

History 4520:
The Built Environment:
The History of American Architecture and Urban Planning
(Final course number and first semester course will be taught to be determined.)

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:45 Old Main 117

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:00, or by appointment.

Course Readings Available for Purchase at U.S.U. Bookstore:

Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context*

Leland Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture*

Witold Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmstead and America in the 19th Century*

Additional course readings will be available on Canvas.

This course examines the history of architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture in the United States, from the Colonial era to the present. We will examine both vernacular architecture and architecture designed by professional architects. We will likewise consider the history of urban planning and landscape architecture, and explore examples of both from different regions and time periods. More broadly, this course is designed to think about architecture, designed landscapes, and cityscapes – from individual buildings and parks to entire urban and suburban regions – as components of a “*built environment*.” This environment has been designed and constructed by humans, but it remains inextricably connected to the natural, non-human environment. Humans build in response to environmental conditions, build with materials drawn from the natural environment, and built and natural environments intersect in innumerable ways. The course will also take environmental sustainability as a central focus. While “sustainability” in architecture is a relatively recent concept, such as the “carbon footprint” of the construction and operation of a building and its impact on climate change, humans have long been concerned about how buildings coped with local climatic conditions or environmental hazards, as they were no less concerned with cost and practicality, maintenance, utility, and aesthetic, cultural, or societal value. In that broader sense, sustainability is a theme that can be read far back into the past, and not perceived as only a concern of the present. Course lectures, readings and reading discussions, and final research, field, or design projects will give students a broad working knowledge of the history of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning in American history, but also allow students to research and work with these topics and themes in the built environment of our present and possible future.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

Historical Knowledge:

- The history of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning in the United States
- How factors such as the natural environment, culture, economic and technological change, and immigration and migration have shaped buildings, landscapes, and cities
- The relationship between built and natural environments

Historical Thinking and Analysis:

- Learning how to use historical evidence to understand the evolution of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning
- Critically reading and analyzing primary and scholarly materials, and using them to understand the historical evolution of the built environment
- Surveying built environments, from individual structures to larger landscapes and cityscapes

There are seven graded components in this class. You will write two papers, 3 to 5 pages in length, be based on the weekly readings. There will be a midterm and final exam based on class lectures. You will receive a participation grade based upon your attendance and participation in class discussion. You will also be responsible for turning in reading questions based on each week's reading assignment, and your questions will serve as part of class discussion.

The final project for the course, which counts as 30% of your total grade, will be designed to fit your individual interests and disciplinary focus. Regardless of what form the final project takes, each student will be responsible for giving a class presentation based on it, and (in the case of design or field projects) providing a written summary discussing the purpose, methodology, and historical context of the project.

Possible projects could include:

- A research paper using scholarly sources to explore a historical topic, from the development of a single city to the career of an individual architect, landscape architect, or urban planner, or the history of a vernacular or regional architectural form.
- An archival research paper based upon substantial primary sources, such as urban planning records, or the papers of an individual architect or design or planning firm.
- A field survey of a historic structure or neighborhood, cataloging and describing the structure (or structures) in detail, and providing an historical context for this specific example of the built environment, and its significance. This could also be designed as a prototype for a report requesting recognition of a structure or neighborhood for government designation as historic.
- An architectural, landscape architecture, or urban design plan for a specific project or site. While this plan considers the present and future, from basic utility to sustainability, it should also explain how it relates to an historical context, such as precedents or examples.
- Other final project options are possible if selected in consultation with the course instructor

Graded Components of Course:

Readings Paper 1	10%
Readings Paper 2	10%
Final Paper or Project	30%
Midterm Exam	10%
Final Exam	10%

Reading Questions	15%
(Five typed substantial questions minimum due on Thursdays when course reading is assigned.)	
Class Participation	15%

Class Participation:

This course is not solely a lecture class, and will include in-class discussions. Your participation in discussion is essential, and will determine 15% of your final grade. Simply showing up to class does not constitute active participation. Your participation grade will depend upon your contributions to our discussions. Joining in these conversations demonstrates your understanding of the readings, and allows you to share your views of the topics we discuss.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will lower your participation grade. You should make every effort to be present when we meet. The second absence will result in the lowering of your participation grade by a full letter grade. The third absence will result in a zero for your participation grade. To avoid these penalties, you must speak with me prior to any absence except in the case of an emergency. If an emergency occurs, contact me as soon as possible to be excused from class.

Reading Assignments:

You are expected to complete each week’s reading on schedule. These assigned readings provide the core materials for the course, and will enable you to participate in discussion. Failure to complete reading assignments will endanger your participation grade and make it impossible to successfully complete reading questions, essays, and exams.

Grading:

All work received on time will be graded and returned as promptly as possible. If your paper is turned in late, it will receive a reduced grade (1/3 of a letter grade a day) unless you make arrangements with me well in advance. You are expected to proofread and revise your written assignments before turning them in. Please feel free to meet with me to discuss a topic, thesis statement, introductory paragraph or preliminary outline for your papers before they are due.

Academic Dishonesty:

The USU Honor Code prohibits academic dishonesty. Plagiarism includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials (*Code of Policies and Procedures for Students*, Article V, Section 3A.1). The penalties for plagiarism are severe. Plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an immediate F, and will be reported to the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Other penalties may also be imposed at the Dean’s discretion. These include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, referral to psychological counseling, and other disciplinary actions.

This syllabus and class schedule may be revised if needed. An updated version will be available on Canvas and the History Department website: history.usu.edu.

Course Schedule

Week 1	
Tuesday	The Native American and European Origins of America's Built Environment
Thursday	Vernacular Architecture in the Colonial Era, from New England to Nuevo Mexico
Week 2	
Tuesday	Wall Street: New York's Rise from Eastern Port City to the Nation's Commercial Capital
Thursday	Designing and Surveying a Nation: Designing the Federal Style, Washington, D.C. and a National Land Survey System
Week 3	
Tuesday	Cradles of the Industrial Revolution: Factories and Northern Mill Cities
Thursday	The New Middle Class and the "Refinement" of Houses, Cities, and Material Culture
Week 4	
Tuesday	From Tara to the New Orleans "Two Story": The Slave Plantation and Urban Architecture of the Antebellum South
Thursday	The Gold Rush and the "Instant Cities" of the West
Week 5	
Tuesday	Chicago: From Silo to Skyscraper, and the Rise of the Midwest's "Great Metropolis"
Thursday	The Skyscraper: From Technological Innovation to an Original American Architectural Form
Week 6	
Tuesday	Frederick Law Olmstead, Central Park, and the American Landscape
Thursday	Cities of Immigrants: Tenements, Barrios, and Chinatowns
Week 7	
Tuesday	Urban Reform, Renewal, the City Beautiful, and Urban Planning in the Progressive Era
Thursday	From Victorian to "Usonian": The Emergence of an American Modern Domestic Architecture in the Career of Frank Lloyd Wright
Week 8	
Tuesday	Midterm Exam
Thursday	From Hollywoodland to Autotopia: Los Angeles and the Emergence of <i>the</i> Twentieth-Century American City

Week 9

Tuesday Migrations and Urban Transformation, 1920s-1945: The African American Great Migration, Okies, and War Mobilization Transform the Urban North and West
Thursday Mass-Producing Suburbia: From the Bungalow to the Ranch House

Week 10

Tuesday Cities of Leisure: Disneyland, Sun City, Las Vegas, and the Sunbelt Ascendant
Thursday Postmodernism and Other Architectural Trends of the Late Twentieth Century

Preliminary Final Project Description and Sources Due

Week 11

Tuesday Sprawl Versus the “New Urbanism”
Thursday The Unnatural History of Urban Natural Disasters

Week 12

Tuesday Architecture and Urban Planning in an Age of Disaster, from Climate Change to Terror
Thursday The Emergence of Sustainable Architecture and Planning: Something New, Something Old, or Sometimes Both?

Finalized Final Project Description and List of Sources Due

Week 13

Tuesday The Globalization of Architectural and Urban Forms
Thursday The Place of Nature in the City: Environments, Built and Natural, in a Changing World

Week 14

Tuesday No Class – work on final papers; Consultation with instructor
Thursday Final Project Presentations

Week 15

Tuesday Final Project Presentations
Thursday Final Project Presentations/Final Exam Review

Final Projects Due Friday by 5:00 PM

Week 16:

Final Exam