AMST 175 / Art 191: American Architecture 1600-1860

Objectives

This course examines selected aspects of the built environment in the United States from the first period of European settlement to the eve of the Civil War. Functions, patterns of form and expression, cultural traditions and preferences, technology, and urbanism are introduced as vehicles for interpreting the historical significance of this legacy of both exceptional and representative examples. Buildings are analyzed as artifacts that both manifest and shape broader social, cultural, and economic tendencies. Other topics introduced include multi-faceted nature of change, the persistence of tradition, the role of the designer, the influence of region, and architecture as a component of landscape.

Among the facets of the built environment that are examined are the multi-faceted nature of colonial building and settlement patterns; the emergence of national expression; the rise of city building and of a commercial core; the growing specificity of building types for commercial, governmental, institutional, and religious functions; the enduring importance of the single-family house; the multi-faceted nature of eclecticism; evolving views of nature and landscape design; and the impact of technology.

Detailed examination is made of the contribution made by many celebrated figures in design, including Alexander Jackson Davis, Andrew Jackson Downing, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Robert Mills, Frederick Law Olmsted, William Strickland, and Richard Upjohn. At the same time, attention is given to broad tendencies in design and their effect upon rural and urban landscapes. The impact of peoples from Africa and the Caribbean, the British Isles, France, German states, the Netherlands, and Spain is examined during both the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Meetings

Mondays/Wednesdays, 12:45 PM - 2:00 PM. Office hours will be set at the first class; at other times, by appointment. My office is at 2108 G Street, #202, tel. 994-6098, email rwl@gwu.edu. Please consider me available at all times.

Evaluation

Attendance is not taken; however, you are responsible for all the material presented in class, which complements, rather than merely repeats, that in assigned texts. Note taking is essential. The final grade will be based on an hour exam (@20%), a final exam (@35%), and a term paper (@45%).

Course Materials

In addition to the syllabus, handouts include (1) a study aid citing works discussed in lecture. Those marked by an asterisk are ones for which you will be responsible identifying on the exams. These and additional images are posted on the course website (2), for which you will also receive access instructions. Also posted is (3) a bibliography for use in researching your term papers. A style guide for use in writing them will be handed out when your outlines are returned.
### Lectures

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### Readings


On Reserve:


Reading Assignments

Read by:   Sep. 10 Pierson I: 1-2
Sep. 17 Gowans 29-63
Sep. 24 Peterson "Houses of the French"
Oct.  1 Pierson I: 5
Oct.  8 Pierson I: 3-4; Gowans 115-119, 173-239
Oct. 15 Pierson I: 6-7
Oct. 22 Pierson I: 8-9
Oct. 29 Pierson I: 10
Nov.  5 Pierson IIa: 1, 3-4
Nov. 12 Pierson IIa: 6-8
Nov. 19 Gowans 291-301, 316-327

Supplementary Readings for Graduate Students

Week 1


Week 2

Fred Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, December 1965, 549-77


Week 3


Week 4


Week 5


Bernard Herman, "Multiple Materials, Multiple Meanings: The Fortunes of Thomas Mendenhall," Winterthur Portfolio, spring 1984, 67-86

Week 6


Week 7

Betsy Blackmar, "Re-walking the 'Walking City': Housing and Property Relations in New York City," Radical History Review, fall 1979, 131-48


Week 8


Week 9


Week 10


Week 11


Week 12


Term Paper
The paper may focus on a variety of topics, including: 1) the development of a building or landscape type, 2) characteristics of architecture or landscape of a culture or in a region community during a specified time period, 3) the work of an architect or master-builder, 4) the development of a building technology or material, or 5) detailed analysis of a single building or landscape. Whatever, the topic, there must be sufficient available source material for the study to have both breadth and detail. At the same time, the paper should not merely restate the contents of a few existing studies, published or otherwise. All topics must be approved by the instructor. A sign-up sheet will be passed around in class to make an appointment.

A principal aim of this assignment is not only to gather material, but to analyze it in a historical context. Thus, descriptions and presentation of data should provide a basis for interpretation from a broad perspective, which may include esthetic, ideological, social, economic, technological, cultural, and urbanistic factors. DO NOT rely heavily on quotes. Absorb the material you read and frame it in your own words, giving credit where it is due in the notes (either footnotes or end notes are fine). A style sheet will be handed out, and it is mandatory that you follow it. Points will be deducted for clear negligence in this regard.

Concentrate also on the paper's organization. While you may introduce a diverse spectrum of material, the content should have a clearly defined scope and focus throughout. Present a clear argument and develop it. Avoid presenting a catalogue of examples. Never let the reader lose sight of why you are discussing a given matter.

The paper should be between 10 and 15 (undergraduate), or 20 and 30 (graduate) double-spaced, typewritten pages (12 pt. font, 1 1/2" margin on the left, 1" elsewhere), EXCLUDING foot or end notes, bibliography, and illustrations, which should follow in that order. All illustrations should be keyed to the text. Digital images or xerox copies attached to 8 1/2 x 11" sheets and fully identified are fine. For graduate students: please submit two copies of the paper (original and photocopy); the original will be returned to you. ONLY HARD COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Topics must be selected and approved in meetings I will schedule individually with each of you by 8 October. A three-page, typewritten outline, plus bibliography should be submitted by 29 October. (NOTE: Failure to submit this portion of the assignment on time will result in a reduction of the paper grade.)

Papers are due on 24 November for undergraduates and 10 December for graduates; NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

WHERE TO FIND WHAT YOU NEED FOR THE PAPER

Gelman Library is a reasonable source for many current publications. Some material that Gelman does not have can be found at other consortium libraries. If you do not find the material you need from the consortium catalogue, there are a number of alternatives. The easiest way to get additional material is through Gelman's INTER-LIBRARY LOAN office, which is located at the southeast corner of the main floor of Gelman. This is a very efficiently run operation, but you need to allocate several weeks for retrieval. Look for the material you need early and if you don't find it, go to inter-library loan asap.

The University of Maryland has by far the best academic library system in the metropolitan area. If you have access to a car, go there. After hours, you can park for free, but you cannot check material out. For hours, call 301 405-6317 (Architecture Library) or 301 405-9075 (main library).
Closer at hand is the Library of Congress. Take the Metro's Blue or Orange lines to Capitol South. Go east to the Madison Building (the newest), which faces Independence Avenue. Get a reader's card at ground level. Then take the subterranean tunnel to the Jefferson Building and proceed up to the main floor. Material catalogued since 1972 is on the computer (and accessible online at www.loc.gov). This is also an excellent way to see what may exist on a given subject. Material of earlier vintage can be found in the card catalogues in the stack area off the rotunda of the Jefferson Building. Bring some work with you. It takes about an hour to retrieve materials from the same building. If what you want is in the Adams Building across the street, it is easier to go there, to the 5th floor, via the tunnel that connects all three buildings.