

ARCH 591: Problems in Architectural History and Theory

Exhibiting Housing - History, Design, Theory

Fall 2026 - POT B (2nd 8 week)

Prof. Kathryn Holliday

T/Th, 9:00am–10:50am 4

credit hours

CRN 63994



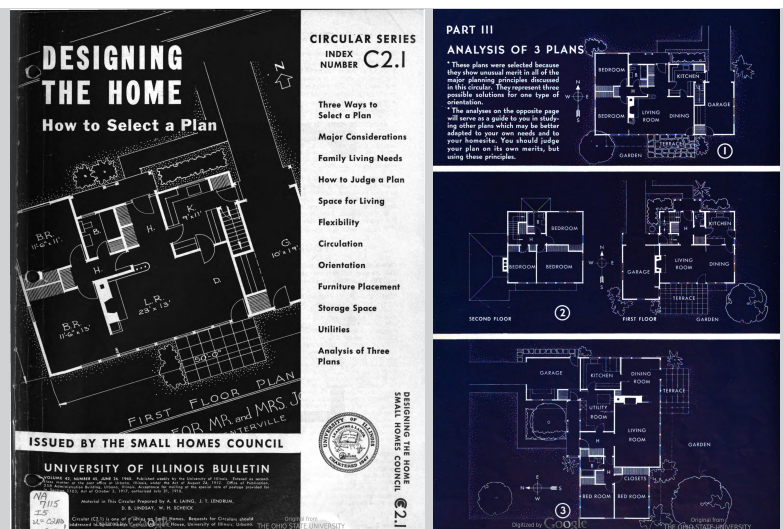
left: Houses and Housing Exhibition (1939), Museum of Modern Art. Image: MoMA Archive and Library
right: House of Tomorrow, Chicago World's Fair of 1933. Postcard.

This course explores the history of housing by looking at exhibitions dedicated to the subject in the 20th century. From the 1927 Weissenhof Siedlung to the 1939 "Houses and Housing" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, to more recent exhibitions by the American Institute of Architects at the National Building Museum and the Venice Biennale, avant-garde housing has remained a consistent theme for curators and architects alike. Housing demonstrations at World's Fairs, including the Chicago 1933 and New York 1939 fairs focused on the house and town "of tomorrow," focused on popular audiences and codifying norms of gender, class, and race in domestic space.

This course will explore about a dozen exhibitions as case studies and then students will dive deeply into the University Archives to propose an exhibition using materials in the Small Homes Council collection. We will meet once per week in the archive on campus; in addition to exploring the history of modern housing, students will learn methods of archival research as well as basic curatorial practices in producing didactic exhibitions.

Between 1945 and 1990, the Small Homes Council operated at the University of Illinois, dedicated to creating usable prototypes for efficient, affordable single family homes in the Midwest. Its history remains largely unexamined but is documented thoroughly in archives housed in our University Library.

left and right: A.K. Laing, Designing the Home (Small Homes Council, 1945)



Questions? Email Prof. Holliday at keh202@illinois.edu.