

Building: Construction: Work An Introduction to Construction History

Thomas Leslie, Instructor

This course examines the history of human construction over the last 4500 years. By focusing on materials, processes, and techniques, Construction History offers an alternative to traditional architectural narratives, making productive connections to histories of economics, industry, and labor and to related disciplines such as structural and civil engineering.

Lectures will focus on material typologies, showing how production methods and economics have influenced design and vice versa; on the development and evolution of building science; and on the impact changing technology has had on architectural aesthetics and ethics over the last century. The class will conclude by examining contemporary issues in technology and design, in particular efforts to address profligate energy use.

Students will have the option of executing a detailed analytical model illustrating technical aspects of a selected work or writing a 15-20 page term paper. There will be a take-home midterm and final.

No technical knowledge or mathematical background is required—concepts will be explained in intuitively and qualitatively.

Thomas Leslie, FAIA, FAAR, is a Visiting Professor at the Illinois School of Architecture. He is the author of Chicago Skyscrapers, 1871-1934; Louis I. Kahn: Building Art, Building Science; Beauty's Rigor: Patterns of Production in the Work of Pier Luigi Nervi and, with Jason Alread and Rob Whitehead, Design-Tech: Building Science for Architects. Prior to teaching he was an Associate with Norman Foster and Partners.

