

## Public History of the Built Environment: Theory and Practice

HSPV 5340 – Spring Semester 2024

Class Time: Thursdays, 1:45-4:45 PM

Location: Meyerson B-5

**Instructors:** Aaron Wunsch and Elizabeth Milroy

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Office Hours will be held in Meyerson G16 on Wednesdays, 2-5. If you would like to schedule a meeting at another time or schedule a zoom, please contact us via email.



Mount Pleasant, East Fairmount Park,  
Philadelphia. 1765. HABS photo.

*A villa ... is the country-house of a person of competence or wealth sufficient to build and maintain it with some taste and elegance.*

*Andrew Jackson Downing*

*What distinguishes the villa from a farmhouse or a country cottage ... is the intense, programmatic investment of ideological goals ... because the image of a refuge in the country focuses not so much on the accommodation of clearly defined rural functions as on a cornucopia of values absent or debased in the city.*

*James Ackerman*

This seminar explores ways of bringing histories of place before the public. "Public History" has been defined as "the practice of historical research, teaching, and interpretation that largely occurs outside of the academy. . . A major aspect of the field is working with the public and with local practitioners to create historical projects. Public history makes the past accessible, intelligible, and relevant for all members of society."<sup>1</sup>

In this seminar we will focus on the “villa” as building and life-style in the antebellum United States, to explore how public history can shed new light on how individuals, communities, and nations remember and forget. We will focus on the “villa” as building and life-style in the antebellum United States, in order to grapple with the ways in which individuals, communities, and nations remember and forget. These buildings have a complex and often problematic history—many survive to the present as historic sites yet are still inadequately or uncritically documented and interpreted. We shall explore how villas, and their landscapes, function as large-scale material culture objects, while they also work differently than smaller artifacts and collections to form frameworks and focal points for public and private life. The seminar foregrounds interpretation and dissemination through multiple media—from signage and monuments to websites and exhibits. It is not an introduction to the technical aspects of those media but a chance to reflect critically on how these can be used for richer interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup> “What is Public History?” <https://louisville.edu/history/public-history/what-is-public-history>

In addition to discussing readings in history, historic preservation, sociology, anthropology, geography, public art, and material culture, students will select a single property and develop a rigorously-researched interpretive plan that incorporates current approaches to public history and historiography.

### Required Book Purchases

- John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Barber, Sarah and Corinna M. Peniston-Bird, (eds.). *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*. Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2009. **OPTIONAL**
- Lyon, Cherstin M., Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum. *Introduction to Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

### Participation & Classroom Conduct

Attendance at all scheduled meetings is mandatory and students must come to class ready to discuss assigned readings. Each student is permitted one unexcused absence without a doctor's note over the course of the semester. Students are responsible for any work missed while absent. Class-time use of electronic devices other than those required for participation in class activities is prohibited without written consent from the instructor.

### Assignments

**Weekly Commentary & Questions.** You are expected to at least browse ALL of the assigned readings. However, some must be scrutinized more closely. To facilitate this, beginning in Week 3, you must upload to Canvas a 500 word/2 page commentary plus questions on ONE of the readings marked with an asterisk \* on the syllabus. Please post this as a Word document (.doc or .docx). Please do NOT use Pages and do NOT submit a .pdf. These must be submitted by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before class. Your commentaries must demonstrate an understanding of the author's argument and should tie into previous weeks' readings with an aim to promote class discussion. 5 points each.

### Term Assignment: Site Interpretation

Students will select one property typically identified as a villa and document how that site has been interpreted **OR** develop a new interpretive plan for the property. As well as archival research and site and structural analysis, the plan should incorporate some critique based on current approaches to public historiography such as oral history and contextual analysis. Students will determine the focus of their plan: potential points of focus are design and construction, historic and/or current gardens and landscape, current physical conditions, adaptive reuse and shifting neighborhood demographics.

The assignment is in two parts:

**Part 1:** A project statement, bibliography and outline describing the property selected and some approaches to interpretation. **Due by 5 pm on March 14<sup>th</sup>.**

**Part 2:** In-class presentation, consisting of a 20-minute powerpoint that describes the interpretive plan. This may function as a "draft" of the final written paper. Students will draw lots for presentation dates (**April 18<sup>th</sup> and April 25<sup>th</sup>**).

**Part 3:** A 3000 word (double-spaced) interpretive plan report. This must be accompanied by scholarly apparatus (footnotes or endnotes), and supporting materials (ie illustrations, transcripts etc.). While neither the supporting materials nor the scholarly apparatus count toward the official length of the submission, they are integral to its success. **Due May 10th, at 5pm; counts for 35% of your final grade.**

### Expectations for Written Assignments

Grades will reflect the substance and persuasiveness of your argument, your ability to advance new ideas, your analysis and synthesis of supporting evidence, your grasp of the course's themes, your use of scholarly apparatus (footnotes, bibliography, etc.), and your familiarity with the mechanics of writing (e.g., spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence and paragraph structure). All written submissions must employ the conventions of academic citation, including the Commentaries.

Written assignments should use:

- 12-point type, with 1” margins all around
- page numbers at bottom
- Endnotes or footnotes must follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*  
Mary Lynn Rampolla’s *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* is an easy and useful guide to Chicago Style and historical writing.

## Grading

**Commentary & Questions:** 40%

## Site Interpretation

- Project Statement , Bibliography and Outline = 10% (**Due March 14<sup>th</sup> by 5 pm**)
- Powerpoint Part 1 = 15% (**Presentations are on April 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>; dates chosen by lot**)
- Final Paper Part 2 = 35%. (**Due Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup> by 5 pm**)

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## Academic Integrity

Everyone, at all times, is expected to abide by the academic honesty principles set out in the University’s Code of Academic Integrity—see <https://provost.upenn.edu/policies/pennbook/2013/02/13/code-of-academic-integrity>

## Land Acknowledgment

This course is taught in and from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and we respectfully acknowledge our location upon the Lenapehoking, the ancestral and spiritual homeland of the Lenni-Lenape, their kin and neighbors. As researchers, practitioners, and students committed to the land and its vast collectives, we commit to strive toward policies and practices that work more closely with indigenous communities, listen to and value their knowledge and perspectives, and recognize their continued presence on and relationships with their ancestral homelands. Related resources include:

Angela Flournoy - What Does It Mean to Acknowledge the Past?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/31/opinion/sunday/what-does-it-mean-to-acknowledge-the-past.html>

Native Governance Center – “A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement” <https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>

Guide to Indigenous Land and Territorial Acknowledgements for Cultural Institutions

<http://landacknowledgements.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Acknowledgement-Guide-finalfinal.pdf>

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## Course Calendar & Readings

### Subject to revision

**NOTE:** This course includes several site visits – including one scheduled for a FRIDAY (March 22<sup>nd</sup>). Students are expected to arrange their own travel and to arrive on time. We are arranging transportation for the Friday site visit (to Andalusia)

**Week 1 (January 18th) Public History of the Built Environment** – Overview of course syllabus, objectives, sites, tools, & repositories.

- Rosenzweig and Thelen, “The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life,” chapter 2 in Kean and Martin, eds., *The Public History Reader*, 30-55.
- Archer, “Prologue” and Introduction” in *Architecture and Suburbia* (2005), xv—xx, 1-14 + notes.
- Lyon, Nix, and Shrum, chapter 1: “Introducing Public History” and chapter 2: “Thinking Historically” in *Introduction to Public History* (2017), 1-32.
- Miller, Volmert, et al. *Reframing History* (2022). Read the entire report (3 sections)
- National Council on Public History, “What is Public History?” <https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/> (2024)

**Week 2 (January 25th) The Villa: Style & Ideology**

- Excerpts from early writers:
- Columella (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE), Horace (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE), Pliny (1<sup>st</sup> century CE)
- Palladio, Chapters XI, XIII and XVI from Book II, *The Four Books of Architecture* (1570) <https://catena.bgc.bard.edu/texts/palladio.htm>
- Daniels, “Villa Parks” in *The Horticulturist* (1858)
- Bentmann & Muller, chapter 8: “Andrea Palladio: The Aesthetic Rationalization of ‘Irrational Order’ in the Countryside,” in *The Villa as Hegemonic Architecture* (1970/tr 1992), 27-36.
- Ackerman, “The Typology of the Villa,” chapter 1 and “The Ancient Roman Villa,” chapter 2 in *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (1990) 8-34.
- Ellis, “Interpreting the Whole House,” in *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (2002).

**Week 3 (February 1st) Villas in England and North America**

- Finish reading ALL of Lyon, Nix, and Shrum.
- Girouard, “The Power Houses,” chapter 1 in *Life in the English Country House* (1978), 1-13.
- Ackerman, “The Palladian Villa in England,” chapter 6 in *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (1990), 135-158.★
- Archer, “Locating the Self in Space,” chapter 1 and “Villa Suburbana, Terra Suburbana,” chapter 2 in *Architecture and Suburbia* (2005), 17-44 and 45-92 + notes.★
- Reinberger and McLean, “The Rise of the Philadelphia Country House,” chapter 3 in *The Philadelphia Country House... (2015)*, 51-73.

**Week 4 (February 8<sup>th</sup>) SITE VISIT: Woodford**

- [Diary entry, June 1, 1762] from *The Diary of Hannah Callendar Sansom...*, 180-184.
- Bushman, “Houses and Gardens,” chapter 4 in *The Refinement of America* (1992), 100-138.★

- Reinberger “The Evolution of Woodford, an Eighteenth-Century ‘Retirement’” in *PMHB* (1997)
- Archer, “The Apparatus of Selfhood,” chapter 3 in *Architecture and Suburbia* (2005), 93-170 + notes.★
- Study the Woodford website at <https://www.woodfordmansion.org/>

#### Week 5 (February 15<sup>th</sup>) SITE VISIT - CLIVEDEN

- Hurley, “Preservation in the City” chapter 1 and “Taking it to the Streets,” chapter 2 in *Beyond Preservation* (2011).★
- Reinberger and McLean, “Fulfillment in the Middle and Late Colonial Periods,” chapter 4 and “The Process of Design and Building,” chapter 5, “Elements of Landscape and Architecture,” chapter 6 and “Cliveden: Benjamin Chew’s Great Gray House in Germantown,” chapter 13 in *The Philadelphia Country House...* (2015), 74-90, 93-115, 116-144 and 295-307.
- Young, “Introduction” and “Conversations: Experiences with Germantown’s Community of Memory,” chapter 1 in *The Battles of Germantown ...* (2019), 11-42, 43-88. ★
- Study the Cliveden website at <https://cliveden.org/>

#### Week 6 (February 22<sup>nd</sup>) The Villa after the Revolution – GUEST SPEAKERS

- Jefferson, “Manners” and “Manufactures,” from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785).
- Marx, excerpts from “The Garden, Parts 2 and 3” chapter 3 in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964; new ed. 2000), 96-101 and 117-144. **On-line** ★
- Bushman, “Ambivalence,” chapter 6 in *The Refinement of America* (1992), 181-206. ★
- Upton, “An American Icon” chapter 1 in *Architecture in the United States* (1998), 17-47 + notes.. **On-line**
- Cooperman and Lloyd, “Lemon Hill Interpretation Study” (2005). Read the entire report.
- Reinberger and McLean, “The Flowering of the 1760s: Mount Pleasant,” chapter 13 in *The Philadelphia Country House...* (2015), 286-292.
- Milroy, “Suburban Villas in the Schuylkill Valley,” chapter 4 in *The Grid and the River ...* (2016), 69-94.

#### Week 7 (February 29<sup>th</sup>) SITE VISIT - Is The Woodlands a villa?? – THE WOODLANDS

- Bentmann & Muller, chapter 15: “The Villa Ideal as Ideology,” in *The Villa as Hegemonic Architecture* (1970/tr 1992), 94-113.★
- Jacobs, “William Hamilton and The Woodlands: A Construction of Refinement in Philadelphia,” in *PMHB* (2006), 181-209.
- Milroy, “Nurseries of National Virtue,” chapter 5 in *The Grid and the River ...* (2016), 95-118.★
- Study The Woodlands website at <https://www.woodlandsphila.org/william-hamilton>

#### (March 7<sup>th</sup>) SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

#### Week 8 (March 14<sup>th</sup>) NO CLASS: Project statement, bibliography and outline due by 5 pm

#### Week 9 (March 22<sup>st</sup>) SITE VISIT: ANDALUSIA

- Biddle, “The American Farmer” *The Farmer & Gardener* (1836)
- Wainwright, “Andalusia, Countryseat of the Craig Family and of Nicholas Biddle and his Descendants,” *PMHB* (1977), 3-69.



- Archer, “Republican Pastoral,” chapter 4 in *Architecture and Suburbia* (2005), 173-202 + notes. ★
- Study the Andalusia website at <https://andalusiapa.org/>

**Week 10 (March 28<sup>th</sup>) Re-Conceiving the Suburb**

- Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (1988), 1-17, 129-138.
- Ackerman, “The Picturesque,” chapter 9 and “Andrew Jackson Downing and the American Romantic Villa,” chapter 10 in *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, 213-228 and 229-253. ★
- Archer, “Suburbanizing the Self,” chapter 5 in *Architecture and Suburbia* (2005), 203-245 + notes. ★
- Holst, “Introduction,” chapter 1 in *Pattern Books and Suburbanization ...* (2008), 1-63.

**Week 11 (April 4<sup>th</sup>) SITE VISIT: Ivy Lodge**

- Fisher, Excerpts from *Diary* (1830s-1850s)
- “How to Make Paradise in the Country,” *Horticulturist* (1847)
- “Citizens Retiring to the Country,” *Horticulturist* (1852)
- “Denwood, The Residence of John Jay Smith, Esq.,” *Horticulturist* (1853)
- Marx, excerpts from “Two Kingdoms of Force, Part 1” chapter 5 in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964; new ed. 2000), pp.227-242. **On-line** ★
- Holst, “Ivy Lodge and Personal Commitment,” in *Pattern Books and Suburbanization ...* (2008), 367-379, 414-418. ★

**Week 12 (April 11<sup>th</sup>) NO CLASS: Individual meetings to discuss class presentations**

**Week 13 (April 18<sup>th</sup>) Final Presentations**

**Week 14 (April 25<sup>th</sup>) Final Presentations**

**Final paper is due May 10th, at 5pm; counts for 35% of your final grade**

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