

History of American Architecture

58-314, 201; 58-314, 301; and Honors

MWF, 12:00-1:00 Coburn Hall 300

Fall 2008

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Office Hours: MWF 12:00-3:00

Office: Coburn 113D/South Campus

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 our vacations we visit countries with unique architectural traditions, stay in hotels, and visit museums. Above all, architecture creates a sense of place. 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. We will focus on American architecture from 1500 to the present; this will allow us to examine regional and ethnic diversity as well as technological and material inventions that made “American” architecture distinct from native and European traditions.

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. 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.

Class Comportment:

Since class lectures are professional presentations at the university level, you are not permitted to eat, drink, converse 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 primary “text” for this class will be Lowell itself and architecture in the surrounding area. Attendance at site visits will contribute to your final grade. In addition, please purchase:

L. Roth, *American Architecture: A History*. Icon Editions, Westview Press, 2001

Grading: Your grade will be based upon the following contributions: map assignment (15%); two tests (20%); participation (15%); final project and presentation (30%). The final project may consist of a paper or a model. See the separate guideline for this assignment.

Honors students: Honors students will, in addition, read one book and view one film for which they will write short (2-3 page) responses which will be discussed outside of class at a mutually convenient time.

Book: Howard J. Kunstler, *Geography of Nowhere*.

Film: "The Fountainhead" based on the novel by Ayn Rand.

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: the following books have been placed on reserve:

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

Please also consult in the permanent Reference collection:

Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*. NA705.B55 1981

McAlester, *Field guide to American Houses*. 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. 3 Introduction; Choosing Your Semester Project
- Sept. 8 Native and Colonial Traditions
Roth: Chapters 1 and 2
- Sept. 15 Colonial Traditions in New England
Sept. 19: MAP ASSIGNMENT DUE
Final decision on building for semester project
Site Visit, Sept. 19: Spalding House, Pawtucket Blvd.
- Sept. 22 The Classical Tradition I: the 18th and Early 19th Century
Roth: Chapters 3 and 4
- Sept. 29 The Classical Tradition I continued.
Judging architectural competitions: The case of Girard College
Roth: Chapter 5
- Saturday Oct. 4: Fieldtrip to Frank Lloyd Wright's Zimmerman House in Manchester, NH.**
- Oct. 6 **Exam I: Wednesday Oct. 8**
Site Visit, Friday Oct. 10: The Allan House, South Campus.
- Oct. 13 Columbus Day (University Closed)
- Oct. 15-17 The Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Gothic Revival, The Suburb
Roth: Chapter 5
- Oct. 20 Richard Morris Hunt and H.H. Richardson
Roth: Chapter 6 (see Chapter 7 for Hunt's *The Breakers*, p. 286)
- Oct. 27 Louis Sullivan; The Skyscraper
Please read: Sullivan, selection from *Kindergarten Chats*.
The Classical Tradition II: the American Renaissance
Roth: Chapter 7
- Nov. 3 Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School
Roth: Chapter 7

Nov. 10 The 1920s, The International Style, Brutalism
Roth: Chapter 8

Site Visit, Friday Nov. 14: Magauvran and O'Leary Buildings

Nov. 17 Post-Modernism and Contemporary Architecture
Roth: Chapter 9 and 10

Exam II: Friday, November 21.

Nov. 24 The New Urbanism: Guest Speaker, Lowell City Planning Department
Thanksgiving Recess

Dec. 1 **Student Presentations.** I will meet with each of you during my office
hours prior to your presentation.

Dec. 8 **Student Presentations**

Final Exam: PLEASE NOTE: We may use the final exam time slot to finish the
presentations.