



# History of the American Home

## COURSE GUIDE

History 325

Fall 2006

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\*Please note: the quickest way to communicate with me is through **email** rather than through my office phone.

Office: HHRA 2109

Hours: Tues./Thurs 2:00-3:00

and by appointment

### Scope of this Course

From the frontier log cabin to the suburban cottage, the single-family home has long served as one of the most powerful symbols of American culture and American identity. Owning an independent home has often been a central concept in the fulfillment of the "American Dream." Studying the ways that Americans have experimented with and reinvented their houses offers a deeper and more complex understanding of the role of housing in American history than the simplicity of the "Dream" might suggest. This course will take you from the colonial period through the twentieth century as we study houses as historical evidence of social change. Rather than a descriptive focus on stylistic or aesthetic changes in American house design, emphasis will be on analysis of the relationship between home as an idea and houses as physical and material spaces. How, for example, did the invention of the parlor document new ideas about private life, new gender roles, and developments in commerce and technology related to the home? As the semester unfolds, we will explore such subjects as the symbolism and politics of domesticity, the evolving functions of particular rooms and spaces, new technologies that reshaped houses, and the diversity of American homes based on region, ethnicity, and class.

## Learning Goals of this Course

The student who successfully completes this course should be able to:

- Describe and evaluate key changes in the form and function of American housing from the colonial period to the twentieth century.
- Evaluate the impact of cultural factors such as gender roles, class, and technology on the form and function of American housing.
- Explain how groups such as social reformers, architectural professionals, residents, servants, and the federal government shaped housing in sometimes competing ways.
- Explain how physical changes that affect the shape, uses, and symbolism of houses can be used to understand cultural change over time (social relationships, ideology, and gender roles, for example)
- Use probate inventories, floor plans, magazine advertisements, and other kinds of primary source evidence to analyze changes in the form and function of American housing over time.
- Implement research skills for studying the history of American housing including defining a research problem, developing a meaningful research bibliography, and using primary and secondary source evidence to defend and explain a thesis statement.

## Required Reading

### Journal Articles and Book Chapters

- Archer, John. "Ideology and Aspiration: Individualism, the Middle Class, and the Genesis of the Anglo-American Suburb," *Journal of Urban History* 14:2 (1988): 214-253. [use journal finder]
- Cohen, Lizabeth, "Residence: Inequality in Mass Suburbia." In *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Vintage, 2003. [ereserves]
- Cohen, Lizabeth. "Embellishing a Life of Labor." In *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Vlach, 261-278. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986. [ereserves]
- Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. "Coal Stoves and Clean Sinks: Housework between 1890 and 1930." In *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, 211-224. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992. [ereserves]
- Cromley, Elizabeth Collins. "At Home in the First Apartment Houses." In *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. [ereserves]
- Feagin, Joe. "The Other Suburbanites: African American Suburbanization in the North before 1950." *Journal of American History* 85:4 (March 1999): 1495-1525. [use journal finder]
- Gilliam, Jan K. "The Evolution of the House in Early Virginia." In *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life*, ed. Eleanor McD. Thompson, 177-196. Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum. Distributed by Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998. [ereserves]
- Graffam, Olive Blair. "'They Are Very Handy': Kitchen Furnishings, 1875-1920." In *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life*, ed. Eleanor McD. Thompson, 217-240. Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum. Distributed by Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998. [ereserves]
- Katz-Hyman, Martha B. "'In the Middle of This Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot': The Furnishing of Slave Quarters at Colonial Williamsburg." In *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life*, ed. Eleanor McD. Thompson, 197-216. Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis

DuPont Winterthur Museum. Distributed by Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998. [ereserves]

Marling, Karal Ann. "Nixon in Moscow: Appliances, Affluence, and Americanism." In *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994. [ereserves]

Marsh, Margaret. "From Separation to Togetherness: The Social Construction of Domestic Space in American Suburbs, 1840-1915." *Journal of American History* 76:2 (September 1989): 506-527. [use journal finder]

Volz, Candace M. "The Modern Look of the Early Twentieth-Century House." In *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, 25-48. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992. [ereserves]

Wright, Gwendolyn. "Independence and the Rural Cottage." In *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Keith L. Eggener, 142-154. [ereserves]

## Evaluation

Participation	10%
Secondary Source Worksheets	20%
Research Portfolio	20%
Term Paper	50%

### Participation (10%)

This assessment will be based on three criteria:

1. Consistent **attendance**--This is not a traditional lecture course. We will be critically evaluating the content of the assigned 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. There will be a penalty for late assignments and no assignments that are more than one week late will be accepted for credit. You should make arrangements with me in advance of a due date if you have a conflict for meeting a deadline.
3. Regular **contributions to class discussions**—the success of this course for your learning depends on active intellectual engagement with your peers. Discussions will take place during every class meeting in both small group exercises and as a whole class.

Here's an example of how the participation grade is calculated: a student attended class 87% of the time, asked or answered several questions during the semester, actively participated in research workshops and group discussions, but failed to turn in two ungraded assignments and turned in at least one graded assignment late. Though attendance and participation might suggest a B+ for this student, the late assignments mean that this student cannot make higher than a B- and could even be in the C-range depending on the nature of the missed assignments. Ten percent may seem like a small amount in the overall grade, but it can make a significant difference in the final grade. Skipping classes and ungraded

assignments can also have a snowball effect for the results of graded assignments. The course is designed to help you develop your research project in stages and learn skills that build on each other one step at a time. If you skip the smaller steps, the larger research project can seem overwhelming.

### **Secondary Source Worksheets (20%)**

The reading worksheet is designed to help you practice skills that will be essential for successful completion of your research project. These skills include identification of a scholarly thesis, evaluating a scholar's use of different types of primary source evidence, developing concrete ideas to use as keywords for finding additional scholarship, and using footnotes to follow a practical research trail. You must complete one worksheet for your choice of the assigned readings in each of the case studies 2-4.

Responses must be typed. You will complete a total of 3 worksheets for the semester and I will drop your lowest grade. The worksheet, formatted in Microsoft Word, is posted on Blackboard and you should download it to insert your responses in the appropriate sections.

#### **Due dates:**

Worksheets are due **by the beginning of class** on the date of the scheduled reading. No late worksheets will be accepted. You may either print your finished worksheet and turn it in at the **beginning** of the appropriate class or email it to me at [lctolber@uncg.edu](mailto:lctolber@uncg.edu) **before** the appropriate class period.

### **Research Portfolio (20%)**

The portfolio is designed to help you create resources for successful completion of your term paper. The portfolio will consist of a completed topic description form, research bibliography, and preliminary primary source analysis of your selected plan.

### **Term Paper (50%)**

**The goal:** You will develop a research paper based on a floor plan of a particular house or a site plan of a particular neighborhood. Each plan is related to information provided in the assigned readings. You will put your plan into appropriate historical context and do additional research to explore a theme of your design that evaluates a particular aspect of the plan as evidence for understanding social and cultural history. Your paper must evaluate spatial or material evidence in appropriate historical context. Your paper should go beyond description of the plan to analysis of its meanings or social implications.

#### **The primary sources:**

A set of house and site plans have been selected based on the assigned reading for each of the course case studies. You will select **one** of these plans as the starting point for focusing and developing your research project. The plans date from the eighteenth century through the post World War II era and represent a variety of housing types and social classes (middle class bungalow, working class tenement, for example). There are also a few site plans documenting suburban neighborhoods or house lots. You should select a plan that will enable you to work on a time period in American history that interests you most. In order to avoid competition for possibly limited library resources on some topics or eras, I need to make sure that students are evenly distributed and not everybody is working on the same two or three plans. Therefore, you should take a look at the plans posted on Blackboard and email me your top three choices in order of preference no later than 12 September. I will make every effort to give you your first choice.

**The secondary sources:** The plans have been selected because they relate to assigned reading in the course, but to define your theme and develop analysis of your plan for the paper, you must go beyond the assigned readings to do your own original research. Your research bibliography should contain at least 5 scholarly secondary sources not originally assigned in the course schedule. At least one source must be a book and at least one source must be a journal article.

**The final paper** should be about 12-15 pages typed and double spaced, with Turabian-style notes and bibliography. We will be developing this assignment throughout the semester. This assignment will be the exclusive focus of the course during the month of November, which is organized as a series of workshops devoted to specific term paper revision issues.

Research skills this assignment will teach you include the following:

- Constructing an interesting and clearly focused research topic.
- Using floor plans or site plans as primary source evidence for understanding social and cultural history.
- Developing a meaningful research bibliography.
- Synthesizing scholarly arguments.
- Developing an original thesis or argument and using evidence to develop and support your thesis.
- Practicing scholarly citation methods.
- Strategies for effective revision of your argument.

**Due dates for the Portfolio and Term Paper:**

12 September	first three choices of plan for research project
12 October	Preliminary research portfolio due
31 October	Final research portfolio due
2 November	Working thesis statement due
9 November	<b><u>Complete</u></b> term paper draft due ( <b>all 12-15 pages of it</b> ) with footnotes, bibliography, and any relevant illustrations
4 December	Final, revised term paper due

## Class Schedule

**15 August** Introductions

### Case Study 1: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Virginia Houses

**17 August** Gentry houses

**Read**

Gilliam, Jan K. "The Evolution of the House in Early Virginia." In *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life*, ed. Eleanor McD. Thompson, 177-196. Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum. Distributed by Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998. [ereserves]

**22 August** Introduction to probate inventories as evidence

**24 August** Probate inventories and other evidence of slave houses

**Read**

Katz-Hyman, Martha B. "'In the Middle of This Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot': The Furnishing of Slave Quarters at Colonial Williamsburg." In *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life*, ed. Eleanor McD. Thompson, 197-216. Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum. Distributed by Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998. [ereserves]

**29 August** **Research Workshop:** Overview of research project parts and rationale; strategies for topic development, keyword searching techniques

### Case Study 2: House Types: Cottages, Bungalows, Apartments, Tenements

**31 August** Middle-class single-family house

**Read**

Wright, Gwendolyn. "Independence and the Rural Cottage." In *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Keith L. Eggener, 142-154. [ereserves]

**5 September** Middle-class multi-family house

**Read**

Cromley, Elizabeth Collins. "At Home in the First Apartment Houses." In *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. [ereserves]

**7 September** From Victorian cottages to the bungalow

**Read**

Volz, Candace M. "The Modern Look of the Early Twentieth-Century House." In *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, 25-48. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992. [ereserves]

**12 September** Tenement—housing the urban working-class

**Read**



**17 October** Housework and technology

**Read**

Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. "Coal Stoves and Clean Sinks: Housework between 1890 and 1930." In *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, 211-224. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992. [ereserves]

**19 October** Politics and symbolism of the Cold War kitchen

Marling, Karal Ann. "Nixon in Moscow: Appliances, Affluence, and Americanism." In *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994. [ereserves]

## **Unit 5: Term Paper**

- 24 October** Pre-writing workshop: Using the portfolio to develop the term paper
- 26 October** Pre-writing workshop: Strategies for effective note-taking
- 31 October** Thesis statement workshop
- 2 November** No class. **Working Thesis statements due.**
- 7 November** Writing workshop: Thesis statements and other intellectual stuff
- 9 November** **Complete term paper draft due (all 12-15 pages of it) with footnotes/endnotes and bibliography**
- 14 November** Revising workshop: Paragraph development and organization of argument
- 16 November** **No class.**
- 21 November** Revising workshop: Strategies for footnoting
- 23 November** **Thanksgiving Holiday**
- 28 November** Revising workshop: Use of evidence
- 30 November** Revising workshop: Thesis statements and Introductions
- 4 December** **Final Term Paper due.**