AMERICAN ARHITECTURE, 1860-1940

SYNOPSIS

This course examines selected aspects of the built environment in the United States from the Gilded Age to the eve of World War II. Stylistic properties, functions, common tendencies of design, technological developments, and urban patterns are introduced as vehicles for interpreting the historical significance of this legacy of both exceptional and representative examples. Buildings are analyzed both as artifacts and as signifiers of broader social, cultural, and economic tendencies. Other topics introduced include the persistence and mixing of cultural traditions, 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 changing, multifaceted nature of eclecticism; the exponential growth of metropolitan areas; the emergence and development of tall commercial buildings; the rise of a comprehensive approach to planning; the enduring importance of the single-family house; evolving views of nature and landscape design; the pursuit of fantasy and reality in design; the impact of mass transportation systems and motor vehicles on the landscape; the reluctant acceptance of modernism; and the varied impacts of technology.

Detailed examination is made of the contribution made by many celebrated figures in design, including Daniel Burnham, Frank Furness, Charles and Henry Greene, Irving Gill, Richard Morris Hunt, Charles McKim, Richard Neutra, Henry Hobson Richardson, John Wellborn Root, R. M. Schindler, Gustav Stickley, Stanford White, and Frank Lloyd Wright. At the same time, attention is given to broad tendencies in design and their effect upon suburban and urban landscapes. The impact immigrants and new ideas from abroad is examined throughout the decades covered. Lectures are profusely illustrated.
OBJECTIVES

The underlying objective of this course is to facilitate understanding the built environment through correlating the analysis of its physical properties with that of the historical forces that helped shape them. Additional objectives include the refining the ability to distill salient information from verbal presentation. (Taking copious notes in class is especially important since the lectures draw from a much broader range of material than that contained in the assigned readings.) The term paper assignment enables pursuit of a subject of interest in detail. The ability to draw from a spectrum of authoritative (mostly non-digital) sources, to develop a persuasive argument, and to present the case in a logical, coherent, and engaging manner are all basic objectives of the assignment.

MEETINGS / ATTENDANCE

Mondays, Wednesdays 12:45-2:00. Office hours will be set at the first class; at other times, by appointment. Office: 2108 G Street, N.W., #202, tel. 202 994-6098, email rwl@gwu.edu.

While attendance is not taken, students are responsible for all material presented in class. As noted below (Class Assignments), each of you is required to submit a single-sheet synopsis of salient points made in the lectures and in the readings on a weekly basis. Should circumstances preclude attendance at a given time, it is your responsibility to attain the pertinent material from others in the class. Religious holidays, sickness, or other extenuating circumstances are the only valid excuses for missing class.

EVALUATION

The final grade will be based on your reading synopses (@ 10%), a research paper (outline and bibliography @ 5%; paper @ 35%), hour exam (@ 20%), a final exam (@ 30%).

COURSE MATERIALS

The syllabus includes 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, for which you will also receive instructions in class. Also posted is a bibliography for use in researching your term papers. Later on in the semester you will receive a hard-copy style guide for your papers.
LECTURES

January 11 - 20  Architecture and the City in the Gilded Age
January 25    The Impact of Richardson
January 27 - February 1 Resort Architecture to Suburban Architecture
February 3 - 10 Commercial Architecture 1870-1900
February 17 - March 1 Academic Eclecticism and the Progressive Era
March 3        Hour Exam
March 8 - 10   Arts and Crafts Movement
March 22 - 24  The Emergence of Wright
March 29 - 31  The Persistence of Traditionalism
April 5 - 12   Art Deco
April 14 - 21  Architecture and the Automobile
April 26 - 29  Avant-Garde Modernism of the 1920s & 1930s

READING SYNOPSISES

A requirement of the course is that you submit a synopsis of the readings each week, beginning on 25 January. These should be no more than one page, double-spaced, with your name at the date of submission on the top line. The content of your synopses should focus on the key points made in the assignments. Feel free to question or challenge the points made, but support your assertions. If there are matters that do not seem clear to you or you otherwise don’t understand, please include them. These will not be graded, but collectively they will count toward your final grade, as noted above, in terms of the thought you have given to them. Submissions will only be accepted in hard copy at the time of class.
READINGS

Buy:


On Reserve:

Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, American Vernacular Design 1870-1940: An Illustrated Glossary, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1985 (guide to terms)


Vincent Scully, Frank Lloyd Wright, New York: George Braziller, 1960

READING ASSIGNMENTS

read by: 20 Jan.  Gelenter, Ch. 6  27 Jan.  Gowans, pp. 329-349
17 Feb.  Scully  24 Feb.  Upton, Ch. 3
22 Mar.  Upton, Ch. 4  29 Mar.  Gelenter, Ch. 8
5 Apr.  Bletter  12 Apr.  Upton, Ch. 5
19 Apr.  Upton, Ch. 6
ADDITIONAL READING FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Week 1

Michael Lewis, “‘He was not a Connoisseur’: Peter Widener and His House,” Nineteenth Century 12:3-4 (1993): 27-36

Week 2


Week 3


Week 4


Week 5


Week 6

Week 7  Thomas Hubka and Judith Kenny, “Examining the American Dream: Housing Standards and the Emergence of a National Housing Culture, 1900-1930,” Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, 2006, 49-69


Week 12  Richard Longstreth, City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, 103-41

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Beginning the third week of class (25 January), and each Monday thereafter, you will submit a one-page, typed synopsis of key points made in the previous week’s lectures and readings. These comments should not be a re-hash or a listing of facts, but a thoughtful exploration of the ideas presented. Any questions you have about this material should also be enumerated on this sheet.

Your submissions will help you preparing for the exams, and they will also be an instructive guide for me in terms of points that might be discussed further in class.

TERM PAPER

The paper may focus on a variety of topics, including (but not limited to):

1) the development of a building or landscape type;

2) characteristics of architecture, landscape architecture or planning in a region or community during a specified time period;

3) the work of an architect, landscape architect, planner, or master builder;

4) the development of a building technology or material;

5) detailed analysis of a single building, landscape design, or plan;

or 6) the development of a community, district, or campus.

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 few existing studies, published or otherwise.

All topics must fall more-or-less within the timeframe of the course and must be approved by the instructor.

A principal aim of this assignment is to analyze material in an authoritative manner, drawing from a variety of scholarly sources, while developing your own thesis, supported by the material you incorporate in the text. The physical world (buildings, plans, landscapes, etc.) should be placed in an appropriate historical context, which may include esthetic, ideological, social, economic, political, technological, cultural, and/or urbanistic factors.

Concentrate also on the paper's organization. While you may introduce a diverse body of material, the content should have a clearly defined scope and focus throughout. The paper must
have an underlying thesis/argument to which all of its content contribute. Never let the reader lose sight of why you are discussing a given matter.

**The paper should NOT regurgitate other texts, not should it be primarily descriptive. All descriptions, as well as factual material, should be introduced ONLY when they make broader points that are clearly related to your thesis.**

The paper should be 10 to 15 (for undergraduate students), 20 to 30 (for graduate students) double-spaced, typewritten pages using 12-point font (1½” margin on the left, 1” elsewhere), PLUS notes, bibliography, and illustrations in that order. It is fine to use footnotes instead of endnotes, but do NOT cite sources in brackets in the text. Do NOT have a separate title page.

If you discuss physical attributes in any detail, you **MUST** illustrate them with images. All illustrations should be of pages separate from the text, notes, etc. Illustrations should be numbered, beginning with “fig.1,” and include an identifying caption, including the source. Photo or digital copies are fine. Pagination should be used throughout, including illustration pages.

**Papers must be submitted in hard copy on the designated day in class; no email attachments will be accepted.**

Do not waste time and money on fancy presentations; just make sure the copy is clean and readable. The title of the paper and your name should be on the first page, followed by the text. Do NOT have a separate title page. The content of the paper will be the basis for your grade. Two copies of the paper (original and a copy) must be submitted by graduate students; the original is all that is necessary for undergraduates.

Topics must be selected and approved by 10 February. A bibliography must be submitted by 1 March, and a three-page, typewritten outline should be submitted by 24 March. All undergraduate papers are due on 26 April; graduate papers on 3 May.

**No late papers will be accepted.**

The format should conform to accepted scholarly standards. When I return your outlines, I will hand out a basic guide, which you are to read carefully and follow.

Take advantage of GW’s Writing Center, located in the Academic Center, #550, which has tutors on hand to assist you in improving all facets of your writing – developing and sharpening your ideas and argument, organizing your thoughts, writing clearly and concisely, etc. You need to make an appointment in advance. Consult gwriter@gwi.edu.
An exemplary paper should:

* have a solid, compelling thesis/argument that is fully supported by the text,
* be analytical, rather than descriptive in nature,
* demonstrate an authoritative grasp of the sources consulted, but also
* reflect the capacity to think critically, not just re-hash points/facts found in those sources,
* avoid quotations, except in unusual cases where the specific nature of wording is key to a point you are developing,
* be organized in a coherent, logical sequence, with smooth transitions from one point to another,
* have a strong introduction that delineates the scope and focus of the paper, as well as its thesis, without lapsing into sweeping generalities,
* be well-written, with good sentence structure and grammar, correct use of punctuation and citation style (in style guide that will be distributed later), have no run-on sentences or awkward constructions, and have minimal spelling errors.
WHERE TO FIND WHAT YOU NEED

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 your search does not yield the citation under “title,” try under “author,” or visa versa; a large number of books are not catalogued under both – incredibly.

If Gelman does not have the book or if it is lost or checked out, a copy can be procured within a day or so through the consortium. 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 can be done electronically, 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 the best academic library system in the metropolitan area. If you have access to a car, go there. After 4PM and on weekends, you can park for free, but you cannot check material out.

Closer at hand is the Library of Congress. Take the Metro's Blue or Orange lines to Capitol South. Go to the north side of the Madison Building at Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S.E. Get a reader's card at the office to the left after passing through security. They will direct you to the places where you want to go. The main catalogue is at the Jefferson Building on the first floor. Material catalogued since 1972 is on the computer (and accessible online at www.loc.gov). A substantial number of titles of earlier vintage are also online; others can be found in the card catalogues in the stack area off the rotunda. 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 the lowest levels of both buildings.