125 / AFAM 125 / HIST 136

**Course Title:** The Long Civil Rights Movement

**Professor:** Crystal N Feimster

**Time:** Monday, Wednesday, 11:35-12:25pm

**Description:** Political, social, and artistic aspects of the U.S. civil rights movement from the 1920s through the 1980s explored in the context of other organized efforts for social change. Focus on relations between the African American freedom movement and debates about gender, labor, sexuality, and foreign policy. Changing representations of social movements in twentieth-century American culture; the politics of historical analysis.

## On the Ground

Submit tips to On the Ground at [otg.paprika@gmail.com](mailto:otg.paprika@gmail.com)

Welcome back! School just started so there's still time to...

### GTFO

Twice a year those with free time can venture into classrooms outside of Rudolph Hall. Meet potential clients at the School of Management, or find some cooler friends at the School of Art.

Good luck getting a ticket for the January 28th TV on the Radio concert at the Scharzman Center. Luckily, other events at that weekend's Blackstar Rising & The Purple Reign conference will be free and un-ticketed.

Get a glimpse of how critiques work at the School of Art's Senior Thesis Midway Exhibition and Salon on Wednesday, January 18th at 5:30. All are invited, and DINNER will be served.

### Classy Affairs

First Years kicked off the 50th Jim Vlock Building Project with a visit to Columbus House, a non-profit that provides shelter and housing to people experiencing homelessness. The class will design and assemble a replicable prefab, two-unit residence for the organization to manage as permanent supportive housing. The productive visit has students excited to work in partnership with Columbus House and their clients, continuing next week with a talk on homelessness in the US by Columbus House CEO Alison Cunningham.

The second year class is getting ready for the urban studio, which this year has a new site in the small, post-industrial city, \_\_\_\_\_, USA, aka Lowell, MA, [likelowell.com](http://likelowell.com), #lowell #theresalot-tolike #lowelltheresalottolike.

### OTG's Guide to Spring

**Advanced Studios**  
Third Years and Post Pros participated in the Advanced Studio Lottery. Highlights include:

### Phifer

A new artist's colony in Marfa, TX. Phifer: "Architecture so spare that it becomes aggressive." "Is an un-self-conscious form possible?" Dugdale:

"For travel week, we will spend a good amount of time in Marfa... which is NOT Rome." #allroadsleadtomarfa

### Erdman

Key Words: #ArchitecturalObjects #ArchitecturalQualities #Alteration #Massing #ooo

### Easterling

OTG would like to clarify on behalf of Professor Easterling, the flag she displayed during her presentation was not a Princeton flag, but the Olympic flag for the refugee team. #NYGOcracy #improv

### Aureli

Stop us if you've heard this before: Domestic space, typology, affordability, San Francisco. We look forward to square oblique renderings of sparsely furnished rooms. #bart

### Plater-Zyberk

Take a tour with Tatiana through the gardens of Mexico. Be original, and enjoy your stay in picturesque beach towns aptly named Seaside, Rosemary Beach, Alys Beach and SweetBay. #NewUrbanismRedux #BeachfrontBargainHunt

### Bilbao Bellow/Bow

Bellow and Bow commit to regular FaceTime meetings. Get drunk with them off sustainable sake in Kyoto. #sakebros #ascotsmananirishmanandacanadianwalkintoabar

### Bellow/Bow Bilbao

Take a stroll with Tatiana through the gardens of Mexico. Be original, and visit a part of Mexico that isn't Cancun. #yesyouculiacan

### Houben

Take a stroll down memory lane and reimagine your first semester branch library project under the wing of Francine Houben. Completely unrelated fact: Hard drugs ARE illegal in the Netherlands but you may purchase up to 5g of cannabis a day from coffee shops. #readingisFUN-damental #goingdutch