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course title: American Architecture
institution: University of Pennsylvania
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American Architecture (HSPV 521)

Fall 2012

Meeting Time and Place: Wednesdays, 2 - 5 p.m., Meyerson B-3

Office Hours: Mondays, 3-5PM, Meyerson G-16. *Please contact instructor by email to schedule meetings within these hours or outside of them.*

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Description:

This course is a survey of architecture in the United States. The organization, while broadly chronological, emphasizes themes around which important scholarship has gathered. The central purpose is to acquaint you with some of the cultural, economic, environmental, and creative forces that have shaped buildings and settlements in North America for the last 400 years. To that end, we will study a mix of “high-style” and “vernacular” architectures while prompting you to think critically about these categories. Throughout the semester, you will be asked to grapple with both the content of assigned readings (the subject) and the manner in which authors present their arguments (the method). Louis Sullivan, for instance, gives us the tall office building “artistically considered” while Carol Willis presents it as a financial and legal artifact. What do you make of the difference? Finally, you will learn how to describe buildings. While mastery of architectural vocabulary is a necessary part of that endeavor, it is only a starting point. Rich or “thick” description is more than accurate prose. It is integral to understanding the built environment – indeed, to *seeing* it at all. Although this is a lecture class, it requires students to participate regularly in discussions of assigned readings. Papers are short but intensive. Based on original research and independent thought, they are graduate-level exercises in argumentation, clear prose, and the use of scholarly apparatus.

Required Texts (available at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th St.):

- Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Technological and Cultural Context* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).
- Steven Conn and Max Page, eds., *Building the Nation: Americans Write About Their Architecture, Their Cities, and Their Landscape* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
- Keith L. Eggner, ed., *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Strongly Recommended for Purchase:

- Cyril Harris, *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction* (any edition).
- Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

Course Requirements:

- 1) Attendance and participation. We cover a lot of material in each lecture, so regular attendance is crucial. It is equally important that you complete each week's readings prior to that week's lecture. *Readings provide the context for lectures rather than duplicating them.* Non-Gelernter readings are the focus of student-led discussion sessions that occur in the second half of class; (a sign-up sheet will circulate during our second meeting.) Attendance and participation count for **20 percent** of your grade.
- 2) Completion of two five-page papers. These must employ double-spaced text, twelve-point Cambria font, and 1.25-inch margins. They count for **30 percent** of your final grade (10% for the first and 20% for the second) and are meant to sharpen complementary skills used in the practice of architectural history. In both papers, you will be making a scholarly argument, not writing a summary or a book report. As such, you will need to present a clear *thesis*, supported by evidence and framed by an introduction and a conclusion (see Frederick Crews, *The Random House Handbook* for further discussion). Footnotes should follow a standard format, preferably that outlined in Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. While you may use the internet to assist your research, few if any of your cited sources should be websites. If you believe your topic merits an exception to this rule, please obtain my permission well before you submit your paper.

Primary Source Paper, due on October 10th. Historians distinguish between “primary” and “secondary” sources. Primary sources are the raw materials of history: newspaper articles, diary accounts, the federal census – sources that date from the period you're studying (for example, the date when your building was erected). Secondary sources are what historians make out of primary sources: scholarly books and articles, generally written in recent decades. A historian, then, is someone who interprets, contextualizes, and pieces together. This assignment asks you to do the same. In our *Building the Nation* reader, the editors offer primary sources with brief introductions. Picking one of these selections that has not been assigned on our syllabus, explain it in greater depth. Does the source fit into the history of American architecture as presented in survey textbooks like Mark Gelernter's? If so, what role does it play, and could it play others? If not, does it belong there? Why should architectural historians pay attention to this primary source and what else might they do with it? Please use and cite a minimum of three other sources (primary or secondary) to put the one you've chosen into context. These should not include our Gelernter book, though its bibliography may be a good starting point for your research.

Historiography Paper, *due on November 21st*. In this assignment, the goal is to compare the ways scholars have looked at a canonical American building or building type over time (if you do not know what this means, please ask). Take, for example, Minoru Yamasaki's Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis (1952-55; demolished 1972). The building's fate supposedly showed "the failure of Modernism" until historians began questioning that interpretation in the 1980s. What do you make of the shift? Did the impetus come from within the field of architectural history or outside of it? Does scholarship on your building tend to get stuck in ruts? If so, what aspects of the building's history remain unexplored, and what methods might you use to correct that? Hint: assigned readings beyond our Gelernter textbook can be your guides here. Ask yourself: what would Carol Willis or Alice Friedman say about my building if she were studying it?

Some ground rules: A) this paper should draw on scholarly sources, e.g. the professional writings of architectural historians, sociologists, architects, and urban planners, not of journalists or architecture critics; B) summary of your site's history should be minimal – only as much as your reader needs to make sense of the historiography; (the assignment isn't to write an account of your building but to critically analyze what other scholars have said about it); C) as you organize your findings and ideas, ask yourself: Where do the viewpoints I've discovered originate? What patterns can I discern? Can viewpoints be grouped by their authors' academic disciplines or by other identifiable camps? Or are variables like the periods in which particular views are expressed more important?

- 3) **Mid-Term and Final Exams.** The mid-term, *held on October 24th*, will consist of two slide comparisons (a total of four slides). The final, *held on 14 December, 2-4 PM*, will involve two slide comparisons and two essay questions. Strong essays will avoid generalization and provide details gleaned from readings and class discussion. The exams count for **20 and 30 percent**, respectively, of your grade. Please return any exam-related handouts at the end of each test.

A Note on Our Surroundings: Philadelphia arguably contains the best cross-section of urban building types in the country as well as many canonical works. You should consider the city part of our classroom. To orient yourself, you may wish to consult some of the sources listed under "Philadelphia Architectural & Geographic Resources," below.

DESCRIBING BUILDINGS & LANDSCAPES: A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dictionaries, Glossaries, Primers

Francis D.K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1995).

James S. Curl, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

James S. Curl, *Classical Architecture: An Introduction to Its Vocabulary and Essentials, with a Select Glossary of Terms* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2003).

Cyril M. Harris, *Dictionary of Architecture & Construction*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

Carl R. Lounsbury, ed., *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

James F. O’Gorman, *The ABC of Architecture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

Therese O’Malley, *Keywords in American Landscape Design* (New Haven: Center for the Advanced Study of the Visual Arts / Yale University Press, 2010).

John Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

Field Guides & Stylebooks

Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

Dell Upton, *America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1986).

Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes

Allan B. Jacobs, *Looking at Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Donald Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

PHILADELPHIA ARCHITECTURAL & GEOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Select Guidebooks

John Andrew Gallery, *Philadelphia Architecture: a Guide to the City*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2009).

Edward Teitelman and Richard W. Longstreth, *Architecture in Philadelphia; a Guide* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974).

Richard Webster, *Philadelphia Preserved: Catalog of the Historic American Buildings Survey* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

Richard Saul Wurman and John Andrew Gallery, *Man-Made Philadelphia; a Guide to Its Physical and Cultural Environment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).

Major Architectural History Resources Online

Places in Time (via Bryn Mawr College)

<http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/>

Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project (via Philadelphia Athenaeum)

<http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/>

Note: full access via U. Penn Library computers

Historic Maps Online

<http://www.philageohistory.org>

<http://www.phillyh2o.org/maps>

<http://www.pagenealogy.net/maps%20here.htm>

Historic Photographs Online

<http://www.phillyhistory.org/PhotoArchive>

COURSE CALENDAR:

Week 1 (September 5th)

Course overview and scope: What Is American Architecture?

Week 2 (September 12th)

Native American Architectures

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 1
- Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, “‘Modifying Factors’ in Native American Architecture,” chap. 2 in Eggener reader.

Week 3 (September 19th)**Colonial Encounters**

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 2.
- Cary Carson et al., “Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 16, nos. 2-3 (1981): 135-178.

Week 4 (September 26th)**Getting Formal**

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 3.
- Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (1992), 3-29.
- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, William Peden, ed., (1982), 152-154.

Week 5 (October 3th)**Empires, Waxing and Waning**

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 4.
- Marc Treib, “Church Design and Construction in Spanish New Mexico,” in Eggener reader, 51-72.
- Anonymous, excerpt from “On the Architecture of America,” 1790, in Conn and Page reader, 9-10.
- Anonymous, excerpt from “On the Arts,” 1815, in Conn and Page reader, 10-12.

Week 6 (October 10th)**FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS****Urban Space in the Early Republic**

- John Stilgoe, “National Design: Mercantile Cities and the Grid,” in Eggener reader, 25-38.
- Pamela Scott, “‘This Vast Empire’: The Iconography of the Mall, 1791-1848,” in *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*, ed. Richard Longstreth (1991), pp. 37-60.
- Mrs. Anne Royal, “The Federal Capital” and “Philadelphia – Its Markets and Charities,” in Warren S. Tryon, ed., *A Mirror for Americans* (1952), 48-55, 58-68.

Week 7 (October 17th)

Professionalism, Historicism, Nationalism

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 5.
- Mary N. Woods, “The First Professional: Benjamin Henry Latrobe,” in Eggener reader, 112-131.
- W. Barksdale Maynard, “The Greek Revival: Americanness, Politics, and Economics,” in Eggener reader, 132-141.

Week 8 (October 24th)

MID-TERM EXAM (first half of class)

Domesticity and the Rural Ideal at Mid Century

- Gwendolyn Wright, “Independence and the Rural Cottage,” in Eggener reader, 142-156.
- Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850; repr., Dover, 1969), pp. 22-27.
- Anonymous, “Landscape Gardening: Llewellyn Park,” 1857, and Anonymous, “Llewellyn Park,” 1871, in Conn and Page reader, 263-264.
- Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, excerpt from *The American Woman’s Home*, 1869, in Conn and Page reader, 324-328.

Week 9 (October 31st)

Gilded Age Ideals and Realities

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 6.
- Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (1995), 46 - 77.
- Richard T. Ely, excerpt from "Pullman: A Social Study," 1885, in Conn and Page reader, 328-335.
- Isaac F. Marcosson, excerpt from "Giving Carnegie Libraries," 1905, in Conn and Page reader, 338-341.

Week 10 (November 7th)

Modernity, Modernism, and the City

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 7.
- Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance* (1995), 19-65.
- Louis Sullivan, excerpt from "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," 1896, in Conn and Page reader pp. 221-226.

Week 11 (November 14th)

Have We Ever Been Modern?

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 8.
- James F. O'Gorman, "The Prairie House," in Eggener reader, pp. 267-280.
- Aymar Embury, II, "Modern Adaptations of the Dutch Colonial," *International Studio* 35, no. 138 (August 1908): 49-52.
- Helen Burns, excerpt from "Colonial Williamsburg," 1940, in Conn and Page reader, pp. 378-381.

Week 12 (November 21st)

SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS

High Modernism and the Professional Architect

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 9.
- Andrew Saint, *The Image of the Architect* (1983), pp. 1-14.
- Alice T. Friedman, “People Who Live in Glass Houses: Edith Farnsworth, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson,” in Eggener reader, pp. 316-341.

Week 13 (November 28th)

Cities in the Age of the Automobile

- Jane Jacobs, “Downtown is for People” (1958), in Conn and Page reader, pp. 237-240.
- Howard Gillette, Jr., “The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City,” *APA Journal* (Autumn 1985): 449-460.
- Chad Freidrichs, director, *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth: An Urban History* (2011); **FILM screening time TBA**
- Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (1972, second ed. 1977), pp. 3-20.

Week 14 (December 5th)

Postmodernism and the Problem of Community

- Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, chap. 10.
- Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, “The Second Coming of the American Small Town,” *Wilson Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 19-50.
- Michael Sorkin, “Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park,” in Eggener reader, 407-411.

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 14th, 2PM – 4PM.