



The History of American Architecture

U89 AMCS 420 | Spring 2018 | Tues 6:00-8:30PM | Michael Allen, instructor

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Office hours by appointment.

“What the people are within, the buildings express without.”
Louis Sullivan

“The perennial architectural debate has always been, and will continue to be, about art versus use, visions versus pragmatism, aesthetics versus social responsibility. In the end, these unavoidable conflicts provide architecture's essential and productive tensions; the tragedy is that so little of it rises above the level imposed by compromise, and that this is the only work most of us see and know.”
Ada Louise Huxtable

1.0 Description

American architecture's chief innovation, the skyscraper, is a work of economic calculation – the maximization of land rents. While much of American architecture embodies a utilitarian creed, other parts include furtive attempts to use buildings to connote the values of a new nation, technological innovation influential across the world and enduring works of beauty. The spectrum of building activities in what would become the United States of America began with native mound building, blossomed with pueblo building in the southwest and took on European influences with the arrival of settlers from Spain, England and France. By the time that Frank Lloyd Wright designed his first building, there were long traditions in both common (“vernacular”) building types and architect-designed buildings. The story of American architecture is a story that can be fully understood through examining the pathways of immigrants, the rise of real estate capitalism, the growth of cities, the refining of architecture as a profession and the public imagination of what architecture should tell the world about the ideals of the nation.

The central questions of this course follow: What are the definitive characteristics of American architecture? How do the characteristics of American architecture reveal the social, economic and political structures of its production? Ultimately, how can we read an American building to reveal sense of national identity, individual political agency, the evolution of gender roles, the assertion of disciplinary and economic power, and the evolution of the American artistic sensibility? Where is American architecture headed in an age where people barely look up from their smart phones when walking in the city, and where the call for redressing historic oppression and exclusion – often embodied by historic works of architecture -- is powerful?

2.0 Readings

There are six required texts (both available in the campus bookstore):

- Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context* (University Press of New England, 1999; ISBN: 1584651369)
- Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995)
- Louis Sullivan, *The Autobiography of An Idea* (Dover Publications, 2009; ISBN: 048620281X).
- Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning From Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of American Form* (The MIT Press, 1977; ISBN: 026272006X).
- Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (University of New Mexico Press, 1997; ISBN: 0826317464)
- Gwendolyn Wright, *USA* (Reaktion Books, 2008; ISBN: 1861893442)

Other required readings are accessible on Blackboard (<http://bb.wustl.edu>) or will be distributed in class.

Required Work

Response Papers (5 at 10% each)	50%
Final Project	30%
Attendance and Participation in Discussion	20%

Field Trips

There will be two field trips on Saturdays outside of normal class meeting times exploring sites relevant to the themes of the course.

Attendance at one of these field trips is mandatory, unless exceptional circumstances exist in which case an assignment will replace the trip.

Field trips will form the basis for the midterm assignment, so attendance at both is strongly encouraged.

Response Papers

There will be five response papers to readings that should be 5 pages long, except for the first paper, which will be 4 pages long. The prompts for the papers will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard, since course activity will influence the exact questions for each paper.

If any student needs an extension on one of these papers, s/he should ask for one at the start of the class *before* which the paper is due. One extension will be granted, but only if it is requested according to the requirement listed on this syllabus.

Late papers will lose 3 points for each day they are not submitted. Email is an appropriate way of submitting a paper, and will be counted the same as paper submission.

Grades will be returned by the start of the next class.

Group Reports

Students will work in groups to make presentations twice during the semester. These exercises are noted on the syllabus and will be explained in class ahead of time. Groups will foster dialogue and shared learning, as well as allow for students to take the reigns of the course. These exercises are considered part of instruction and are not graded.

Final Project

The exact prompt for the final paper will be distributed in class, and will entail a substantial research paper of 12-15 pages. The final paper will be based on selection of a topic selected in consultation with the instructor (possibilities: a style, a specific building, an architect, a critical race analysis of a building or style, etc.).

Schedule

January 16

Film in class:

Brick By Chance and Fortune (2011; Bill Streeter, director)

Surveying the History of American Architecture

January 23

Lewis Mumford, "A Backward Glance" (on Blackboard)
Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, chapters 1-3.

Paper #1 due.

January 30

Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, chapters 4-6.
Andrew Jackson Downing, "Rural Adaptation" (on Blackboard)

February 6

Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, chapters 7-8.

Paper #2 due.

February 13

Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, chapters 9-10.
Henry Russell-Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, "The International Style" (on Blackboard)

SATURDAY FIELD TRIP #1

February 17

***Saturday Field Trip: Frank Lloyd Wright House at Ebsworth Park
2:00PM***

February 20

Film During Class:

Visual Acoustics (2008; Eric Bricker, director)

Mary Reid Brunstrom, "Four Decades of Modern Architecture in St. Louis, 1928-1968: An Expanded View" (on Blackboard).

Helene Lipstadt, "Co-Making the Modern Monument: The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Competition & Saarinen's Gateway Arch" (on Blackboard).

Inge Horton, "Daring to Design Modern," *DOCOMOMO* (August 11, 2014).
<http://docomomo-us.org/news/daring-to-design-modern-women-architects-of-northern-california>

Eric Brightwell, "Pan-Asian Metropolis — Pioneering Asian-American Architects in Los Angeles," *Eric Brightwell Blog* (October 5, 2016).

<https://ericbrightwell.com/2016/05/10/early-asian-angeleno-architects/>

Paper #3 due.

Modernism and National Identity

February 27

Wright, *USA*, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Group reports based on assignments.

March 6

Wright, *USA*, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Alexandra Lange, "Seven Leading Architects Defend the World's Most Hated Buildings," *New York Times* (June 5, 2015)

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/05/t-magazine/architects-libeskind-zaha-hadid-selldorf-norman-foster.html?_r=0

March 9

Midterm Paper Due by 5:00PM

March 13: No Class, Spring Break

Authorship and Authority

March 20

Film In Class:

Louis Sullivan: The Struggle for American Architecture (2010; Mark Richard Smith, director)

Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea*, p. 38-52; 198-217; 241-330.

SATURDAY FIELD TRIP #2

March 24, 10:00 AM

Downtown St. Louis led by the instructor.

Meet in front of the Old Post Office, 815 Olive Street.

The Architecture of Everyday America

March 27

Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, p. vi-116.

Paper #4 due.

April 3

Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, p. 117-228.

Student presentations.

April 10

Venturi, *Learning from Las Vegas*.

Paper #5 due.

Regional Identity and the Constructed Past

April 17

Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, Introduction, chapters 1 through 5 and interludes.

April 24

Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, chapters 6-8 and conclusion.

May 1

Final Presentations

May 8

Final Paper Due, 6:00 PM.

Course Policies and Information for Students

The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At Washington University in St. Louis, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere, in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, although instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

A range of resources is available to those who perceive a learning environment as lacking inclusivity, as defined in the preceding paragraph. If possible, we encourage students to speak directly with their instructor about any suggestions or concerns they have regarding a particular instructional space or situation. Alternatively, students may bring concerns to another trusted advisor or administrator (such as an academic advisor, mentor, department chair, or dean). All classroom participants—including faculty, staff, and students—who observe a bias incident affecting a student may also file a report (whether personally or anonymously) utilizing the online Bias Report and Support System.

This seminar operates on a pedagogical model of participatory inquiry, where all participants shape the research questions and experiential priorities of the course. The seminar requires a high degree of participation through verbal discussion while also demanding a robust schedule of readings to support exploration of themes. While the instructor will lecture and guide, the seminar is a venue for each student to present questions, findings and connections located in readings and field trips.

Policies:

1. **ATTENDANCE POLICY:** All students should attend each class session, take notes and participate in discussions. *Only one unexcused absence is allowed. A second unexcused absence will result in automatic drop of one letter grade for the final course grade.* If a student cannot attend a session due to a conflicting academic requirement, that student should notify the instructor in writing one week prior to the session that will be missed. If a student has a medical or personal reason for absence, likewise the instructor shall be notified in writing at least prior to the start of class. When in doubt, please contact the instructor. Your grade will thank you. All field trips will occur during class time and are mandatory.
2. **PENALTIES FOR LATE WORK and REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS:** Late work will lose three points for each day that it is late. Requests for extensions must be made before the start of the class session before the assignment is due. No explanations submitted along with late work will suspend these policies. Always consult the instructor if in doubt.
3. **REGRADING POLICY:** There is no regrading in this seminar.
4. **REQUESTS FOR INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK ON DRAFTS AND REQUESTS TO REVISE:** Please consult the instructor if you want to receive feedback on writing before it is due.
5. **TECHNOLOGY POLICIES:** Computers and smart phones may aid course sessions by allowing students to pull up readings, websites, images or other materials to share. These devices should not be used for other purposes during class time. Absolutely no use of these devices for personal communications, web browsing or games is allowed.

Academic Integrity

Effective learning, teaching and research all depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust one another and to trust the integrity of work that is submitted for academic credit or conducted in the wider arena of scholarly research. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential.

In all academic work, the ideas, drawings, photographs, written texts and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged through citation, with the name of the author and full reference of the source. See <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~writing/plagiarism.htm> for more information on properly documenting any work or ideas that are not your own. Work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at Washington University. Students must be the sole authors of their work from concept through production.

Students should become familiar with the guidelines and policies of the university and school regarding academic integrity and misconduct. Any questions or concerns should be immediately addressed. Your instructors, advisors and department faculty are available to help students understand the Academic Integrity Policy, how to avoid plagiarism and its serious consequences by learning to cite sources correctly and leaving plenty of time to complete assignments. Do not hesitate to ask for assistance with any concerns in these regards.

Intentional plagiarism may result in a failing grade for this class. If you are not certain what constitutes plagiarism, please ask your instructor.

Resources for Students

1. **DISABILITY RESOURCES:** If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, please speak with instructor and consult the **Disability Resource Center** at Cornerstone (cornerstone.wustl.edu/). Cornerstone staff will determine appropriate accommodations and will work with your instructor to make sure these are available to you.
2. **WRITING ASSISTANCE:** For additional help on your writing, consult the expert staff of The Writing Center (writingcenter.wustl.edu) in Olin Library (first floor). It can be enormously helpful to ask someone outside a course to read your essays and to provide feedback on strength of argument, clarity, organization, etc.
3. **THE UNIVERSITY'S PREFERRED NAME POLICY FOR STUDENTS**, with additional resources and information, may be found here: registrar.wustl.edu/student-records/ssn-name-changes/preferred-name-policy/preferred-name-policy-student/.
4. **ACCOMMODATIONS BASED UPON SEXUAL ASSAULT:** The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support

services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center. Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to speak with the Title IX Coordinator directly, Ms. Kennedy can be reached at [\(314\) 935-3118](tel:3149353118), jwkennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting her office in the Women's Building. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to Tamara King, Associate Dean for Students and Director of Student Conduct, or by contacting WUPD at [\(314\) 935-5555](tel:3149355555) or your local law enforcement agency.

You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling [\(314\) 935-8761](tel:3149358761) or visiting the 4th floor of Siegle Hall.

5. **BIAS REPORTING:** The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu

6. **MENTAL HEALTH:** Mental Health Services' professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. See: shs.wustl.edu/MentalHealth

Disclaimer: *The instructor reserves the right to make modifications to this information throughout the semester.*