

American Architecture
History 4404W and Art 4295-01W
Fall 2019

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Office hours: Tuesday 1:00-5:00 p.m. at the Center for Public History; Wednesday 11:00-12:30 at the Atlanta History Center; Thursday, 9-12 a.m. at the Center for Public History. Additional office hours by appointment. The Center is in the lower level of the Library, "inside" the Special Collections suite. The Center phone is 678-839-6141

Class meetings: Tuesday, 5:30-8 p.m. in Pafford 106

Course Objectives

The primary objectives of this course are to:

1.

This course will explore the evolution of American architecture with an emphasis on the "home" from the earliest European housing in the seventeenth century through the post-World War II ranch house. Through the lens of the American home, we will examine the various elements of architecture--including style, floor plan, interior design, furnishings, and building technologies and construction. A background in architectural styles is *not* required. Students will develop a working knowledge of styles and architectural terminology in this course.

In much of the class, we will focus on "vernacular," or ordinary, architecture, although we will also talk about significant architectural influences, styles, and trends as well as architects, reformers, and designers. Our study will reflect the interdisciplinary character of this field, drawing upon methodologies from art history, anthropology, archaeology, cultural geography, folklore and folklife, the history of technology, women's history, and American social and cultural history. The readings will reflect this variety of perspectives.

This course requires that all students attend two fieldtrips. These fieldwork experiences will teach students to apply their knowledge from readings and class discussions to dating and interpreting historic buildings. Each student will also complete a class project that documents a building or building complex or that interprets primary sources in American architecture.

DSW Designation

A **AW@** designation means that this course is a "Disciplinary Specific Writing" course. (see <https://www.westga.edu/dsw>) The guiding principle behind this designation is the idea that writing is a valuable tool for learning and communication. All W courses must require (a) at least one Writing-to-Communicate assignment that includes an iterative (draft-revision) process, and (b) a minimum of 4,000 words across all writing assignments, not including revisions.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will document and analyze a historical building by writing an architectural description of a building, identifying its style and/or period based on architectural features,

- drawing a floor plan, interpreting the changes to the building over time, and assessing the meaning of the building.
2. Students will conduct historical research in primary sources and to write analytically about the results of that research.
 3. Students will describe and interpret, in writing, the evolution of American architecture from the colonial period through the twentieth century from an interdisciplinary perspective.
 4. Students will 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.
 5. Students 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, art 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. A new edition is available, but plenty of copies of the older editions are available at very low prices on-line.

Course Requirements

Examinations (40% of final grade)

The course includes a midterm and a final examination, both drawn on readings and class discussions. The final exam will not be cumulative but will be based on materials from the second half of the class. Both exams will incorporate three major written components: an essay, interpretations 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 architecture is to visit buildings. Each student will be expected to attend two field trips and to write, for each excursion, a three-page, word-processed description and analysis of the building. The essay must include:

1. an architectural description of the building, identifying its style and/or period based on architectural features, and assessing the additions and changes to the building over its history;
2. a floor plan that illustrates the changes of the building over time;
3. an assessment of what the building tells us about the time and place in which it was created
4. your field notes from the time of the visit.

These fieldwork assignments must be turned in within two weeks of the date of the field trip.

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 primary sources related to American architecture. A more detailed description of the assignment requirements will be provided and posted on Course Den. Students will have two choices for this project/paper:

Option 1: A thorough study of a building or building complex, including a written narrative of its history, an architectural description, floor plans prepared by the student, photographs (both contemporary taken by the student and any historic photographs available), and an analysis of the building that places it in historical and architectural context. The contours of this study will vary with the building that the student chooses. The requirements of this project are similar to what one would include in a National Register nomination, but this assignment requires that students present what you have learned in an interpretive essay rather than report format. Please note that you may *not* select a building that is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places or one that has already been extensively documented. You must select a building that needs research and analysis! If you would like to pursue this option and need help in selecting a building, please let me know.

Option 2: A research paper on an issue or topic related to American architecture using *primary sources*, supplemented by secondary source material. I would be happy to provide some suggestions based on your interests, so please contact me regarding the period or type of architecture literature of interest and we can brainstorm primary sources that you could use. Some possible options include:

- a. Analysis of architectural literature. You have several options here,
 1. Analyze two to three pattern books from a certain time period to document a particular period of architecture. There is a wide range of this literature from the early nineteenth century through the present. For example, students have written about the bungalow, the Victorian house, or the 1920s home. You must choose two or three books to compare and contrast for this option.
 2. Compare two pattern books from different periods to explore how housing ideals changed over time.
 3. Analyze advice literature for women and the home, including popular literature or domestic manuals. This literature dates from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. You must have at least two or three primary sources.
 4. Explore a specific topic in American architecture through several pattern books or popular magazines. For example, students have written about the development of the kitchen or another room or space in the home using several pattern books.

An excellent database of such books is on-line at www.archive.org/details/buildingtechnologyheritagelibrary. The Association for Preservation Technology International (APTI) created and maintains the **Building Technology Heritage Library** (BTHL), a web-based digitized collection of archival architectural and construction trade catalogs, house plan books, and related publications.

All papers must be ten pages of word-processed text, double-spaced, *plus* appropriate illustrations, footnotes and bibliography. Students must include visual documentation appropriate to their topic, such as photographs, illustrations, site plans, floor plans, etc. Please note that illustrations, bibliography, floor plans, and cover pages do *not* count in the final page total.

Project Schedule:

1. **Tuesday, September 17 by 5 p.m.:** Project topics or ideas need to be submitted through Course Den.
2. **September 24:** We will meet with librarians who can help you find sources for your paper. All students are encouraged to make appointments to meet with these librarians individually to discuss their research.
2. **October 1:** A formal research proposal will be due, after we have our meeting with the librarian. This proposal must include: (1) your topic, (2) the primary sources you are using and (3) your secondary sources. Please submit a copy on Course Den.
3. **November 5:** Each student will submit a full draft of the paper to me in Course Den. Please note that a draft of your research paper is **required**, since this is a DSW class. The draft must be at least eight pages and include some images and a draft bibliography. I will provide comments and suggestions for your revision.
4. **December 3:** Final paper due.

***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 discuss the readings and view images that are essential to your understanding of the material. Please note that many of these images will not be available in your readings.

Because this class meets only once a week, we will move quickly through the course material. Regular class attendance will also help you perform better on the exams and class assignments. More than two unexcused absences will lower your final course grade one letter grade (10 points); more than four unexcused absences will lower it at least two grades, depending on the number of absences.

Additional Information

Plagiarism is a serious offence. Any example of plagiarism (even just one sentence) or other acts of academic dishonesty will be punished with an automatic “F” in the class. Claiming ignorance of what plagiarism is will not constitute a valid excuse. The History Department’s definition of plagiarism is available on-line at <http://www.westga.edu/~history/statementonplagiarism.pdf> to refresh your knowledge about this topic. See also the university honor code at http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

Cell phones and personal use of laptop computers will not be tolerated during class. Please turn off your cell phone when you come to class. If I see cell phones in use or on your desk during class, I will remove them for the remainder of the class. If you want or need to use your laptop for notetaking during class, please talk with me during the first two weeks of class.

Art Department Course Fees: Fees for this course support the [Visual Resources Center](#) (VRC), a research and teaching resource in the Art Department. The VRC enhances student learning by providing access to images and other scholarly art historical resources, and by supporting student research and writing. Students have access to the VRC's image database, [MDID](#), in completing their semester projects. In addition, students have access to the research support offered by the VRC staff.

Additional Syllabus Information for all UWG courses:

<https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php>

Class Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change, based on how we are progressing through the class topics. All students are responsible for keeping up with any changes in topics and/or readings.

The **field trip schedule** will be announced. A schedule of field trips will be developed based on student schedules.

August 20 Course Introduction

August 27 Architecture, Housing, and Society in Early New England

Readings:

- *Upton/Vlach*: (Isham/Brown) pp. 149-158, (Cummings) pp. 219-239
- *Wright*: chapter 1
- "Researching Historic Buildings in the Brattish Isles: Vernacular Architecture," at <http://www.buildinghistory.org/style/vernacular.shtml>
- "Bayleaf—Wealden Downland Open Air Museum," at <http://www.wealddown.co.uk/explore/buildings/further-reading/general-information-bayleaf-wealden-house/>

September 3 Architecture, Housing, and Society in the Early Chesapeake

Readings

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

September 10 Georgian Ideals and Cultural Diffusion

Readings:

- *Upton/Vlach*: (Kniffen) pp. 3-26; (Glassie and Kniffen) pp. 159-181; and (Glassie), pp. 394-432

- *Roots*, “The Scots-Irish” and “African Americans”

September 17 The Mid-Atlantic, the Upper South, and the Lower South Regions

Readings

- *Roots*, “The Germans”
- *Upton/Vlach*: (Chappell) pp. 27-57 and (Vlach) pp. 58-78.

DUE: Research project ideas

September 24 Researching Architectural History topics

Meet in Library with Anne Barnhart at 5:30 to discuss research topics

Ethnic Architecture Across America (7-8)

Readings

- Complete reading *America’s Architectural Roots*

October 1 Documenting Georgia Vernacular Architecture

Readings

- “House Types in Georgia,” available at <http://georgiashpo.org/sites/uploads/hpd/pdf/housetypes.pdf>

DUE: Research Proposal

October 8 Midterm Exam

October 15 Early Nineteenth Urban Architecture and Landscapes and the Development of Architectural Pattern Books

Readings:

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

October 22 The Cult of Domesticity, Mid-Nineteenth Century Pattern Book Architecture, Victorian Ideals, and Architectural Revivals

Readings:

- *Upton/Vlach*: (Ames) pp. 240-260;
- *Wright*, chapters 5-6
- *Clark*, chapters 2-3.

October 29 Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the City: Industrialization, the Suburbs, and the Working-Class Family

Readings

- *Upton/Vlach*: (Cohen) pp. 261-279

- *Wright*, chapters 7-8;
- *Clark*, chapter 4.

October 31 Architectural Reform: Bungalows, Home Economics, and the Progressive Housewife

Readings

- *Upton/Vlach*: (Lancaster), pp. 79-106.
- *Wright*, chapter 9;
- *Clark*, chapters 5-6;
- “The American Small House,” available at http://georgiashpo.org/sites/uploads/hpd/pdf/American_Small_House.pdf

November 5 No class

DUE: Research paper draft in Course Den by 8 p.m.

November 12 Planned Housing: Company Towns, Planned Communities, and Public Housing

Readings

- *Wright*, chapters 10-12;
- Allison Hoagland, “The Boardinghouse Murders: Housing and American Ideals in Michigan’s Copper Country in 1913,” on Course Den;
- Robert Blythe, “Unraveling the Threads of Community Life: Work, Play, and Place in the Alabama Mill Villages of the West Point Manufacturing Company,” on Course Den

November 19 Post-World War II Suburban Housing, the Ranch House, and the Middle-Class Family Ideal

Readings

- *Wright*, chapter 13
- *Clark*, chapter 7-8;
- “The Ranch House in Georgia,” available at http://georgiashpo.org/sites/uploads/hpd/pdf/Ranch_House_Evaluation_revSept2010.pdf

November 26 No class, Thanksgiving Break!

December 3:

Guest speaker: Dr. Richard Cloues, 5:30-6:45

DUE: Final research papers

December 10: Final exam, 5-7

Guide for Accessing the Plan Books

By Dr. Richard Clouse

archive.org > Internet Archive > Building Technology Heritage Library

The Association for Preservation Technology International (APT) created and maintains the **Building Technology Heritage Library** (BTHL), a web-based digitized collection of archival architectural and construction trade catalogs, house plan books, and related publications.

The collection contains materials printed and published before 1964 which are now in the public domain. The materials come from various libraries, museums, and private collections. The Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal was the first major contributor. To date, the BTHL contains 1,135 items – including more than 350 house plan books -- and more are being added.

The house plan books can be viewed on-line or downloaded as PDFs.

The collection can be searched but only using a rather clumsy and complicated built-in search protocol with which I have had disappointing results ...

To access the Building Technology Heritage Library – method 1:

The Building Technology Heritage Library is found at
www.archive.org/details/buildingtechnologyheritagelibrary

After the Building Technology Heritage Library web page opens, scroll down to the bottom of the first “box” and click on “Browse by Subject/Keywords”

From the list of keywords, select “House Plans” for the longest list. You can also choose among “House Plans,” “House Plans-Catalogs,” etc.

To access the Building Technology Heritage Library – method 2:

cut and paste this rather unwieldy URL into your browser:

<https://archive.org/search.php?query=mediatype%3Atexts%20AND%20collection%3Abuildingtechnologyheritagelibrary%20AND%20subject%3A%22House%20Plans%22>