

MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture VI  
*Revision 0*  
MODULE CODE: ARC711  
HAND OUT No: 20

**Essential Reading:**

Leader D. Groves J, *Introducing Lacan*, Cambridge UK, Icon Books, 1995

**Useful Reading:**

Mallgrave H F, *Architectural Theory Vol.1*, Oxford UK and other places, 2006

**Hermeneutics II**

I'm using the term hermeneutics because in the academic world it is usually taken to be associated or even be – 'interpretation'.

Cultural Context in the undergraduate course at UU is based on a hermeneutical approach. This is to say that it requires students to interpret rather than to learn like parrots. Interpreting is really a process of appreciating what is significant and what is not. It is then a process of articulating what is significant so that the listener or the reader can remove ambiguity. It is a bit like turning a vase around to see that it is perfectly symmetrical about both axes or that it is not. This makes it possible for people to make declarations about 'things' that are the same – or different - and also to behave accordingly.

For a while now the cultural context modules have relied on writing essays and on dialogue in studio and I am hoping that you will contribute far more to the latter, dialogue in studio and in these cc modules, now that you have been out working and/or getting around the world a bit. To help with writing and articulating your thoughts there are two books you should purchase if you can:-

**Warburton N**, *Thinking From A-Z III*, London and new York, Routledge, 2007

**Warburton N**, *The Basics of Essay Writing*, London and new York, Routledge, 2007

As numbers increase the philosophical differences are likely to become more diverse and interpretation becomes a more necessary skill. Hopefully you will appreciate that because each person is perfectly capable of making an interpretation of their own it is important to allow for dialogue between people so that they can remove ambiguity in an acceptable way.

I am hoping that you will talk to the undergraduate students a bit and they with you so that your experience and interpretive skills can be shared with them. It is usually more about confidence than most other things, although confidence can sometimes become Hubris. Appendix I is a diagram of my hermeneutic quadrant giving the stages of recognition and cognition. In order to appreciate it you will need to read a number of books and hopefully this term will

- Improve your ability to interpret the built environment and
- Introduce you to a way of converting theory into practice (studio work)

You will see from the module that most of the hours of work are on your own. Please use the library often, it is full of useful material and you are welcome to recommend books of your own. You are also encouraged to email me on [wj.thompson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:wj.thompson@ulster.ac.uk) at any time with questions and comments.

We will review our understanding of the way in which we actually experience our existence by sharing some illustrations of the perceptual mechanisms we have on board, so to speak, that allow us to accumulate experience and then act on what is around us. We have accumulated these illustrations by gradually exploring the world we live in.

I have included an extract from Kurokawa's book  
Kurokawa K, The Philosophy of Symbiosis, London, Academy Editions, 1994



Also an introduction to  
Canguilhem G, The Normal and the Pathological, New York, Zone Books, 1989  
Written by Michael Foucault.

And an extract from  
Cohen G A, Karl Marx's Theory of History, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984

I am hoping to discuss these extracts if we can get them onto a screen! The extracts are pdf files and will be available on the web some time soon.

It would be nice if you could get hold of the books. It is difficult for reasons of copyright and also cost to distribute printed copies for you to take away. It is also good for you to look at the books if you can and read more than just a fraction of the total text. However each of you will make choices according to your own interests I am sure.

One further book of interest generally, it is used by Baird in his book [Baird G, The Space of Appearance, Cambridge Ma; London, MIT Press, 2003] and also by Kenneth Frampton in his book [Frampton K, Labour Work and Architecture, Phaidon Press Ltd, 2002] and it is:  
Arendt H, The Human Condition, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969.

In it she writes about labour as metabolism, the very basic interaction of energy between our living organism and our surroundings and it is this that commences the road to dogma and which also beckons our return to jouissance or the excitement of being. The second interaction is work, which is fabricating and making (read her or talk to me about her use of this term), of bringing into being that which we need for social action and finally social action which is a contentious issue that may be resolved as language both spoken and written, or by thinking itself in the form of coming to recognise and then using recognition in order to hold particular relationships in place.