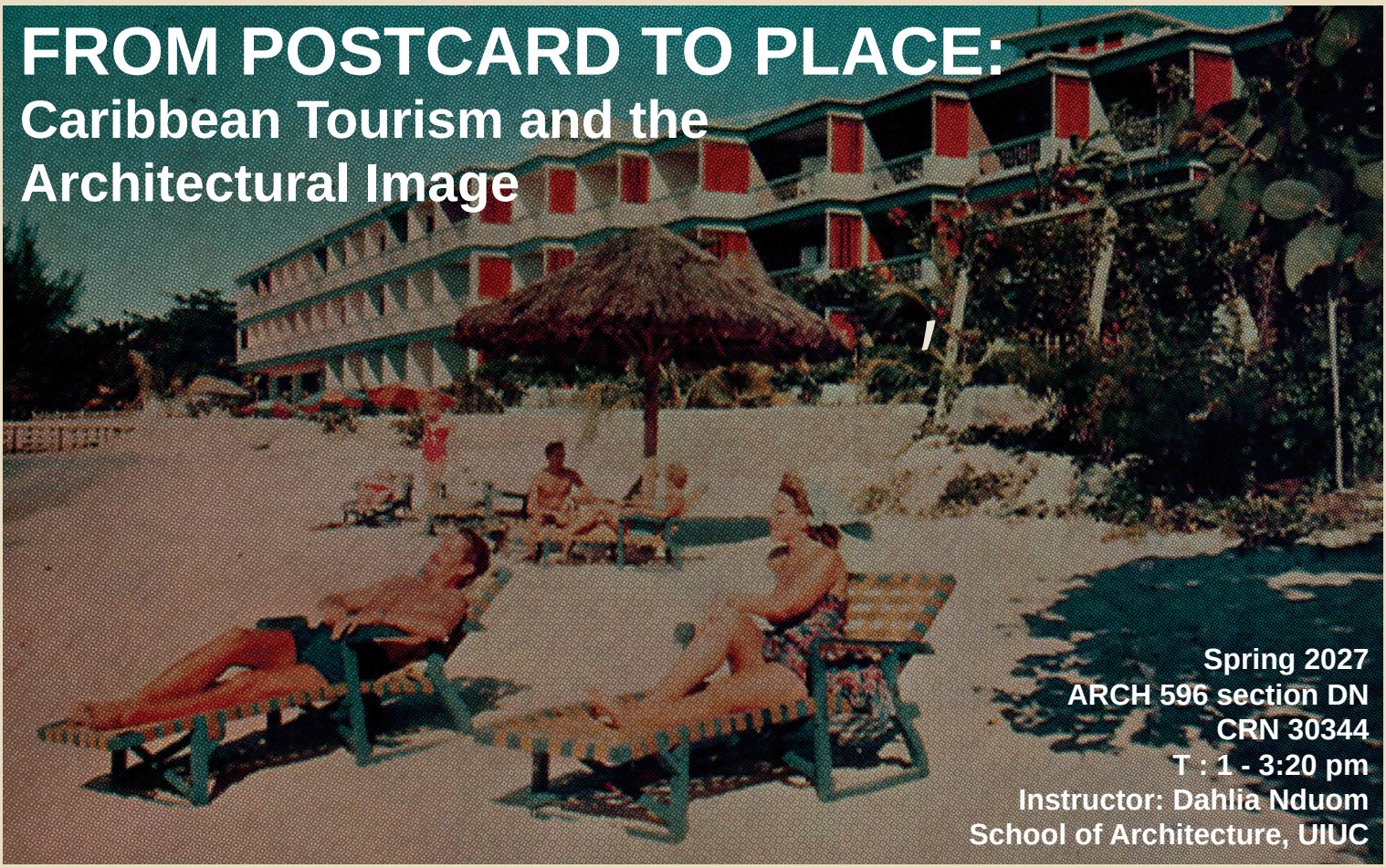
FROM POSTCARD TO PLACE:
Caribbean Tourism and the Architectural Image



Spring 2027
ARCH 596 section DN
CRN 30344
T : 1 - 3:20 pm
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This seminar examines how tourism's image economies (e.g., paintings, photographs, postcards, advertisements) construct the Caribbean as an "exotic" paradise of leisure and health, disseminating that fantasy to advance political, social, cultural, and economic objectives. Using the Caribbean as a case study, we will examine how historical representations (from the 18th century to the present) center the tourist gaze, colonial consumption, and simulated authenticity to shape a picturesque ideal.

The seminar will probe architecture's positioning within these media and how images translate into architectural tropes in resorts, waterfronts, and everyday urban fabrics. Reading the "postcard" against the place, we ask what tourism imagery reveals, conceals, and idealizes in Caribbean architecture. Students will explore whose leisure is visible, whose labor is hidden, how climate, comfort, and health are framed, and where local belonging and identity are flattened into stereotypes. Students will explore theories at the intersection of tourism studies and architecture as they analyze historic tourism media and their dissemination, alongside physical developments within and at the margins of tourist spaces.

Through case studies, students will gain a deeper understanding of architecture and identity across the region, including the indigenous, colonial, modernist, economic, political, and climatic forces that have shaped its morphology. Through collage, analytical drawing, and "counter-image" exercises, we will explore these histories, unpack the nuanced architectural legacy, explore architectures of resistance, and present representations that foreground Caribbean spatial narratives of belonging, care, and identity.