

American Architecture from a Preservation Perspective I



AAAP 421/521 Fall 2020 4 Credits

CRN 10446 / 10453

Wednesdays 8:15am – 9:45am and 10:15 – 11:45am HP Seminar Room (WSB 442)

Chad Randl - crandl@uoregon.edu - 607-319-9004

This survey of American building history spans the pre-Columbian era to around the Civil War. An ambitious timeframe is matched by an equally ambitious range of subjects—monumental and everyday, urban and rural, from Native American mat houses to Independence Hall to plantation slave quarters to skyscrapers. Our analysis will consider occupants as well as designers and builders. While the course is arranged in a general chronological order, we will situate American architecture in a broader cultural context using the themes such as Nature, Power, Nation, Home, and Technology. We will also return regularly to the present to connect new issues with old and to address practices of myth making, appropriation, stewardship, and the evolving meanings of various building forms.

The course is designed to introduce students to the range of architectural expression dating up to 1900 in what is now the United States. It will prepare students to be critical observers and shapers (as preservationists, designers, or citizens) of the built environment through an understanding of its social and cultural meanings. We will be reflective of our role as architectural historians, as rigorous researchers and thoughtful interpreters, mindful of our prejudices and assumptions.

The course will include class presentations by the instructor and guests, discussions and workshops based on assigned readings, student presentations, and a term-long research project. Evaluation is based on class participation, quizzes and exams, assignments, presentations, and the final project.

Requirements:

Students will complete weekly readings, attend all meetings, actively contribute to all class discussions, and complete all assignments and exams. Readings will be provided as pdfs or web links on the course Canvas site. At the beginning of each class I (Chad) will introduce the week's topic and provide a framework for our conversation. Each week one student will serve as an instructor's assistant. They will give a brief (8-10 minute) case study presentation on particular issue or site related to that week's theme, provide any necessary planning support, and help lead our discussion.

All students will write a research paper (15 pages for grad students 10 pages for undergrads), properly formatted, with images, citations, and a bibliography, due December 10. The paper project, titled "Then and Now," will ask you to identify an architectural moment and compare its historical manifestation with its current condition. The subject is up to you; it can be a particular structure or site, a building type, practice or material, an industry, an architectural manifestation of a social or economic or political issue, a building-related profession. Your primary charge will be to trace the evolution of your subject from past to present, accounting for and explaining change over time. Additional details will be provided in a project description to be distributed in class. A written midterm reflection (on November 5) will ask students to synthesize readings, discussions, and other course content.

Consistent participation in the class is a primary requirement. If you are unable to attend a session please notify me (Chad) beforehand. Students are to come to all sessions having carefully read the materials assigned for that week. Occasionally you will be asked to bring materials (located online, photographed around town, researched at the library, etc.) for use in class. All assignments are to be submitted by their due date in the format specified. Late submissions will receive a lower grade.

Required Text:

David P. Handlin, *American Architecture*, 2d (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004)

Grading:

Attendance and participation in class discussions - 40%

Class presentation and discussion guidance - 15%

Final Paper Project (Then and Now) - 30%

Midterm Reflection and any Reading Quizzes - 15%

Academic Integrity:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Oregon Student Conduct Code. Any work submitted for academic credit will be the student's own work.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first week of the quarter, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Please arrange for the Counselor for Students with Disabilities to send a letter verifying your disability.

Life:

Being a student can be hard. Life doesn't always align with or respect the ambitious schedules of a graduate course or program. If you encounter circumstances that stand in the way of your work in this course, please let me know so we can find a solution.

Class Schedule (weekly topics and readings are subject to change)

WEEK 1	10/01	Introduction - Course Scope and Goals In this introductory meeting we will discuss the boundaries of our topic, the themes we will encounter, our collective expectations and goals, the course schedule and structure, assignments, and assessments. We will also examine how history works and ask why it is worthwhile to study architectural history. Readings: Harris, Dianne. "That's Not Architectural History! Or What's a Discipline for?" <i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i> 70, no. 2 (2011): 149–52. Longstreth, Richard. "Architectural History and the Practice of Historic Preservation in the United States." <i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i> 58, no. 3 (1999): 326–33.
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WEEK 2	10/08	Indigenous, Architecture, Contact, and Colonization- Ab Initio Readings: C.W. Short, "Antiquities of Ohio, 1817," in <i>Building the Nation: Americans Write About Their Architecture, Their Cities, and Their Landscape</i> , eds. Steven Conn and Max Page (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 97-98. Stephen H. Lekson, "Europe, the New World, and Buildings Without History," in <i>Canyon Gardens: The Ancient Pueblo Landscapes of the American Southwest</i> , eds. Vincent Barrett Price and Baker H. Morrow (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 1-15. Handlin, Chapter 1, 9-38.
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WEEK 3	10/15	Places of Worship, Expressions of Faith Readings: Richard Cullen Rath, "No Corner for the Devil to Hide," in <i>How Early America Sounded</i> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 97-119. Due: Thesis Question (bring to class on 10/15, then post on Canvas by 10pm)
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WEEK 4	10/22	Forging a Nation - An Appropriate Style and Seats of Governance Readings: Handlin Chapter 2, 39-69.
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WEEK 5

10/29

Landscapes of Enslavement – Power and Subversion

Readings:

John Michael Vlach, "The Plantation Landscape," in *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Keith L. Eggener, (New York: Routledge, 2004) 95-111.

Knowles, Hannah. "As Plantations Talk More Honestly About Slavery, Some Visitors Are Pushing Back." *Washington Post*, September 8, 2019.

and select ONE of the two following readings:

Clifton Ellis. "Building for "Our Family, Black and White": The Changing Form of the Slave House in Antebellum Virginia." in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*. eds. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010),

Rebecca Ginsberg, "Escaping Through a Black Landscape," in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*, eds. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 51-66.

Other Prep: Watch one of the following films and be prepared to discuss how power and the subversion of that power is represented architecturally in the film's set design and art direction:

Gone With the Wind, 1939

Django Unchained, 2012

12 Years a Slave, 2013

Roots (1977 or 2016)

Due: Thesis Statement (bring to class on 10/29, then post on Canvas by 10pm)

WEEK 6

11/05

Urban America - Row Houses and Separation in the City

Readings:

Handlin, Chapter 3, 70-99.

"Urban Settings: Houses and Housing in the Early American City" in Bernard L. Herman, *Townhouse: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 1-32.

Selection from William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

Midterm Reflection in second half of class

Due: Bibliography (bring to class on 11/05, then post on Canvas by 10pm)

WEEK 7 11/12 **Designing and Constructing - Architects, Master Builders, Laborers,**
Readings: Mary N. Woods, "The First Professional: Benjamin Henry Latrobe," in
 American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader, ed.
 Keith L. Eggener (New York: Routledge, 2004) 112-131.

WEEK 8 11/19 **Houses and Homes - Styles, Revivals, Typologies**
Readings: Selection from Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social
 History of Housing in America*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

**Due: 5 page draft (bring to class on 11/19, then post on
 Canvas by 10pm)**

WEEK 9 11/26 **Natural Ideals - Cemeteries, Parks, Suburbs, Lawns**
Readings: Anonymous, Excerpt From 'College Edifices and Their Relation to
 Education,' 1847," in *Building the Nation: Americans Write About
 Their Architecture, Their Cities, and Their Landscape*.
 eds. Steven Conn and Max Page (Philadelphia: University
 of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 320-324.
 Henry C. Binford, "The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the
 Boston Periphery, 1815-1860," in *The Suburb Reader*. eds. Becky
 M. Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese (New York: Routledge,
 2006), 85-91.

WEEK 10 12/03 **New Typologies for a Mass Culture / Review**

Readings: "Chapter 7: Philadelphia and Its Solitary Prison," in Charles
 Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (London: Chapman and
 Hall, 1913), 117-132.

11/26 Mon Factories, Prisons, Asylums, Hotels, Department Stores

11/28 Weds Review

Due: Final Paper due on 12/10, posted to Canvas by 10pm)