History of American Landscapes and Architecture

COURSE GUIDE

HIS/IAR 624

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Hours: Tues. & Thurs., 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

Fall 2005

Course Objectives

This course is designed as an advanced reading seminar in the history of American landscapes and architecture. The course will introduce you to the variety of methods developed by architectural and cultural historians to interpret buildings and landscapes as cultural artifacts with historically specific meanings that must be understood in particular context over time. An important objective of the course is to go beyond classroom reading and discussion to application of specific scholars' arguments and methodologies through analysis of particular buildings and landscapes.

By the end of the semester you should be able to do the following:

• Explain major changes in the development of the American landscape from the colonial period through the mid-twentieth century.

• Demonstrate an understanding of the ways that architecture and landscapes document cultural and social change over time.

• Define particular architectural styles, use specialized architectural vocabulary/terminology, and explain the differences between vernacular and academic building traditions.

• Use different methodological approaches to evaluate particular landscapes in historical context.
Evaluation

Participation 10%
Unit Case Studies 60%
Comparative Methodology Analysis 30%

All written assignments should be typed, with appropriate citations in Turabian style [http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/handouts/turabian.html]. You will submit your written assignments electronically to my email address on the appropriate due date. Late assignments will be penalized.

Participation (10%)
This assessment will be based on three criteria:

1. Consistent attendance—this is a seminar, not a traditional lecture course. We will be critically evaluating the content of the readings and practicing the application of analytical skills during each class period. You will not be able to make up for your absences by copying someone else's notes. For this reason, consistent attendance is essential to your learning in this course.

2. Thorough preparation for class—readings must be completed before class and assignments must be turned in on time.

3. Regular contributions to class discussions—the success of this course for your learning depends on active intellectual engagement with your peers.

Comparative Methodology Analysis (30%)
Due 13 October, 7-10 double-spaced pages.
You will compare and contrast at least two different scholars’ approaches to the study of landscape and architecture demonstrated in the assigned reading for either unit 1 or unit 2. Papers should consider the following issues (not necessarily in the order listed below):

- Explain how each author defines the central research problem of the study.
- Explain the significance of the timeframe for the research problem.
- Describe the most important primary source material for the scholar’s study.
- Explain the importance of field work (if relevant) for the scholar’s analysis.
- Explain any key terms or concepts the scholar defines for readers of the study.
- Explain the most important ways that the scholar uses architecture or landscape as evidence. In what ways, for example, does the scholar consider building technology, materials, space, form, or style as evidence? What are the most important features or parts of a building or landscape for the scholar’s analysis?
• What is the scholar’s academic specialization and what, if any, interdisciplinary theories, concepts, or approaches does the author employ to develop the interpretation of landscape or architectural evidence?
• You may use illustrations in your analysis if you find them useful for explaining your ideas.

**Case Study Building/Landscape Analyses (60%; 20 % each)**

This course is organized into three chronological units. The goal of each unit assignment is to go beyond basic reading knowledge of the materials we discuss to begin to USE the knowledge you are acquiring in a "real world" case study. In each case you will evaluate evidence from a particular building or landscape by applying appropriate arguments from assigned readings to put the designated site in historical context. The case studies may also introduce you to different types of primary sources (HABS drawings and Sanborn insurance maps, for example) that are useful for doing architectural history. Above all, you will practice really looking at and analyzing the historical evidence that is documented in particular buildings or landscapes. Unit papers are not intended as research papers; therefore, you are not required to consult references beyond those identified in the assignment. You will find the McAlester field guide to be a useful reference for identifying appropriate architectural vocabulary for specific features of the assigned site, but be sure to focus your analysis on arguments of other authors in the unit.

Each paper should do the following:

• Use specific and appropriate visual evidence from the assigned site to develop your analysis. It may be necessary to take photographs of specific building or landscape features for your analysis.
• Use specific arguments from assigned scholars in the unit to interpret and evaluate the assigned landscape in an appropriate historical context.
• Use appropriate architectural vocabulary to describe key features of assigned buildings for your analysis.

All unit essays should be typed and double-spaced, 7-10 pages long, with appropriate citations in Turabian style [http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/handouts/turabian.html]. You will submit your essays electronically to my email address: lctolber@uncg.edu.

**Criteria for evaluation of unit essays:**

For each essay, I will evaluate how effectively you accomplish the following:

• Analysis of specific architectural and spatial evidence documented by the assigned subject.
• Creative application of historical and methodological content of readings assigned in the unit.
• Application and understanding of appropriate authors' arguments. [Note: You are not required to mention every author assigned in the unit, but you should certainly address the content of more than one or two authors in the unit.]
• Use of appropriate architectural terminology.
• Polish and presentation of prose, and accuracy of citations.
Due dates:
Unit 1: 13 September, Evaluate house and plantation landscape at Drayton Hall
Unit 2: 1 November, Blandwood including its relationship to downtown Greensboro; or Revolution mill village (northeast Greensboro)
Unit 3: 1 December, Compare and contrast suburban design of Sunset Hills and Starmount; or compare and contrast downtown Elm St. commercial district and Lawndale Shopping Center

Course Readings

Books (Available at the UNCG bookstore)

Book Chapters/Journal Articles (Available on electronic reserve or online as noted.)


**Course Schedule**

16 August  
Introductions

18 August  
Architectural History and Professional Practice

Read:


23 August Vernacular Architecture Methodologies
Learning to Look at Architecture: Foust Building Evaluation
Use the McAlester, *Field Guide to American Houses*, to identify the architectural style of the Foust Building and to describe its defining architectural features. Type a one-page, single-spaced description of the building defending and explaining your identification. Your grade on this assignment will be part of your participation score.

**Read:**
In *Common Places*:
- Kniffen, “Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion,” pp. 3-26

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**Unit 1: Pre-Colonial and Colonial Architectures**
This assignment introduces you to materials in the Historic American Buildings Survey. Use the readings assigned in this unit to evaluate the architectural evidence of Drayton Hall [http://www.draytonhall.org/about/habs.html] in historical context. You may also use any information provided on the Drayton Hall website about the history of the site to develop your analysis. Due 15 September.

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25 August What is Architecture? Part 1
**Read:**
Roth, Ch. 1. The First American Architecture: Ceremonial Enclosures and Homes

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30 August What is Architecture? Part 2
**Read:**

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1 September Seventeenth-Century European Architectures
**Read:**
Roth, Ch 2. Europeans in the New World, 1600-1700: Transplanted Vernaculars
In *Common Places*:
- Isham and Brown, “Early Rhode Island Houses, pp. 149-158.
6 September  The Georgian Revolution

Read:
Roth, Ch. 3. In the Latest Fashion, 1690-1785: Georgian Architecture and Vernacular Themes in Common Places:

8 September  Regionalism and Landscapes of Slavery

Read:


13 September  Unit 1 Case Study due

Unit 2: Nineteenth-Century United States

Use assigned readings to evaluate one of the following landscapes in historical context: (a.) Blandwood including its relationship to downtown Greensboro; or (b.) Revolution mill village (northeast Greensboro). I recommend that you consult Marvin A. Brown, Greensboro: An Architectural Record. Preservation Greensboro, 1995 (on reserve in Jackson Library). You should also consult evidence in Sanborn insurance maps:
[http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2048/login?url=http://sanborn.umi.com; enter your university ID at this webpage in order to gain access to the digital Sanborn map collection.] Include appropriate photos and illustrations of the particular landscape that is the subject of your essay. Due 1 November.

15 September  Early Republic: Architecture and National Identity

Read:
Roth, Ch. 4. A New Architecture for a New Nation, 1785-1820: Searching for Symbols of Democracy
20 September  Early Republic: Vernacular Gentility
Read:

22 September  Early Republic: Regional Perspective
Read:

27 September  Early Republic: Regional Perspective
Read:

29 September  Antebellum
Read:
Roth, Ch. 5. Appropriation and Innovation, 1820-1865: Images of the Past, Visions of the Future

4 October  Style vs. Form in the Market Economy
Read:

In Common Places:

6 October  Urban Landscapes
Read:

11 October  Fall Break

13 October  Methodology Assessment due

18 October  Urban Landscapes
Read:

In Common Places:

20 October  Architecture of the Gilded Age
Read:
Roth, Ch. 6. Architecture in the Age of Energy and Enterprise, 1865-1885: Parvenu Taste in an Expanding Economy

25 October  Multifamily Housing and Industrial Landscapes
Read:

27 October  Multifamily Housing and Industrial Landscapes
Read:

1 November  Unit 2 Case Study due by 5:00 p.m.
Use assigned readings to evaluate one of the following landscapes in historical context: (a.) compare and contrast suburban design of Sunset Hills and Starmount; or (b.) compare and contrast downtown Elm St. commercial district and Lawndale Shopping Center. I recommend that you consult Marvin A. Brown, *Greensboro: An Architectural Record*. Preservation Greensboro, 1995 (on reserve in Jackson Library). You should also consult evidence in Sanborn insurance maps: [http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2048/login?url=http://sanborn.umi.com; enter your university ID at this webpage in order to gain access to the digital Sanborn map collection.] Include appropriate photos and illustrations of the particular landscape that is the subject of your essay. Due 1 December.
22 November   Modernism
Read:
Roth, Ch. 9. The Emergence of Modernism, 1940-1973: Social Agenda or the Latest Aesthetic?

24 November   Thanksgiving Holiday

29 November   Beyond Modernism
Read:

1 December    Unit 3 Case Study due