American Architecture
History 5404
Fall 2013

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Office hours: T/Th from 2-4:30 at the Center for Public History, Ingram Library, lower level; Wednesdays 11:30-1 at the Atlanta History Center by request, and other hours by appointment.
Class meetings: Thursday, 5:30-8 p.m. in Pafford 206

Course Objectives
The primary objectives of this course are:
1. to provide an introduction to the field of American architecture;
2. to examine the various methods one can use to study architecture;
3. to develop skills in documenting and interpreting historic buildings; and
4. to explore how architecture illustrates broader issues and questions in American history and culture.

This course will trace the evolution of American architecture with a particular emphasis on the "home" from the earliest European housing in the seventeenth century to 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 decoration and 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 will require that 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 final project that documents a building or building complex or interprets primary sources on American architecture.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to document and analyze a historical building by writing an architectural description of the 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 be able to conduct historical research in written records to date the building, to trace a chain of title, and to document the building=s history and to write analytically about the results of that research.
3. Students will be able to 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 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.

5. 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:
Other materials will be on e-reserve.

Recommended:

Course Requirements

Examinations (30% of final grade)
The course includes a midterm and final examination, which draw both on readings and class discussions. Each exam will include identification questions requiring students to view slides and interpret the buildings. In addition, there will be short and long essay questions that focus on some of the methodological and historiographical issues of American architectural history. The final exam will not be cumulative, but will be based on materials from the second half of the class. Each exam will be worth 15% of the final course grade.

Fieldwork Experiences (15%)
One of the best ways to learn about how to study architecture is to 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. Only hard copies of these papers will be accepted.

Methodology essay: (10%)
Throughout the class, we will be talking about how scholars of different disciplines study architecture. Graduate students will be required to examine one building and analyze it from at least three different disciplinary perspectives, showing how practitioners of that discipline would approach and study the building. These approaches MUST include an art historical perspective and two others (which may include cultural geography, anthropology, folklife, archaeology, or history). This assignment should be three to five pages in length and must be word-processed. Be sure to attach at least one photograph of the building you are interpreting. This paper will be due on October 31.
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. 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 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 assignment are similar to what you would include in a National Register nomination, but this assignment requires that you 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.

2. A research paper on an issue or topic related to the course using primary sources, supplemented by secondary source material. This paper could be an analysis of local buildings from tax records, probate records, Sandborn maps, or other courthouse documents; a study of mill workers housing or the development of a mill town; or an examination of sharecroppers housing based on historical photographs. There is also a wealth of advice literature on housing that provides an excellent source for research projects, including advice directed at women in popular magazines and other contemporary literature and a wide range of pattern books and catalogs on housing beginning in the early nineteenth century and continuing through to the present. Again, 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.

All papers must be approximately 20 pages of word-processed text, double-spaced, plus appropriate footnotes and bibliography. In addition, 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.

A more detailed description for both paper options will be provided. Project topics need to be submitted to me via our Desire to Learn website by Tuesday, September 17 at 5 p.m. A formal research proposal will be due on September 26, after we have our meeting with the librarians. This proposal must include: (1) your topic, (2) the primary sources you are using and (3) your secondary sources. Please submit a copy to me via both D2L and a hard copy in class.

The final paper is due on the last day of class, December 5. Papers that are not the full length will be marked down. Please let me know if you would like me to review a rough draft of your paper.

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.

Graduate students will also meet separately for discussions that probe the readings in greater depth. These meetings will be held after class ends. The dates for these meetings are included in the class schedule.

Class Policies

1. **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/statemetonplagiarism.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/~history/statemetonplagiarism.pdf) to refresh your knowledge about this topic.

2. **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. Cell phones are distracting both to students and to faculty. If I see cell phones in use or on your desk during class, I will remove them for the remainder of the class. Similarly, laptops are suitable for taking notes but not for accessing the internet or other personal uses during the class. If I suspect that you are using your laptop for an activity other than note-taking, I will ask you to close your computer and not use it during class.

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.

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**August 29: **Course introduction

**September 5: **Architecture, Housing, and Society in Early New England  
**Readings:**  
- *Upton/Vlach*: (Isham/Brown) pp. 149-158, (Cummings) pp. 219-239, (St. George) pp. 336-365,  
- *Wright*: chapter 1

**September 12: **Architecture, Housing, and Society in Early Virginia  
**Readings:**  
- *Upton/Vlach*: (Upton) pp. 315-35 and (Neiman) pp. 292-314;  
- *Wright*, chapter 3;  

*****Graduate student discussion

**September 19: **Researching Historic Buildings  
**Guest speakers:** Jessica Critten, Ingram Library, and Blynne Oliveri, Special Collections  
**Read:** *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture*  
**Please note:** we will meet in the “Aquarium” on the third floor of the Library on this day.
September 26: Georgian ideals and cultural diffusion

Readings:
- Upton/Vlach: (Kniffen) pp. 3-26; (Glassie and Kniffen) pp. 159-181; (Gowans) pp. 367-393; and (Glassie), pp. 394-432

Due: Research proposal

*****Graduate student discussion

October 3: The Mid-Atlantic, the Upper South, and the Lower South Regions
Ethnic Architectural Across America

Readings
- Complete reading America’s Architectural Roots:
- Upton/Vlach: (Chappell) pp. 27-57 and (Vlach) pp. 58-78.

Documenting historic buildings

Readings

*****Graduate student discussion

October 10: Midterm Exam

October 17: 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
- Bernard Herman, “The Charleston Single House,” on reserve

*****Graduate student discussion

October 24: The Cult of Domesticity, Mid-Nineteenth Century Pattern Book Architecture, Victorian Ideals, and Architectural Revivals

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

*****Graduate student discussion

October 31: Field Trip

Due: Methodology paper.

November 7: Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the City: Industrialization, the Suburbs, and the Working Class Family

Readings
November 14:  Architectural Reform:  Bungalows, Home Economics, and the Progressive Housewife

Readings
- *Upton/Vlach:  (Lancaster), pp. 79-106;
- *Wright, chapter 9;
- *Clark, chapters 5-6;
- Michael Ann Williams, “Selling Domestic Space,” on reserve

*****Graduate student discussion

November 21:  Planned Housing:  Company Towns, Planned Communities, and Public Housing

Readings
- *Wright, chapters 10-12;
- Robert Blythe, “Unraveling the Threads of Community Life:  Work, Play, and Place in the Alabama Mill Villages of the West Point Manufacturing Company,” on reserve
- Mark Barron, “Architecture of Public Housing,” on reserve

*****Graduate student discussion

November 28:  No class, Thanksgiving Break

December 5:  Post-World War II Suburban Housing, the Ranch House, and the Middle-Class Family Ideal

Guest speaker:  Dr. Richard Cloues

Readings
- *Wright, chapter 13
- *Clark, chapter 7-8;

Due:  Research papers

December 12:  Final exam. 5-7 pm