

# IAR/HIS 548: Architectural Conservation

Faculty: Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll • Spring Semester 2006

*Conservation is the action taken to prevent decay. It embraces all acts that prolong the life of our cultural and natural heritage, the object being to present those who use and look at historic buildings with wonder the artistic and human messages that such buildings possess. The minimum effective action is always the best: if possible, the action should be reversible and not prejudice possible future interventions.*

—Bernard Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*

## Course Syllabus

Architectural conservation is one specialization within the broad field of historic preservation. Noted preservationist James Marston Fitch defined architectural conservation as "physical intervention in the actual fabric of the building to ensure its continued structural integrity."<sup>1</sup> A general understanding of contemporary conservation principles, practice, and technology is essential for interior designers, architects, planners, and historians who are dealing with historic buildings and interiors. Knowledge of contemporary architectural conservation practice provides students with a basis for developing a well-informed approach in making appropriate conservation and design decisions for historic buildings and interiors. This course provides an overview of the skills and technology involved in architectural conservation and involves "hands on" exposure to some of them. Specifically, the four course objectives are:

- 1. To provide students with an overview of the skills and technology utilized in architectural conservation. Students are introduced to strategies for inspecting and recording historic buildings as well as techniques for analyzing and diagnosing specific conservation problems. Methodologies for conserving various materials and finishes are also addressed.

- 2. To provide students with an opportunity to gain "hands on" experience in conservation techniques through a series of conservation exercises including preparing record drawings, record photographs, moisture analyses, architectural finish analyses and chronologies, and testing of various conservation chemical poultices and solutions.

- 3. To provide students with an opportunity to develop more in-depth knowledge of a specific aspect of architectural conservation through an individual research topic. To hone research, writing, and graphic skills through the preparation of a technical brief on the selected topic.

- 4. To provide students with a common vocabulary and understanding of architectural conservation principles and practice so they can establish a dialogue with peers and allied professionals within the field of architectural conservation. The course will consist of a series of lectures, assigned readings, site visits, and lab exercises. The readings are generally technical in nature and will be from the assigned

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. Fitch, *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*, page 104.

text, *Caring for Your Historic House*, or available through the library's e-reserves or via the internet.

A series of lab exercises will be assigned during the semester. Some will be accomplished in small groups and others will be undertaken individually. All exercises will result in a submittal to the instructor. Each student will be asked to keep all supplemental handouts, photocopied readings and class notes in a three-ring notebook along with any information or notes from the lab exercises. It is intended that this notebook become a professional reference for you in the future and it may be used during the final exam.

A major component of this course is the individual project. A portion of each class will be allotted to discussions of various individual projects. Each student will identify an area of research related to the course and develop a brief on that topic. All students will use an established format for their briefs and the entire series will be finalized on a common computer program and subsequently printed. High quality briefs may be linked to the department web site as part of the ongoing student publication series: *The Historic Dimension Series*. Part of the first two classes will be spent discussing potential topics and students can also make individual appointments with the instructor to discuss potential topics. Everyone must decide on his/her specific research topic by the end of January. Each student will turn in a proposal describing the research topic, the research methodology, and an initial bibliography of at least five references no later than February 7th. Any proposals that are not acceptable will be returned for revision and resubmittal.

Sequentially, an outline of the brief, a full draft of the brief, and illustrations (original photographs and/or line drawings) for the brief will be developed by each student and submitted according to the due dates in the course schedule. The text for all drafts must be edited by the University Writing Center, 101 McIver Building, prior to submitting them to the instructor. All texts must be prepared on a word processing program (preferably Microsoft Word) so they can subsequently be formatted for desktop publishing (with the assistance of the graduate assistant) for inclusion in the student publication series. Part of the last class and the exam period will be devoted to individual presentations of the completed briefs. Students should plan to provide each member of the class with a copy of their final brief and to expand upon their topic during a 10-15 minute oral presentation. Students are encouraged to use Power Point or some other similar format for their class presentations. Students taking the class for graduate credit must prepare a six-page brief: addressing a specific topic in depth. Undergraduates may elect to prepare a four-page brief.

There will be one "open notebook/book" exam for IAR/HIS 548. Students may bring their course notebooks and textbook to the exam and will be able to refer to them during the exam. This exam will be given in class on April 25th. Students will be evaluated on the following:

Class participation :	5%
Course exercises:	45%
Individual research brief:	35%
Final exam:	15%

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is critical in this class. Three absences from class will result in an automatic F for the course.

### **Faculty Contact Information**

Professor Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll

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Office Hours: I am usually in my office on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 11 am until noon but it is generally best to contact me by email to set up an appointment in advance or to ask a question.

### **Some Related Internet Sites:**

National Park Service Technical Preservation Services site: [www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps)

Old House Journal: [www.oldhousejournal.com](http://www.oldhousejournal.com)>

The National Trust for Historic Preservation: [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)

Preservation North Carolina: [www.presnc.org](http://www.presnc.org)

NC State Historic Preservation Office: [www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/](http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/)

## IAR/HIS 548 Course References

*Association for Preservation Technology (APT) Journal*, selected issues.

*Caring for Your Historic House*, Historic Preservation and National Park Service. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, NY: 1998.

*Cheap, Quick, & Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870-1930*, Pamela Simpson, University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1999.

*Conservation of Historic Buildings*, Bernard Feilden. Butterworth, London: 1982. (Paperback 1994.)

*Conserving Buildings: A Manual of Techniques and Materials*, Martin Weaver. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, NY: 1997.

*The Interiors Handbook for Historic Buildings*, Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, Washington, DC: 1988.

*The Interiors Handbook for Historic Buildings II*, Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, Washington, DC: 1993.

*Keeping It Clean: Removing Exterior Dirt, Paint, Stains and Graffiti from Historic Masonry Buildings*, Anne Grimmer. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, DC: 1988.

*Metals in America's Historic Buildings*, M. Gayle, D. Look, J. Waite. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division: 1980.

*The Preservation Briefs Series* (nos. 1-44), US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, Washington, DC: 1976-ongoing. Available online at <[www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs)>

*Recording Historic Structures (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*, John Burns, ed. John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ: 2004.

*Skills Development Plan for Historical Architects in the National Park Service*, Hugh Miller, Lee Nelson, Emogene Bevitt. National Park Service, Washington, DC: 1992.

*Technics and Architecture: The Development of Materials and Systems for Buildings*, Cecil D. Elliot. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1992.

*The Technology of Historic American Buildings*, Ward Jandl, Editor. Foundation for Preservation Technology, Washington, DC: 1983.

*Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, Thomas C. Jester, ed., National Park Service, McGraw Hill: NY, NY, 1995.

## IAR/HIS 548 Course Schedule and Outline

- January 10: Course Overview and Discussion of Individual Research Projects  
Intro to Architectural Conservation
- January 17: Researching/Investigating Historic Properties
- January 24: Documenting/Inspecting/"Reading" Historic Properties  
Recording Historic Properties
- January 31: Inspecting and Diagnosis: Building Pathology  
Moisture in Historic Buildings, Mothballing Historic Buildings
- February 7: Recording Historic Structures Using Digital Technology, Peter Aaslestad,  
Frazier Associates, Staunton, VA. Brief Proposals due.
- February 14: Diagnosis and Analysis: Materials and building elements.
- February 21: Site visit to begin recording exercises. Site to be announced.
- February 28: Conservation Technology: Materials, Outline for brief due.
- March 7: NO CLASS (Spring Break)
- March 14: Conservation Technology: Materials and Finish Analysis
- March 21: No class due to Tryon Palace Symposium
- March 23: Rehabilitation of the Grove Arcade in Asheville, David Rogers, Rogers &  
Associates, Inc. NOTE Thursday date, 321 Petty
- March 28: In class work session on documentation project (Jo at conference)  
Full draft of brief due, must have been edited at the Writing Center.  
Must be emailed or copy delivered to faculty box by 5 PM.
- April 4: Interior Materials and Finishes. Brief illustrations due.
- April 11: Chemical solutions and poultices (fieldwork on campus, rain date: 4/18)  
Meet at 314 Petty to gather supplies.
- April 18: Conservation Technology: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Materials
- April 25: Open book exam during first half of class. Presentation of individual briefs  
to class, each presenter will have 10-12 minutes.
- May 10: Exam period, 3:30-6:30 pm. Continued Presentations of Individual  
Projects, each presenter will have 10-12 minutes.