

WHO CONTROLS THE DESIGN?

Architecture *in the Age of* Artificial Intelligence

AI will not replace architects. But architects who know how to question, challenge, and shape AI will replace those who don't.

WHY THIS SEMINAR IS DIFFERENT

Most AI conversations in architecture schools are about tools: which software to learn, which plugins to use. This seminar is about something more fundamental: *power, agency, and the future of the profession.*

Who decides what AI learns from? Who owns a design when AI generated it? What happens to the profession when a client can prompt a building into existence? How do you know if you have agency? How can you build it?

These are not technical questions. They are questions of agency, authorship, ethics, and survival that every architecture student should be wrestling with before they enter practice.

This is a question- and discussion-driven seminar. No prior knowledge of AI is required or assumed. You do not need to be a coder or interested in technology. *You need to be curious, opinionated and willing to be challenged.*

COURSE LOGISTICS

CREDITS	3 credits. CRN 78038
FORMAT	Weekly seminar — discussion, debate, possible guest critics
PREREQS	None. Open to all graduate students (open to undergraduate students; case by case basis)
ENROLLMENT	Limited to 12 students
CONTACT	Randy Deutsch rdeutsch@illinois.edu

WHAT WE WILL EXAMINE

The seminar is organized around five interlocking themes, each examined through light readings, case studies, visiting practitioners, and structured debate:

01 Authorship & Attribution

- When AI generates a design, who is the author? The prompter? The firm? The model's training data?
- How should attribution work when AI is a substantial co-creator?
- What do existing copyright frameworks fail to address and what should replace them?

02 Ethics of Training Data & Fair Use

- AI image and design models are trained on vast archives of human work often without consent or compensation. Is this acceptable?
- What obligations do firms and schools have when adopting tools built on uncredited labor?
- Case studies: litigation, policy responses, and emerging professional standards.

03 Bias, Representation & the Built Environment

- AI trained on historical architectural photography inherits historical biases. What does this mean for whose aesthetics, whose neighborhoods, and whose bodies are centered in AI-generated design?
- How can practitioners audit and resist these biases in practice?

04 Labor, Education & the Profession

- Which roles in architecture are most vulnerable to automation and which are not?
- How should architecture schools be rethinking what they teach and why?
- Should professional licensure bodies regulate the use of AI in stamped drawings?

05 Agency, Advocacy & Shaping the Future

- What levers do architects, students, and professional associations have to shape AI policy?
- Who is writing the guidelines right now and who is missing from those conversations?
- Studio: each student develops a personal position presentation and presents it.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Expect to walk into class with an opinion and leave with a more complicated one. Past seminar questions include:

- "If a client can use Midjourney to generate a building concept, what is the architect actually selling?"
 - "Should the AIA adopt an ethical framework for AI use? Or should that be left to each firm to decide?"
 - "Is an AI trained on Zaha Hadid's drawings allowed to design in 'her style'? Does she or her estate have a say?"
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ENROLLMENT IS LIMITED

The questions this seminar asks will define your career. Enroll or contact the instructor to discuss fit.

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ARCH 594 AI Cheat Sheet

CRN 78038

Seminar Fall 2026

Seminar name: *Architecture in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*

Instructor: Randy Deutsch

Contact: rdeutsch@illinois.edu

Meeting time: Wednesdays 9-11:50 AM

Location: 102B Architecture Building

Enrollment: Limited to 12 students

Flyer: See pages 1-2

This seminar will ask and seek to answer:

- What new capabilities could AI enable?
- How can designers embrace new modes of design?
- What is it that makes us valuable as architects?
- What do AI technologies vs. design professionals do best?
- How can AI augment and amplify what we do?
- How might we leverage AI to reduce our industry's challenges (time, cost, carbon, safety?)
- How can we use AI to expand the value of what we do in studio?

Additional questions this seminar will explore:

- How might we leverage AI to reduce our industry's challenges (time, cost, carbon, safety, etc.)?
- How can we use AI to expand the value of what we do in studio?
- With knowledge bound in unstructured data sources like people, 3D models, and 2D drawings, how might AI help address this?
- With the expanded thinking AI enables, what value will we create and how might we work differently?
- What forms of simulation, automation, and generative outcomes should AI be oriented toward for maximum impact in our collective outcomes?