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 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 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.

Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lit Review</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic Landscape Analysis and Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Landscape Analysis and Presentation</td>
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All written assignments should be 7-10 pages double-spaced, with appropriate citations in Turabian style [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html]. You will submit your written assignments electronically on the appropriate due date. Late assignments will be penalized.

Criteria for evaluation:
For each writing assignment, I will evaluate how effectively you accomplish the following:

- Analysis of specific architectural and spatial evidence.
- Creative application of historical and methodological content of assigned readings that demonstrates complex understanding of the limits and possibilities of particular scholar’s arguments and sources.
- 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.

Unit 1 Lit Review [30%, due Feb 15] In this paper you will evaluate the methodological approaches for studying buildings and landscapes we address in Unit 1, with particular consideration of how historians have used fieldwork, material culture analysis, and historical documents to interpret architecture as a cultural artifact.

Unit 2 Historical Analysis of Domestic Building/Landscape [35%]
May be related to your thesis/dissertation project. You will apply assigned reading to interpret a particular domestic building/landscape of your choice. Detailed instructions and approval form will be provided as the semester unfolds.
Due dates:
Submit form identifying your selected building/streetscape for approval by March 5.
March 27, 20-minute Ppt presentation and final essay due.

Unit 3 Historical Analysis of a Commercial Building/Streetscape [35%]
May be related to your thesis/dissertation project. You will apply assigned reading to interpret a particular commercial building/streetscape of your choice. Detailed instructions and approval form will be provided as the semester unfolds.
Due dates:
Submit form identifying your selected building/streetscape for approval by April 9.
April 24, 20-minute Ppt presentation and final essay due.
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—participation is not formally graded as a specific percentage of the final grade but 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:


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**Course Schedule**

**Jan. 16**

Introductions

**I. Theories and Methods for Studying Buildings**
Jan. 23  Introduction to Historiography/Lit Review

Jan. 30  Material Culture: Form and Style as Evidence

Feb. 6 Documentary Evidence and Fieldwork
Small, Nora Pat. Beauty and Convenience: Architecture and Order in the New Republic, Introduction, pp. xiii-xxiv. Pay particular attention to her rationale for why it is necessary to use both documents AND fieldwork in studying historical landscapes.

Feb. 13  Cultural Landscapes

Feb. 15  Lit Review Due

II. Historical Contexts: Domestic Landscapes

Feb. 20  Atlantic World Town House
Feb. 27  
**Federal Era New England**

Submit form identifying your selected building/streetscape for approval by **March 5**

March 6  
**Early Twentieth Century Suburbs: Planned and Unplanned**


March 13  
**Spring Break**

March 20  
**Lawn**

March 27  
**Presentations: Domestic Landscape Analysis Due**

III. **Historical Contexts: Commercial Landscapes**

April 3  
**Stores as Cultural Spaces**


Submit form identifying your selected building/streetscape for approval by **April 9**.

April 10  
**Department Stores and Skyscrapers**


April 17  
**Commercial Streetscapes**

April 24       Presentations: Commercial Landscape Analysis Due

[Last day of classes = Tuesday April 30 (Friday schedule)]