

ARCH 591 TEH -

The Experimental House - Histories of Housing

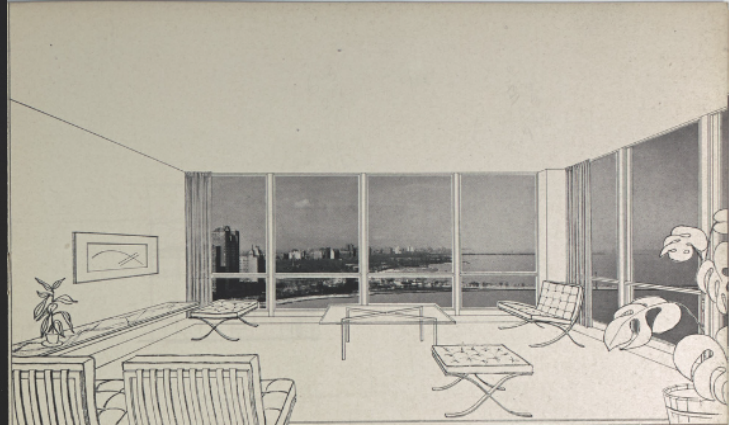
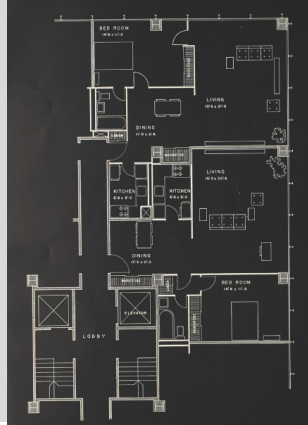
Spring 2025

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Thursdays, 2-5pm

4 credit hours



Sales Brochure for the 860-880 Lakeshore Drive Apartments, Museum of Modern Art

The house provides a small-scale design project that allows architects, builders, and clients to experiment in multiple ways, from the technical (building systems) and formal (building aesthetics) to the social (how we live). This course will provide students with an opportunity to refine their research skills – first delving into experimentation in housing design in the 19th and 20th centuries, and second, looking specifically at the history of the 860-880 Lakeshore Drive Apartments, a pair of innovative middle-class housing towers designed by Mies van der Rohe in Chicago, completed in 1951. The Apartments will celebrate their 75th anniversary in 2026, and this project will support the efforts the 860 Trust, which owns and manages the building, to celebrate its history and tell new stories about its innovations in construction, the role of collaboration between architects and engineers like Georgia Brown (the second African American woman to earn a license in architecture in the U.S.), and the role of residents in stewarding the building into the 21st century.

We will spend the first half of the semester conducting site visits, particularly to experimental houses listed on the National Register of Historic Places that we can study in situ, as well as the Experiment Station Farm House (now known as the Mumford House), the Warm Air Research House, and projects of the Small Homes Research Council. We will also visit Chicago (your travel costs will be covered) and work directly with residents in 860-880 Lakeshore Drive to develop new ways of telling its story. Our goal is to write, collaboratively, an essay that will support the nomination of 860-880 as a National Historic Landmark, the highest form of distinction granted to buildings and landscapes, recognizing their significance to telling the story of America.

Beyond our fundamental focus on experimental housing, students will also gain an understanding of historic preservation guidelines and documentation in the U.S. and will create materials suitable for a portfolio showcasing that knowledge – students are encouraged to treat the research project as an opportunity to prepare a paper or poster for an academic conference. Guest lectures from historic preservation professionals as well as experts in construction will supplement site visits and classroom activities.

