History of American Landscapes and Architecture

COURSE GUIDE

HIS/IAR 624                    Spring 2012
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A landscape “happens not by chance but by contrivance, by premeditation, by design.”

–John Stilgoe, Common Landscape of America

Course Objectives

This course is designed as an advanced reading seminar in the history of American landscapes and architecture. We will explore a variety of approaches 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 different types of primary sources documenting buildings and landscapes.

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

• Identify and explain the most important influences on the design of domestic and commercial landscapes from the colonial era through the mid-twentieth century.

• Explain how individual buildings and larger sites or landscape systems document cultural and social change over time using specific architectural examples.

• Define the distinguishing characteristics of particular architectural styles and building types and use specialized architectural vocabulary/terminology accurately.

• Explain the differences between vernacular and academic building traditions and the approaches scholars have used to study them.

• Compare and contrast the methodologies developed by a variety of scholars to interpret landscape and architecture as historical evidence.

• Apply different interpretive approaches and primary sources to evaluate a particular landscape or building as a cultural artifact in historical context.
*Note that though this course is not a traditional, art historical survey of styles and periods, accurate use of specialized terminology is an important part of your professional development. The McAlester survey is a useful reference tool for understanding specialized architectural vocabulary.

**Role of this course in the graduate curriculum:**
This course plays an essential role as a requirement for historic preservation students and an elective for museum studies students. If you are a preservation student you should learn strategies for explaining the historical significance of any type of building you may need to evaluate—whether it be house, barn, store, or skyscraper. If you are a museum studies student you should learn how to look at architectural evidence to bring it to life for your visitors. If you are a regular history student this course can expand your toolkit of historical practice beyond traditional documents to understand strategies for using artifacts as historical evidence.

[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

**Evaluation**

Primary Source Case Studies  100%

All written assignments should be 7-10 pages typed, with appropriate citations in Turabian style [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html). You will submit your written assignments electronically to my email address on the appropriate due date. Late assignments will be penalized.

**Primary Source Case Studies (25% each)**
The goal of each case study is to go beyond basic reading knowledge of the materials we discuss to begin to APPLY the knowledge you are acquiring in a "real world" case study. In each case you will evaluate a different type of primary source evidence by applying appropriate arguments from assigned readings to put the selected evidence in historical context. The case studies will introduce you to four different types of primary sources (probate inventories, HABS drawings, postcards, and consumer magazines) scholars have used in creative ways for studying doing architectural history. Above all, you will practice really looking at and analyzing the historical evidence that documents particular buildings or landscapes. While you will need to do some limited research in the primary sources, case studies are not intended as extensive research papers; therefore, you are not required to consult scholarship beyond the assigned reading or additional resources 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 your selected case study, but be sure to focus your analysis on arguments presented by scholars in appropriate assigned readings.

Each paper should do the following:

- Use specific and appropriate visual and text evidence from the selected sources to develop your analysis.
- Use specific arguments from appropriate assigned scholars to interpret and evaluate your selected landscape in an appropriate historical context. Be sure to evaluate divergent interpretations among the scholars.
- Use appropriate architectural vocabulary to describe key features of your case study as part of 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 all of the case studies:
For each case study, I will evaluate how effectively you accomplish the following:

- Analysis of specific architectural and spatial evidence documented by the selected case study.
- Evaluation of the possibilities and limitations of the primary sources for doing architectural history.
- Creative application of historical and methodological content of assigned readings that demonstrates complex understanding of the limits and possibilities of particular scholar’s arguments.
- Synthesis of multiple scholars’ arguments paying attention to points of consensus or disagreement among scholars. [Note: You are not required to mention every author assigned in a particular unit, but you should certainly address the content of more than one or two authors in the unit.]
- Accurate use of appropriate architectural terminology.
- Polish and presentation of prose.
- Accuracy and completeness of citations.

Due Dates:

**Case Study 1:** Eighteenth Century: Probate Inventories as Architectural History. Due 17 February by 5:00 p.m. Use up to 5 different probate inventories from the following databases to evaluate room uses and domestic spaces in eighteenth-century Chesapeake:
- York County, Virginia [http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/BrowseProbates.cfm](http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/BrowseProbates.cfm)
- Virginia and Maryland [http://chnm.gmu.edu/probateinventory/](http://chnm.gmu.edu/probateinventory/)
- You may also find the Gunston Hall Room Use Study to be helpful in evaluating room uses using probate inventories: [http://www.gunstonhall.org/mansion/room_use_study/methodology.html](http://www.gunstonhall.org/mansion/room_use_study/methodology.html)

**Case Study 2:** Nineteenth Century: Using HABS to Study Buildings and Landscapes. Due 16 March by 5:00 p.m. Select a nineteenth-century domestic residence from HABS ([http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/)) to evaluate. I will post some recommended properties that would work well with the assigned reading but you can also select a different property for approval. Your selection must contain a variety of documentation including floorplans, elevations, and photographs. Catalog records with historical context are also recommended.
Each paper should do the following:
- In what way is your selected building an architectural event that documents the nineteenth-century society and culture in which it was created?
- Use specific and appropriate visual evidence from the selected site to develop your analysis. Be sure to use both the photographic evidence and the floor plans in your analysis. Include appropriate illustrations in your paper. (illustrations do not count in overall page length of the assignment)
- Use specific arguments from appropriate assigned scholars to interpret and evaluate your selected landscape in an appropriate historical context. Be sure to evaluate divergent interpretations among the scholars.
- Use appropriate architectural vocabulary to describe key features of your case study as part of your analysis.

**Case Study 3:** Twentieth Century: Consumer Magazines as Architectural History due 5 April by 5:00 p.m.
Select one pre-WWII issue and one post-WWII issue of one of the popular consumer magazines listed below and evaluate the content of the magazines using appropriate arguments from the assigned reading to consider the role of architecture in an evolving consumer society. Be sure to analyze visual content as well as text. Include illustrations of the specific advertisements or visuals that you analyze in the paper
Here is a list of approved popular consumer magazines of the twentieth century.

- **Ladies’ Home Journal** (AP2 .L135 [v.1-9 on Film 3570], holdings start in 1890)
- **Better Homes and Gardens** (NA7100 .B45 [v.2-4 on Film 1562] holdings start in 1924)
- **Good Housekeeping** (TX1 .G7, holdings start in 1916)
- **House and Garden** (NA7100 .H6 1 holdings start in 1901)
- **House Beautiful** (NA7100 .H65, holdings start in 1897)

**Case Study 4**: Commercial Landscapes: Postcards as Architectural History due 27 April by 5:00 p.m. Select postcards from [http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/nc_post/index.php?CISOROOT=/nc_post](http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/nc_post) to evaluate commercial landscapes in North Carolina. Possibilities include the cultural context of the skyscraper, concepts of Main Street, comparison of different types of commercial buildings, evaluation of commercial interiors. We will discuss strategies for designing your case study as the semester unfolds.

**Participation and Attendance Policy**

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. Therefore, **there will be a 3% reduction of your final grade for each absence after the first 1**. Beyond even this penalty, a student who seriously neglects attendance and preparation risks failing the 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.

**Course Readings**

**Recommended References**


**Required Books**:


Required Articles and Book Chapters:


Course Schedule

9 January Introductions

16 January MLK Holiday

23 January Reading Architectural History/Academic v.s. Vernacular/How Do You Study a Building that Doesn't Have a Particular Style?

READ:

Chappell, Edward A. “Acculturation in the Shenandoah Valley: Rhenish Houses of the Massanutten Settlement in Common Places


Gelernter, Chapters 2 and 3 for comparison to readings on vernacular architecture.

Eighteenth Century: Probate Inventories as Architectural History

Recommended reading for eighteenth century:
Gelernter, Chapter 3. Colonial Culture, 1650-1763, and Chapter 4. The Age of Revolution, 1763-1820
30 January  Introduction to Probate Inventories as Evidence

READ:
Explore the section titled “Interpreting” on the Exploring the Past website:  
http://chnm.gmu.edu/probateinventory/interpret.php, including the two sample probate inventories (Sarah Green and Moore Fauntleroy). Also read “Methodology” and “Clues to George Mason” in the Gunston Hall Room Use Study:  
http://www.gunstonhall.org/mansion/room_use_study/methodology.html


6 February  Eighteenth-Century Virginia Landscapes

READ:


Also read “Public Spaces” and “Domestic Spaces” in the Gunston Hall Room Use Study:  
http://www.gunstonhall.org/mansion/room_use_study/public.html

13 February  Probate Inventory Workshop [We will work with the probate inventories you are analyzing for your case study]

17 February  Case Study 1 due by 5:00 p.m.
20 February  Introduction to HABS and Houses in the Early Republic

READ:


27 February  Gender, Technology and the Commercialization of Middle Class Housing in the Nineteenth Century

READ:


5 March  Spring Break

12 March  Architecture and the Construction of Class Identities in the Victorian Era

READ:

Borchert, James, “Alley Landscapes of Washington” in Common Places


16 March  Case Study 2 due by 5:00 p.m.
19 March  Redefining Suburbs in the 1920s
READ:

26 March  Twentieth-Century Single-Family House (notice Isenstadt’s extensive use of popular magazines as evidence)
READ:

2 April  Postwar Suburbia and Consumer Magazine Workshop [We will work with the materials you are analyzing for your case study]
READ:

5 April Case Study 3 due by 5:00 p.m.

9 April  Commercial Building Types: Evolving Contexts of Consumption
READ:


16 April Constructing Community? Twentieth-Century Commercial Streetscapes

READ:


23 April Reconsidering Class and Gender: Skyscrapers and the Reorganization of Urban Space in the Twentieth Century/Postcard Workshop

READ:


27 April Case Study 4 due by 5:00 p.m.