

American Architecture (HSPV 521)

Fall 2021

Meeting Time and Place: Wednesdays, 8:30-11:30am at Moore Building, Room 212

Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30am-12:00pm or by appointment. Meetings will take place on campus after class, or at other scheduled times over Zoom.

Instructor: Michael J. Emmons, Jr. (mjej@design.upenn.edu)

Description:

This course is a survey of architecture in the United States. The organization, while broadly chronological, emphasizes themes around which important scholarship has gathered. The central purpose is to acquaint you with major cultural, economic, technological, and environmental factors that have conditioned the design of buildings and settlements in North America for the last 400 years. To that end, we will study a mix of “high-style” and “vernacular” architectures while encouraging you to think critically about these categories. Throughout the semester, you will be asked to grapple with both the content of assigned readings and the methodologies their authors employ. Louis Sullivan, for instance, gives us the tall office building “artistically considered” while Carol Willis presents it as a financial and legal artifact. What do you make of the difference? Finally, you will learn how to describe buildings (a skill also honed in HSPV 600). Rich or “thick” description is more than accurate prose. It is integral to understanding the built environment – indeed, to *seeing* it at all.

Although this is a lecture-based class, it also requires students to participate regularly in discussions of assigned readings. The paper is short but intensive. Based on original research and independent thought, it is a graduate-level exercise in argumentation, clear prose, and the use of scholarly apparatus.

Required Texts

- Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Technological and Cultural Context* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).
- Steven Conn and Max Page, eds., *Building the Nation: Americans Write About Their Architecture, Their Cities, and Their Landscape* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
- Keith L. Eggener, ed., *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Recommended for Purchase:

- Cyril Harris, *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction* (any ed.).
- Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (any ed.).
- Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (any ed.).

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Participation and Discussion.** I cover a lot of ground in each lecture, and your contributions are important for successful discussions, so regular attendance and participation is crucial. It is also very important that you come *prepared* to each discussion section by having completed each week's readings prior to our meeting. Readings provide the context for lectures and fodder for discussions. Each discussion session will be led by 2-3 students (a sign-up sheet will be available during our first meeting), but *all students* are expected to keep the conversation going by drawing on their insights from the readings, citing specific passages when possible. To avoid disruptions, students should arrive on time each week. No more than one absence will be excused throughout the semester without a doctor's note. Attendance, participation, and discussion (including your effort when leading a discussion) count for **20 percent** of your grade.
- 2) **Thought-Provoking Submissions (TPS Reports).** Each week, on Canvas, students will submit a paragraph reflecting on some aspect of that week's materials—including our readings, recorded lectures, and/or other assigned videos/podcasts, etc. These submissions, which are due on the Canvas discussion board **by 6:00pm EST the day before class**, will not only demonstrate your engagement with the readings and lessons, but it will also help the student discussion leaders each week in formulating good topics for discussion (you'll appreciate this when it is your turn). Your weekly posting can include interesting observations about a particular reading or architectural movement, compare readings for their differences in approach, ask informed questions about things that need further explanation, or compare current lessons/architectures to previous ones. In short, give us some good fodder for discussion. While we meet for discussion 13 times over the semester, **only 10 weekly submissions are required**—meaning you get 3 “free passes.” Use them wisely! Note: students may choose to *not* use all of their free passes, since extra Canvas submissions can help offset missed participation points in discussions. These weekly Canvas submissions will cumulatively count for **20 percent** of your course grade.
- 3) **Midterm and Final Exams.** The midterm and final exams will feature essay questions involving key buildings and sites, architectural terminology, and thematic analysis. Questions for both exams will require the visual interpretation of architectural images, and the explanation of significance through essays. The midterm, held on **October 21st**, will take ~40 minutes and consist of slide IDs (building name, date, location, designer, terminology, and significance). The final, held during exam week will run ~100 minutes and likely involve two slide comparisons and two essay questions. Strong essays will take the form of well-organized arguments, avoid generalization, and cite specific readings and buildings. The midterm will count for **15 percent** and the final exam will count for **25 percent** of your course grade.

- 4) **Historiography Paper.** This paper is your chance to think critically about the practice of architectural history, specifically about when and why attitudes toward particular buildings and building types vary over time and across disciplines. You will be making a scholarly argument, not writing a summary or a book report. As such, you will need to present a clear thesis, supported by evidence and framed by an introduction and a conclusion (see Frederick Crews, *The Random House Handbook* for further discussion). Footnotes should follow the standard format outlined in Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. While you may use the internet to assist your research, few if any of your cited sources should be websites. If you believe your topic merits an exception to this rule, please obtain instructor's permission well before you submit your paper. The paper should be 8 pages long. It must employ double-spaced text, 12-point font, and 1" margins. It counts for **20 percent** of your final grade and is due on **Friday, December 3rd**. A fuller explanation of this assignment is available as a PDF handout on Canvas.

A Note on Academic Integrity and Absences: *Everyone, at all times, is expected to abide by the 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>.* Attendance is mandatory at all class meetings. Over the course of the semester, you are allowed one unexcused absence without a doctor's note and/or written permission from the instructor. You are responsible for any material missed while absent. During examinations, no reference materials or notes should be consulted (beyond anything the instructor has approved in advance).

A Note on Our Surroundings: Philadelphia arguably contains the best cross-section of urban building types in the country, as well as many canonical works. While we will not be able to partake in any organized field trips this semester, I encourage you to consider the city part of our classroom and to consistently pay close attention to the local built environment. To orient yourself, you may wish to consult some of the sources listed below under "Philadelphia Architectural & Geographic Resources."

COURSE CALENDAR:

Week 1 (September 1)

Course Overview (8:30-11:30am)

- There are no assignments in preparation for this first meeting. We will introduce ourselves, go over the syllabus, discuss the textbooks, chat about the scope of our subject matter, and address any questions you may have about the course.

Week 2 (September 8)

Native American Architectures

- Gelernter, ch. 1. (pp. 1-34) “First Civilizations, 12,000 BC - AD 1500”
- C.W. Short, “Antiquities of Ohio” (1817), in Conn and Page, 97-99.
- Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, “‘Modifying Factors’ in Native American Architecture,” chap. 2 in Eggener, 39-50.

Week 3 (September 15)

Colonial Encounters

- Gelernter, ch. 2. (pp. 34-64) “Cultures Transformed & Transplanted, 1500-1650”
- Cary Carson et al., “Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 16, nos. 2-3 (1981): 135-178.

Week 4 (September 22)

Getting Formal

- Gelernter, chap. 3. (pp. 65-96) “Colonial Culture, 1650-1763”
- John Stilgoe, “National Design: Mercantile Cities and the Grid,” in Eggener reader, pp. 25-36.
- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, William Peden, ed. (1982), 152-154. [start at “*The private buildings...*”]
- Dell Upton, “Black and White Landscapes in Eighteenth Century Virginia,” *Places: A Quarterly Journal of Environmental Design* 2 (Winter 1985): 59-72.

Week 5 (September 29)

Empires, Waxing and Waning

- Gelernter, chap. 4. (pp. 97-129) “The Age of Revolution, 1763-1820”
- Catherine Kelly, *Republic of Taste: Art, Politics, and Everyday Life in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), chap. 4.

- Anonymous, excerpt from “On the Architecture of America,” 1790, in Conn and Page, 9-10.
- Anonymous, excerpt from “On the Arts,” 1815, in Conn and Page, 10-12.
- Marc Treib, “Church Design and Construction in Spanish New Mexico,” in Eggener, 51-72.
- White House Historical Association, “Building the White House”: <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/building-the-white-house>

Week 6 (October 6)

Urban Space and Urban Experience in the Early Republic

- Bernard Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 1-32 (“Urban Settings”) and p. 119-154 (“The Servants’ Quarter”).
- Pamela Scott, “‘This Vast Empire’: The Iconography of the Mall, 1791-1848,” in Longstreth, ed., *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991* (1991), 37-60.
- Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life & Urban Spaces in the New American Republic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), “Introduction,” 1-15.
- Mary N. Woods, “The First Professional: Benjamin Henry Latrobe,” in Eggener reader, 112-127.
- Catherine W. Bishir, “Good and Sufficient Language for Building,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 4 (1991), 44-52.

Week 7 (October 13)

Arcadianism, Classicism, and Professionalism

- Gelernter, chap. 5. (pp. 130-165) “Cultures Realigned, 1820-1865”
- Mary N. Woods, “Professional Organizations and Agendas” (Ch. 2), in *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 27-39.
- W. Barksdale Maynard, “The Greek Revival: Americanness, Politics, and Economics,” in Eggener, 132-141.

- Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery". *American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836): 1-12.
- R.C. Long, "Architecture: Its Alleged Degeneracy" (1842), in Conn and Page, 12-14.
- Horatio Greenough, "Excerpt from 'American Architecture,'" (1843), in Conn and Page, 14-17.

Week 8 (October 20) - MIDTERM EXAM (first half of class)

Domesticity and the Rural Ideal (second half of class)

- Clifford E. Clark, "Domestic Architecture and an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7, no. 1 (1976): 33-56.
- Gwendolyn Wright, "Independence and the Rural Cottage," in Eggener, 142-153.
- Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850; repr., Dover, 1969), pp. 1-3 and pp. 22-30.
- Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, excerpt from *The American Woman's Home*, 1869, in Conn and Page reader, 324-328.
- Ariel Aberg-Riger, "The City Needed Them Out," *CityLab* 2 October 2017 <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/10/the-city-needed-them-out/541773/>

Week 9 (October 27)

Gilded Age Ideals and Realities

- Gelernter, chap. 6. (pp. 166-189) "Enterprise and Turmoil, 1865-1885"
- James L. Garvin, "Mail-Order House Plans and American Victorian Architecture," *Winterthur Portfolio* (Vol. 16, No. 4, 1981), 309-334
- Kenneth L. Ames, "First Impressions: Front Halls and Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," in Eggener reader, pp. 157-172.
- Richard T. Ely, excerpt from "Pullman: A Social Study," 1885, in Conn and Page, 328-335.

- Elizabeth C. Cromley, *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), "The First Generation of New York Apartments," 62-103. [SKIM]
- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), Ch. 1 ("Genesis of the Tenement"), Ch. 2 ("The Awakening"), and Ch. 4 ("The Down Back Alleys") https://www.gutenberg.org/files/45502/45502-h/45502-h.htm#Page_7

Week 10 (November 3)

The Architect as Individualist, Conformist, or Sideshow

- Gelernter, chap. 7. (pp. 190-229) "The Age of Diversity, 1885-1915"
- "Art in Architecture – Influence of the Columbian Exhibition on American Building," *The Times* [Philadelphia], 19 November 1893, p.17.
- Louis Sullivan, excerpt from "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered" (1896) and James, "Excerpt from The American Scene," in Conn and Page, 221-226.
- Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance* (1995), p. 19-65 ... (lots of images!)
- Susan Tifft, "Out of the Shadows," *Smithsonian* 38, no. 11 (February 2005): 100-106, and Colleen Walsh, "Shining a Light on a Genius," *The Harvard Gazette* (February 26, 2020). [both highlight Julian Abele's work]
- James F. O'Gorman, "The Prairie House," in Eggener, pp. 267-280.

Week 11 (November 10)

Have We Ever Been Modern?

- Gelernter, chap. 8. (pp. 230-259) "Between the World Wars, 1915-1945"
- Joe Rosenberg, "The House That Came in the Mail," *99% Invisible*, episode 323 (11 September 2018) <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/the-house-that-came-in-the-mail/>
- Clifford E. Clark, "The Bungalow Craze," Ch. 6 in *The American Family Home, 1800-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 171-192.
- David Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 22 No. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1987), 109-148.

- Lucy Ives, “Hereditary Forces: The Unsettling History Behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s American Period Rooms,” *Lapham’s Quarterly*, 6 February 2017.
<https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/hereditary-forces>

Week 12 (November 17)

High Modernism and the Artist Triumphant

- Gelernter, chap. 9. (pp. 260-292) “Modern Culture, 1945-1973”
- Alice T. Friedman, “People Who Live in Glass Houses: Edith Farnsworth, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson,” in Eggener, 316-341.
- Katharine G. Bristol, “The Pruitt-Igoe Myth,” in Eggener, 353-363.

*** Wed., November 24 – No Class Meeting this week (Thurs-Fri schedule) ***

Week 13 (December 1)

Metropolitan Landscapes in the Age of the Automobile

- Gabrielle Esperdy, *American Autotopia: An Intellectual History of the American Roadside at Midcentury* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), “The Car and What Came of It,” 15-69.
- Howard Gillette, Jr., “The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City,” *APA Journal* (Autumn 1985): 449-460.
- Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (1972, second ed. 1977), 3-20.
- Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), read opening pages and scan through photographs and captions

** FRIDAY, December 3, at 11:59pm -- HISTORIOGRAPHY PAPER DUE

Week 14 (December 8)**Postmodernism and the Problem of Community**

- Gelernter, chap. 10. (pp. 293-318) “Postmodern Culture, 1973-1998”
- Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, “The Second Coming of the American Small Town,” *Wilson Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 19-50.
- Michael Sorkin, “Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park,” in Eggener reader, 407-411.

FINAL EXAM: Exam week (date & time TBD)

COURSE-RELATED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WEBSITES

Dictionaries, Glossaries, Primers

Francis D.K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1995).

James S. Curl, *Classical Architecture: An Introduction to Its Vocabulary and Essentials, with a Select Glossary of Terms* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2003).

Cyril M. Harris, *Dictionary of Architecture & Construction*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

Carl R. Lounsbury, ed., *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Therese O'Malley, *Keywords in American Landscape Design* (New Haven: Center for the Advanced Study of the Visual Arts / Yale University Press, 2010).

John Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

Field Guides & Stylebooks

Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

Dell Upton, *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1986).

Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes

Allan B. Jacobs, *Looking at Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Donald Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Select Local Guidebooks

John Andrew Gallery, *Philadelphia Architecture: A Guide to the City*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2009).

Edward Teitelman and Richard W. Longstreth, *Architecture in Philadelphia; a Guide* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974).

Richard Webster, *Philadelphia Preserved: Catalog of the Historic American Buildings Survey* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

Richard Saul Wurman and John Andrew Gallery, *Man-Made Philadelphia; a Guide to Its Physical and Cultural Environment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).

Major Architectural History Resources Online

Places in Time (via Bryn Mawr College)

<http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/>

Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project (via Philadelphia Athenaeum)

<http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/>

Note: full access via Penn Library computers

Historic Maps Online

<http://www.philageohistory.org>

http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/wphila/maps/maps_tc.html

<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/maps/mapSearchFrm.cfm>

<http://www.phillyh2o.org/maps>

<http://www.pagenealogy.net/maps%20here.htm>

Historic Photographs Online

<http://www.phillyhistory.org/PhotoArchive>