Architecture in the United States
ARCH 416 – Spring 2013

School of Architecture – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Class Days/Time: Monday and Wednesday, 11:00am – 12:20pm
Classroom: Krannert Art Museum 62
Credit Hours: 3.0

Instructor: Dr. Kenny Cupers (cupers@illinois.edu)
Office Location: Room 307, Architecture Building
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 – 3:00pm or by appointment

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Course Website: https://compass2q.illinois.edu/

Course Description

This course offers a historical survey of architecture in the United States, from the pre-contact period of Native American life to the 21st century. Like its population, the architecture of the United States is extremely diverse, involving many different kinds of builders and designers, construction methods, regional and stylistic traits, and cultural, ethnic, and gender differences. To understand this diversity, our definition of architecture cannot be limited to the work of self-identified designers or a canon of monumental buildings. While this course will familiarize you with famous works of architecture such Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello or Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, it provides a broader understanding of the American built environment, from the everyday space of the kitchen to the dynamics of city and region.

Through an analysis of built environments – and at times of unbuilt projects or visionary proposals – we will focus on how architecture both reflects and actively participates in the political, economic, social, and cultural forces that make up life in the United States. And to understand these forces, we often need to look beyond national borders. American history, including its architectural history, has been fundamentally shaped by flows of people, objects, and ideas to and from other places, both within and outside of the continent. A history of American architecture thus confronts not only Europe, but also Africa and Asia in order to understand the impact of colonization, slavery, immigration, and commerce on buildings and landscapes.

The course is organized into four chronologically organized sections: Native American and colonial architectures until the late 18th century; the architecture of nation, city, and industry in the nineteenth century; the emergence of progressive and modern architectures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and the triumph and contest of modernism since the 1930s.

By the end of this course, you will be able to identify and think critically about major types and forms of the American built environment. You will not only be able to visually analyze distinct architectural styles and discuss the profession and discipline of architecture in the United States, but also understand the social and cultural significance of American buildings and landscapes, many of which still constitute our everyday lifeworld today.
Logistics

Textbook and Readings: The main textbooks for this course are: Wright, Gwendolyn, USA: Modern Architectures in History (London: Reaktion Books, 2008) and Upton, Dell, Architecture in the United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). You are responsible for buying these books. Additional readings for each week are listed in the tentative class schedule included below. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are primary source readings. You are required to do the reading in preparation for each class. Optional readings are useful for further contextualization of the material we will be treating in class.

An Important Note on Critical Reading: Analyze each of the assigned texts asking the following questions: What is the central argument? What is the position from which the author writes – as an architect, a scholar, a politician, a citizen, etcetera? What question(s) is s/he trying to answer? What is the answer and how is it answered? What types of evidence are bolstered? Which particular debate(s) does the author engage? What, if any, are the problems with the argumentation and the position from which the argument is constructed? What is the supporting evidence – visual representations, firsthand experience, archival documents, etcetera? How convincing is this evidence? What is your own opinion on the matter, before and after reading the text? Does the text change the way you think about the question at hand, or the buildings, projects, or built environments discussed?

Website: All course materials such as the syllabus, readings, handouts, image collections, and assignments can be found on the Compass2g course web site. If you have questions about using Illinois Compass2g, please visit: www.cites.illinois.edu/illinoiscompass/studentresources2g.html.

The syllabus and course schedule are subject to change. You will be notified via the course website of any changes.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Grading: Writing Assignment 20% of final grade
Drawing Assignment 20% of final grade
Exam 1 25% of final grade
Exam 2 25% of final grade
Class Attendance 10% of final grade

Writing Assignment: You will be asked to write a book review of Dell Upton’s Architecture in the United States. More detailed information will be provided on the course website, but you should begin by reading the book during the first week of class. The assignment is due 4 February in class.

Drawing Assignment: The goal of this exercise is not to assess your draftsmanship, but rather to allow you to demonstrate your analytical skills in a medium other than writing. More information will be provided on the course website. This assignment is due on 8 April in class.

Exams: The exams are scheduled during regular class hours, respectively on 11 March and 1 May. The first exam covers sections I and II, the second exam covers sections III and IV. Visual analysis will be particularly important: you are expected to be able to identify and analyze all buildings and projects covered in the lectures. The exam format and expectations will be further discussed in class. If other engagements prevent you from attending these dates, you should register for this course during another semester.
**Class Attendance:** Asking questions is a crucial way to learn and to develop critical thinking skills. There will be time for questions and discussion after each lecture and your active participation is required. Instead of attendance sheets, there will be short class quizzes at random times during the semester. You will not be graded on your responses but your participation will count towards this percentage of your grade.

**No late work will be accepted and there are no make-up exams or assignments for this class.** If you have an excused absence due to a medical or family emergency, you will need to provide documentation from the Emergency Dean. Once that documentation has been received and evaluated by the instructor, the assignment in question will be dropped from the final calculation of your grade for the course.

**Graduate Students:** Your main assignment will be a 15-page research paper on a topic of choice, to be selected in coordination with the instructor. Please sign up for office hours in the first two weeks of the semester to discuss your research interests. A draft of your paper is due in class on 25 March and the final version in class on 17 April. No late work will be accepted. The final paper will count for 50% of the grade. You will also participate in both exams, which will each count for 20% of your grade. Class attendance and participation constitutes the remaining 10%. You are not required to complete the other undergraduate assignments (writing and drawing assignment).

**Classroom Protocol**

All electronic devices including cell phones must be turned off and are not to be visible at any time during class unless specifically directed by the instructor. Notebook computers may be used in class for taking notes and specified in-class activities, not for instant messaging, email or other distractions.

**University Policies**

**Dropping the Course:** You are responsible for understanding the university’s policies and procedures regarding withdrawing from courses. You should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

**Intellectual Property:** The materials shared with you during this course are authored by and owned by the instructor, the department, the school and/or the book publisher. Copyright laws must be respected in using these materials. Unless explicitly authorized by the instructor, do not share course materials with anyone outside the course.

**Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:** Express the ideas you use in your own words. Words or ideas that come from someplace or someone else must be cited: “A good rule of thumb is this: Whenever you consciously borrow any important element from someone else, any sentence, any colorful phrase or original term, any plan or idea—say so, either in a footnote, bibliography, or parenthesis” (from “Academic Honesty in the Writing of Essays and Other Papers,” Carleton College, 1990). Plagiarism is an extremely serious infraction of the Student Code and may be subject to the university’s disciplinary procedures. If you are not certain what constitutes plagiarism, please view the University Student Code at [http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article1_part4_1-402.html](http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article1_part4_1-402.html).

**Accessibility:** Please notify me within the first week of classes if you have disability-related concerns or require assistance to participate fully in this class. In accordance with university policy, you will need an official Request for Accommodations letter. For further information, please view the University resource guide at [http://www.disability.uiuc.edu/resourceguide](http://www.disability.uiuc.edu/resourceguide).
Tentative Course Schedule

01/14 Introduction and Course Overview

I. Native American and Colonial Architectures until the late 18th century

01/16 Pre-Contact Native America
Required Reading:
- Roth, Leland, Chapter 1 (first part) from American Architecture: A History, pp. 13-27
Optional Reading:
- Nabokov, Peter, and Robert Easton, Native American Architecture, pp. 93-103; pp. 348-367

01/23 Wigwam, Longhouse, Tipi, and Pueblo
Required Reading:
Optional Reading:
- Roth, Leland, Chapter 1 (second part) from American Architecture: A History, pp. 27-38

01/28 European Settlements in the New World
Required Reading:
Optional Reading:
- Roth, Leland, Chapter 2 from American Architecture: A History, pp. 39-68
- Dell Upton, America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America, pp. 42-99

01/30 English Colonies in the 18th Century
Required Reading:
- *Christopher Wren, excerpt Tract I on architecture
- *Palladio, excerpt The Four Books of Architecture
Optional Reading:
- Roth, Leland, Chapter 3 from American Architecture: A History, pp. 69-106

02/04 Wrap-up Session

***Writing assignment due: hand in during class

II. Nation, City, and Industry, 1780s-1880s

02/06 An Architecture for the New Republic
Required Reading:
- *Thomas Jefferson, letters, and *Benjamin Latrobe, excerpt letters to Thomas Jefferson
Optional Reading:
- Roth, Leland, Chapter 4 from American Architecture: A History, pp. 107-150
02/11 Stylistic Revivals and the Professionalization of Architecture
Required Reading:
Optional Reading:

02/13 Plantations Landscapes, Mill Towns, and Utopian Settlements
Required Reading:
Optional Reading:

02/18 Architecture and 19th Century Technological Developments
Required Reading:
- Schivelbusch, Wolfgang, “Railroad Space and Railroad Time” and “The American Railroad” from The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 33-44; 89-112
Optional Reading:
- Peters, Tom F. Conclusion from Building the Nineteenth Century, pp. 347-358
- Hounshell, David A. “Introduction” in From the American System to Mass Production, pp. 1-14

02/20 Eclectic Styles, the Picturesque, and H.H. Richardson
Required Reading:
- Breisch, Kenneth, “Introduction” from Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Public Library in America, pp. 2-17
Optional Reading:
- Roth, Leland, Chapter 6 from American Architecture: A History, pp. 211-264

02/25 Suburban Domesticity and The Victorian Home
Required Reading:
- Wright, Gwendolyn, “Victorian Suburbs and the Cult of Domesticity” from Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America, pp. 96-113
Optional Reading:
- *Andrew Jackson Downing, excerpts A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Cottage Residences, and The Architecture of Country Houses

02/27 Class discussion

03/04 Empire City and Nature’s Metropolis
Required Reading:
Optional Reading:
- Cronon, William, “Dreaming the Metropolis” and “Pricing the Future: Grain” from Nature’s Metropolis, pp. 23-54; pp. 97-147

03/06 Wrap-up Session and Exam Preparation

03/11 Exam 1
III. Progressivism and Modern Architecture, 1890s-1930s

03/13 Skyscrapers and the Work of Louis Sullivan
Required Reading:
- Wright, Gwendolyn, “Modern Consolidation, 1865-1893” from USA: Modern Architectures in History, pp. 17-46
- “Louis Sullivan, “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered” (1896)
Optional Reading:

03/25 The Arts & Crafts, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Prairie School
Required Reading:
- Wright, Gwendolyn, “Progressive Architectures, 1894-1918” from USA: Modern Architectures in History, pp. 47-78
Optional Reading:

03/27 The Chicago World’s Fair, Urban Reform, and the City Beautiful
Required Reading:
Optional Reading:
- *Daniel Burnham and Edward H. Bennet, excerpt Plan of Chicago
- *Montgomery Schuyler, excerpt “Last Words About the World’s Fair”

04/01 European and American Avant-Gardes
Required Reading:
- “Irving Gill, excerpt “The Home of the Future”
Optional Reading:
- Margaret Kentgens-Craig, “The Search for Modernity: America, the International Style, and the Bauhaus” in Eggener, Keith American Architectural History, pp. 294-312

04/03 Metropolitan Modernities and 20th C Revivals
Required Reading:
- Wright, “Electric Modernities, 1919-1932” from USA: Modern Architectures in History, pp. 79-112
Optional Reading:
- *Hugh Ferriss, excerpts “The New Architecture” & The Metropolis of Tomorrow

04/08 Wrap-up Session
***Drawing assignment due: hand in during class

04/10 No class

IV. The Triumph of Modernism and its Discontents, 1930s-2000s

04/15 The New Deal: Architecture and the State
Required Reading:
- Wright, “Architecture, the Public, and the State, 1933-1945” from USA: Modern Architectures in History, pp. 113-150

Optional Reading:
- *Catherine Bauer, excerpt Modern Housing

04/17 Domestic Modernism, Postwar Suburbs, and Public Housing

Required Reading:
- Joan Ockman, “Mirror Images” in Eggener, Keith American Architectural History, pp. 342-351

Optional Reading:
- Friedman, Alice, “People Who Life in Glass Houses” in Eggener, Keith American Architectural History, pp. 316-341
- Dianne Harris, “‘The House I Live In’: Architecture, Modernism, and Identity in Levittown” Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 200-242

04/22 Corporate, Cold War, and Alternative Modernisms

Required Reading:

Optional Reading:

04/24 Postmodernism and the American City

Required Reading:

Optional Reading:
- *Jacobs, Jane excerpt The Death and Life of Great American Cities
- *Charles Jencks, excerpt The Language of Post-Modern Architecture

04/29 Contemporary Trends and Challenges

Required Reading:
- Wright, Gwendolyn, “Disjunctures and Alternatives, 1985 to the present” from USA: Modern Architectures in History, pp. 235-275

05/01 Exam 2