

American Architecture
History 4404-W and Art 4240
Fall 2006, Mondays 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Dr. Ann McCleary

Office: History Department, TLC 3-211; telephone: 678-839-6041

Public History Center: Pafford 207; telephone 678-839-6141

Email: amcclear@westga.edu

Office hours: Mondays 1-4, Thursdays 12-4 and by appointment

Course Objectives

The primary objectives of this course are to provide an introduction to the field of American architecture; to examine the various methods one can use to study architecture; to develop skills in documenting and interpreting historic buildings, and to explore how architecture can shed light on broader issues and questions in such fields as family history, women's history, ethnicity and acculturation, art history, and popular culture. A background in American architectural styles is *not* required. Students will develop a working knowledge of styles and architectural terminology in this course.

This course will trace the evolution of American architecture with a particular emphasis on the "home" from the first European housing at Jamestown to the post-World War II ranch house and the modern pre-fabricated housing. Through the lens of domestic architecture, we will examine the various approaches to studying architecture--including architectural style, floor plans, interior decoration and design, furnishings, and building technologies and construction.

We will focus particularly on "vernacular," or ordinary, architecture, although we will also talk about major architects and designers and significant architectural influences and trends. Our study will reflect the interdisciplinary character of this field, drawing upon art history, anthropology, archaeology, cultural geography, folklife studies, history of technology, women's history, and American social and cultural history. The readings will reflect this variety of perspectives.

This course will require fieldtrips and fieldwork experiences so that students will be able to apply their knowledge to analyzing and dating buildings using architectural style, technology, and floor plans as well as historical records. Each student will be required to attend two field trips and to complete a final project documenting a building or building complex or to write a research paper on an approved topic.

WAC Designation

A "W" designation means that this course is a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) course. WAC accepts as its guiding principle the idea that writing is a valuable tool for learning and communication. The writing components of a course so designated are designed to communicate what you have learned. Students are required to take two "W" courses for an undergraduate degree in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Learning Outcomes

- 1, Students will be able to document and analyze historical buildings by describing the building, drawing a floor plan, analyzing the changes to the building over time, and dating the building through its architectural features.
2. Students will be able to conduct historical research in written records to date the building, trace a chain of title, and document the building's history and to write analytically about the results of that region.
3. Students will be able to interpret a historic building and identify its style and building period and to write an architectural description of at least three historic buildings.
4. Students will be able to describe and analyze, in writing, the evolution of American architecture from the colonial period through the ranch house from an interdisciplinary perspective.
5. Students will be able to use buildings to examine broader historical questions in U.S. history and to write about how buildings reflect the social, cultural, architectural, and political context in which they were created.
6. Students will be able to identify the methods that different scholars use to study architecture and the contributions that these scholars make to the field of architectural studies, including historians, architectural historians, cultural geographers, anthropologists, women's historians, and historic archaeologists.

Course Readings

Required readings:

Dell Upton and John Vlach, *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. University of Georgia Press.

Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of American Housing*. MIT Press.

Clifford Clark, *The American Family Home, 1800-1960*. University of North Carolina Press.

Dell Upton, *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America*. National Trust for Historic Preservation

Recommended:

Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Alfred A. Knopf. This book provides a good glossary of terms and definitions of architectural styles.

Course Requirements

Examinations (40% of final grade)

The course includes a midterm and final examination, both drawn on readings and class discussions. The final exam will not be cumulative but rather based on materials from the second half of the class. Both exams will incorporate three major written components: an essay, architectural descriptions of buildings shown in slides, and identifications of key terms, people, or concepts in the field. Each exam will be worth 20% of the final course grade.

Fieldwork Experiences (15%)

One of the best ways to learn about how to study architecture is to conduct fieldwork and visit buildings. Each student will be expected to attend two field trip excursions and write, for each excursion, a two-page, word-processed summary of what he/she learned from the building. Each report must include a floor plan and any relevant field notes recorded at the time of the visit. These fieldwork assignments must be turned in within two weeks of the field trip. Field reports turned in late will be marked down one grade (10 points) for each day late.

Class project or paper (30%)

The class paper or project offers students an opportunity to apply the knowledge gained in class to analyzing and interpreting some aspect of American architecture. All projects must be discussed with me by the time of the mid-term exam. Students will have two choices for this project/paper:

1. A thorough study of a building or building complex, including a written narrative of its history, an architectural description and analysis, floor plans, photographs, and a contextual analysis of the building placing it in historical and architectural context. The contours of this study will vary with the building that the student chooses.
2. A research paper on an issue or topic related to the course. This might be an analysis of local buildings from tax records or other historical resources, a study of mill workers housing or the development of a mill town, sharecroppers housing based on historical photographs and existing buildings, housing advice directed at women in popular magazines, catalog housing from the early twentieth century, regional church styles, etc. Papers should be approximately ten pages in length, with additional visual documentation (site plans, floor plans, photographs, illustrations, examples of historical research, etc) as is pertinent to the topic.

All papers must be eight to ten pages of word-processed text, excluding illustrations, and include the appropriate methods of referencing the sources. A more detailed hand-out will be provided with specific instructions for both paper options. Project topics need to be submitted to me in writing by **August 28**. Each student will submit a draft of the paper to me three weeks in advance of the due date for review and revision (**November 6**). If you need assistance in choosing a topic, please contact me. Final papers turned in late will be marked down one full grade (10 points) for each day late.

Class participation and attendance (15%)

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings **before** each class and to be prepared to discuss these readings at the class meeting. Class attendance is important because we will be discussing

the readings and viewing slides that are essential to your understanding of the material. Regular class attendance will also help you perform better on the exams and class assignments.

Because this class meets only once a week, we will move quickly through the course material. More than two unexcused absences will lower your final course grade one letter grade; more than four unexcused absences will lower it two grades.

Tentative Schedule

August 14: Course introduction; Looking at architecture

August 21: Architecture, Housing, and Society in Early New England

Upton/Vlach: (Isham/Brown) 149-158; (Cummings) 219-239; (St. George) 336-365. *Wright*: chapter 1

August 28: Architecture, Housing, and Society in Early Virginia

Readings *Upton/Vlach*: (Upton) 315-35; (Neiman) 292-314. *Wright*, chapter 3. *Roots*, "The English," 55-61.

Due: Preliminary research proposal

September 4: Labor Day, no class

September 11: Folk Housing, Cultural Geography, and Cultural Diffusion

Readings *Upton/Vlach*: (Kniffen) 3-26; (Glassie and Kniffen) 159-181; (Price) 124-148; (Vlach) 58-78. *Roots*, 42-47.

September 18: Ethnicity and Architecture

Readings *Roots*: "Introduction," 7-15, and "Germans" and "Scots-Irish," 68-79. *Upton/Vlach*: (Chappell) 27-57; (Glassie) 394-432.

September 25: Ethnic Architecture across America

Readings Finish reading *America's Architectural Roots* and read (Gowans) 367-393; (McHenry) 107-123.

October 2: Midterm Exam

October 9: No class, fall break

October 16: Early Nineteenth Urban Architecture and Landscapes and the Development of Architectural Pattern Books

Readings Upton/Vlach: (Bishir) 447-481. Wright, chapters 2,4. Clark, chapter 1.

October 23: The Cult of Domesticity, Mid-Nineteenth Century Pattern Book Architecture, and Architectural Revivals

Readings Upton/Vlach: (Ames) 240-260; (Peterson) 433-446. Wright, chapters 5 and 6. Clark, chapters 2 and 3.

October 30: Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the City: Industrialization, the Suburbs, and the Working Class Family

Readings Upton/Vlach: (Cohen) 261-279; (Borechert) 281-291. Wright, chapters 7-8. Clark, chapter 4.

November 6: Architectural Reform: Bungalows, Home Economics, and the Progressive Housewife

Readings Upton/Vlach: (Lancaster), 79-106. Wright, chapter 9. Clark, chapters 5 and 6.

Due: Draft of class project

November 13: Planned Housing: Company Towns, Planned Communities, and Public Housing

Readings Wright, chapters 10 through 12

November 20: Post-World War II Suburban Housing, the Ranch House, and the Middle-Class Family Ideal

Readings Wright, chapter 13. Clark, chapter 7 and 8.

November 27: Contemporary American Architecture and Housing

Readings Wright, chapter 14. Clark, chapter 9.

Due: Final class project

December 4: Final exam, 5:30-7:30