Japanese architecture and urbanism both as present practice and course of history provide us with particular features and unique examples. On the one hand, they are deeply rooted in cultural patterns highlighting important differences between the approaches to the environment and its design in the East and the West; on the other, they are derivative of Japan's contemporary conditions: advanced technology, modes of production and consumption, social order, systems of urbanization, and others, which altogether have by now yielded one of the most innovative, future oriented, and critical practices in the world of urban architecture today.

The course introduces the major issues characterizing Japanese architecture in the past and, more importantly, as well as more in detail, its contemporary modernization (with an emphasis on postwar developments including the most recent ones today). Special attention will be given to "stages" of urbanization and various interpretations of the city by generations of Japanese architects. Aspects of economic, technological, social, and political conditions relevant to the built environment, with all their complexities and contradictions, will also be discussed. The weekly lectures/seminars add up to basically a theory course with the necessary references to the historic developments of Japan and Japanese architecture. Contemporary design philosophies and movements will be outlined in the context of traditions and the wider international scene.

The purpose of the course is to expose you, the students, to various architectural and urban design philosophies, methodologies and practices in a culture different from ours, thus provide you with an additional tool to further develop your awareness of the built environment as a cultural phenomenon, as well as a form of political and ideological discourse within society. In so doing, the course ultimately aims at helping you to come to a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between society and architecture, or, in general, the built environment, plus the role of the architect in guiding this relationship.

In the first half of the weekly classes there will be lecture presentations by your instructor, while in the second half student presentations and discussions on specific topics and/or architectural complexes. You are required to record the presentation of your instructor and keep your class notes up to date. Your final assignment will be designing a very small piece of architecture on specific urban sites the presentation of which will include only one board (24 x 36 equivalent) and a small built model. You will receive grades for your class presentations, submitted class notes, and final assignment, leading to your grade for the course.

I look forward to working with you.