

History of American Architecture
ARHI 3140 and Honors By Contract
MWF, 9:00-9:50 AM
Fall 2016

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History of American Architecture

Course Description:

We cannot escape the art of architecture: we live in houses, condos or apartments, we learn in schools, we work in offices; on vacations we visit cities and countries with unique architectural traditions, stay in hotels, and visit museums. Above all, architecture creates a sense of place. One of the key questions of American Architecture is what makes it “American.” We are a continent of diverse cultures and traditions. Our architecture is very much the result of encounters between those cultures and traditions. In this course, we will focus upon American architecture from 1500 to the present so that we can draw out regional and ethnic diversity as well as the technological and material innovations.

In this course we will learn how architecture affects our lives—how it shapes our experiences, how it pleases us or leaves us numb, how it reinforces values and ideas we deem important. Why are some buildings successful while others fail? This course will introduce students to the study of American architecture through an examination of selected examples from its history; these examples will provide a chronological and thematic framework that will help students understand any work of architecture in the built environment. We will ask questions from both a historical and contemporary perspective. The class will include at least one site visit to a local building or complex, and guest lectures from practitioners in the field. Classes will combine lecture and discussion so that students can learn the fundamentals of American architectural history as well as how to analyze buildings.

Core Curriculum Essential Learning Outcomes for this course: Diversity and Cultural Awareness (DCA)

This course meets the Essential Learning Outcome of Diversity and Cultural Awareness as defined under the Core Curriculum requirements. As such, the course will assist students in developing a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that will help them to engage in effective and appropriate interactions involving diverse cultural and social groups in various contexts.

Specifically:

1. The commonality and diversity among people and cultures across the globe.
2. Identifying and analyzing one's own cultural norms and values in relation to those of other cultures and diverse social groups.

These two criteria will be addressed through class activities detailed below. In this course, we will examine how cultures from across the globe brought their traditions to this country.

NOTE: This is a [3-credit course, as defined by federal regulation](#). Each week, you should expect to complete 9 hours of work for class; this schedule will continue for 15 weeks, for a total of 90 hours of course-related work. (In an in-person class, this regulation usually means 3 hours of work in class and 6 hours outside of class *per week*.)

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify and discuss key architects and their designs in their historical and cultural contexts
 - Identify major architectural styles and master the specific vocabulary of terms related to those styles.
 - Define and deploy central terms and concepts in American architecture (e.g. sustainable design, vernacular, Arts and Crafts, etc.)
 - Read, comprehend, and engage with architectural criticism
 - Read and comprehend architectural drawings
 - Place course subject matter in broader built environment or social contexts
 - Evaluate research sources for authority, accuracy, and appropriateness
- Engage and explicate primary sources including non-textual primary sources such as maps.

Class Compartment: Since class lectures are professional presentations at the university level, you are not permitted to eat, drink, converse, check email, surf the web, text, or receive phone calls during class lectures and discussion. Students are not permitted to tape the lectures without the permission of the instructor. Disabled students must see me on the first day of class so that individual needs can be accommodated.

Requirements:

Text: The class textbook is: L. Roth, *American Architecture: A History*. Second Edition,

Icon Editions, Westview Press, 2016. In addition, a “text” for this class will be Lowell itself and architecture in the surrounding area. Attendance at site visits contributes to your final grade.

Grading: Your grade will be based upon the following contributions: three tests (20% each); participation and discussion, including responses to readings and map assignments (15%); final project (25%).

Attendance: Attendance will be taken regularly. Any student who has more than two unexcused absences may find their grade lowered proportionally. Three tardy arrivals will equal one unexcused absence. If you miss a class, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE UP THE WORK by using the textbook, getting notes from a classmate, and speaking with me during office hours.

Please Note: There should be no reason to plagiarize on any of these assignments; but any student who does plagiarize will receive an “F” for the course. Please see attached statement on plagiarism.

On Reserve at O’Leary Library:

Whiffen, M. *A Fieldguide to American Architecture*. Call number: NA705.W47

Please also consult in the permanent Reference collection:

Blumenson, NA705.B55 1981

McAlester, NA7205.M35 1984

Students may also wish to consult C.M. Harris, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture*, call number NA 31.H56, 1983.

Schedule of lectures and events (N.B. Subject to change without prior notice)

Week of:

Sept. 1 Introduction. Looking at Architecture.

Terms: Façade, Plan, Rendering, Working Drawings.

Sept. 5 **Encounters with Native Traditions**

Roth, Chapter 1. Native Traditions. Anasazi, Hopi, Sioux, Algonquin

Terms: Adobe, Wigwam, tipi

Sept. 12 **Encounters with European Traditions**

Roth: Chapter 2: Colonial Traditions: The Spanish, Dutch and French

St. Estevan, Dyckman House, Parson Capen, Old Ship Meeting House,
Adam Thoroughgood House.
Terms: Wattle and daub; half-timbered; saltbox; gambrel

Sept. 19 **Encounters with European Traditions** cont.
Roth, Chapter 3: The Classical Tradition I: The 18th Century
Savannah, New York City, Redwood Library, Old North, Mt. Vernon,
Washington DC.

Sept. 26 **The Creation of an “American” Classicism**
Roth Chapters 4 and 5: Classical Tradition continued.
Monticello, University of Virginia, Samuel McIntire in Salem; Bulfinch and the
Massachusetts State House; Parris’ Quincy Market, the career of B.H. Latrobe. TU
Walter and the US Capitol.
 Exam 1: Sept. 30 Friday

Oct. 3 **Immigration, the City and the Suburb**
Roth Chapter 5: The Mid 19th Century.
The Shakers; Gothic Revival; A.J. Downing, Renwick (The Smithsonian; St. Patrick’s);
Central Park and Boston’s Emerald Necklace; balloon frame

Oct. 10 **The Gilded Age: “Acquiring Culture”**
The Late Nineteenth Century. Roth Chapter 6 and 7
The career of H.H. Richardson, The Gilded Age; American Renaissance; Victorian; and
R.M. Hunt’s The Breakers. Classical Tradition II: McKim, Mead and White. Chicago’s
World’s Fair.
 Oct. 14: Map Assignment Due Friday

Oct. 17 **Encounters with Technology**
Roth Chapter 7: Louis Sullivan and The Skyscraper
Read: Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, Wright, “In the Nature of Materials,”
Terms: William LeBaron Jenney, steel frame, curtain wall construction

Oct. 24 Roth Chapter 7: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School
Terms: The Arts and Crafts Movement.
 Exam II: Oct. 28 Friday

Oct. 31 The 1920s: Art Deco

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- Nov. 7 **Encounters with European Modernism**
Roth, Chapter 8 and 9: The International Style and Brutalism
Saarinen, Neutra, Raymond Hood, late Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Kahn.
Site visit: Magauvran and O’Leary Buildings
- Nov. 14 **Post-Modernism: the Historical and Cultural Grab Bag**
Roth: Chapter 9: Post Modernism
Robert Venturi, I.M. Pei, Michael Graves, Philip Johnson
- Nov. 21 *Thanksgiving Break*
 Encounters with the Environment
Sustainable Design
Please read: William McDonough, Manifesto.
- Nov. 28 **American Architecture, the Starchitect, and Globalism**
Roth, Chapter 10: Contemporary American Architecture
Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, Diller and Scofidio.
Exam III: December 2 Friday
- Dec. 5 Student Projects and Presentations
- Exam TBA We may also use the scheduled exam time to complete the presentations.