American Architecture, 1876-present

This course surveys architecture built in the United States from the first centennial in 1876 to the present. During these years, industrialization, urbanization, and mass migrations, all fueled by an expanding market economy, transformed the built environment. We will learn about exceptional architects and iconic buildings, of course, but also about everyday spaces, such as shopping malls, suburbs, and highways. We also will engage topics in critical preservation, such as ecological conservation and curatorial practices. Questions related to race, gender, economic inequality, and militarism will be explored, particularly as we unpack the meanings of terms such as progressive, modernism, democracy, and American and consider them in a global context. The class will be a mixture of lectures, discussions, and invited speakers and will incorporate site visits as well study of the Drawings & Archives collections at Avery Library. The goal is to develop competence in identifying, understanding, and analyzing historic structures, their significance, and types. We will gain proficiency in the use of methodological, historiographic, visual, and intellectual tools necessary to interpret historic buildings in their various contexts.

Course Format

Weekly lectures provide the framework for the course. A portion of some classes will be devoted to discussion of contemporary architectural discourse that relate to material in the course. The slides for each lecture will be made available on the course website. There will also be guest speakers, a visit to Avery Drawings & Archives, and one site visit to Midtown/Downtown, during which we will explore modern and postmodern buildings and public spaces. Readings will be posted on the course website, together with assigned pages from Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Westview Press, 2001).

Course Requirements and Grading
Students are expected to attend all lectures and site visits and to participate in class discussions. This semester we will be collaborating with DOCOMOMO Venezuela on a research and exhibition project. From a list of buildings constructed in Caracas, Venezuela by American architects (either American born or working in the United States), students will select one project, built or unrealized, on which to conduct research, construct a bibliography, and write a seminar paper. Particular attention should be paid to archival research in Avery Drawings & Archives, as well as primary materials in other archives. This research will be used to create an exhibition on the relationships between mid-century modern architecture in the United States and Venezuela to be installed in Caracas in July 2017. Students will have the opportunity to collaborate with curators at DOCOMOMO Venezuela and to publish their abstracts in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition. We also will explore possibilities for touring the exhibition to New York City in the fall of 2017. The goal of the research and exhibition is to explore connections – architectural and political – between North and South America, thus situating architecture in the United States in a global context; to explore how curatorial strategies can intersect with preservation causes; and also to advance awareness among the architecture communities in Caracas and New York of these iconic, yet overlooked buildings, many of which are in need of preservation.

FEBRUARY 7 - CHOOSE A BUILDING – 15%

Choose a building or project to research during the semester. Create a preliminary bibliography, including any archives that have collections related to the project or architect under consideration.

MARCH 7 – ABSTRACT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY – 25%

Write a 1000 word abstract with a complete bibliography, to be published in the exhibition catalogue after working with the DOCOMOMO editors.

MAY 2 – FINAL PAPERS – 50%

Write a 4,500-5,000 word research paper, double-spaced at 12-point font, that interprets a historically significant aspect of your building. You should discuss who was involved in creating the building and its meanings, its historical context and original intentions, and its interpretation and reception by others.

GENERAL CLASS PARTICIPATION – 10%

Office Hours and Contact Information
JANUARY 17

Introduction: Modern/American/History

Introduce significant class concepts: architecture and national history; contradictions and challenges of modernism, modernization, and modernity; constructing national identity in an age of international immigration and a global market economy; building typologies (skyscrapers, suburban houses, etc.); renowned architects and iconic buildings versus anonymous builders and everyday environments; critical heritage; overview of course format, schedule, requirements, etc.

Required:


Further Reading:


**JANUARY 24**

**American Pastoral: Producing the Victorian Home**

1876 Centennial Exposition; Colonial Revival; Queen Anne, Stick, and Shingle Styles; technological advancements redefine domestic standards (heating, plumbing, electricity, appliances); Victorian “cult of domesticity”; mutually dependent relationship between suburbs/city and nature/technology; construction of American identity; emergence of preservation consciousness in design, landscapes, and culture; multifamily living in apartment-hotels; industrial standards and human comfort; tenement life; early suburbs and company towns

**Textbook:**

Roth, pp. 236-260.

**Required:**


Further Reading:


Margaret Floyd, Architecture after Richardson: Regionalism Before Modernism (Chicago, 1994).

Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1876-1913 (Chicago, 1980).

Clifford E. Clark, Jr., The American Family Home (Chapel Hill, 1986).


**JANUARY 31**

The Construction of Latin America

**Visit to Avery Drawings & Archives**

**Required:**


Adrian Forty, “Cement and Multiculturalism.” TK

**Further Reading:**


February 7

Original History: Production of the Skyscraper

The Chicago School; skyscrapers in New York; 1916 Zoning Resolution; new technologies and materials (elevators, steel, ventilation, etc.); rise of corporate capitalism versus laissez faire; reorganization of office work; rise of professional management class; gender politics in early offices; consolidating the skyscraper façade, skyline, and the central business district

Textbook:
Roth, pp. 265-287.

Required:


Carol Willis, Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago (New York, 1995), 67-89.

Further Reading:

Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, Chicago 1890: the Skyscraper and the Modern City (Chicago, 2009).


Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age (New York, 1982).


**FEBRUARY 14**

**The City Beautiful: Aesthetics and Social Science**

1893 World’s Fair; the Beaux-Arts and universality; Academic Eclecticism; the City Beautiful Movement; progressive social politics; impact of the social sciences on urban planning; “data-mapping” versus Beaux-Arts rendering; architecture and urbanism for bourgeois crowds; the “immigrant problem”; civic spaces and national identity; the “play movement”; the social center movement; public schools; municipal playgrounds; the “neighborhood unit” as urban-planning model; architectural representation and civic identity; emergence of American architectural profession; politics of public space

**Textbook:**


**Required:**


Further Reading:


**FEBRUARY 21**

**Domestic Revolutions**

1900-1910s; Arts & Crafts movement; Gustav Stickley and the *Craftsman*; the Prairie School; Frank Lloyd Wright and his California contemporaries; mail-order and prefabricated dwellings; gender politics and domestic science; the "servant problem"; "germ theory"; sanitation and hygiene movements; regionalism and global culture; progressive social politics; domesticating modernism

**Textbook:**
Roth, pp. 299-317, 381-395

**Required:**


**Further Reading:**


**FEBRUARY 28**

**Futurism, Fantasy, and Architecture**

Art Deco and *Moderne*; regionalism and period styles; fantasy spaces and leisure activities; “total experience design” in hotels; movie houses and theaters; spectatorship; programmed experience; kitsch, excess, and ornament; Chicago Tribune Competition; 1933 Century of Progress; 1939 New York World’s Fair; the Colonial Revival; restoration of Colonial Williamsburg; beginnings of Disney urbanism

**Textbook**

Roth, pp. 339-360; 364-391.
Required:


Further Reading:


MARCH 7

The Technological Sublime

1920s, 30s; American industrial aesthetic; factories and grain elevators; the International Style; Neutra; Schindler; the machine aesthetic; Henry Ford and assembly-line production; Albert Kahn; “Taylorism” and scientific management; the “cult of efficiency”; Buckminster Fuller; Usonian houses; buildings for expanding governmental agencies; Tennessee Valley Authority; European émigrés; European vs. American modernism

Textbook:


Required:


Further Reading:


John Sergeant, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian Houses (New York, 1976).


**NO CLASS MARCH 15 - SPRING BREAK**

**MARCH 21**

Military-Industrial-Architectural Complex: from Total War to Total Living

1940s-50s; defense industries and garden suburbs; military-industrial complex; 194X; Federal Highway Administration; Federal Housing Authority; suburban tract housing (Levittowns); prefabrication (Lustron, plywood); defining the “normal” family; Case Study Houses; Neutra; postwar consumer culture; “Good Design” standards; model houses and museums; gender politics of postwar domestic environment; the Glass Houses (Mies and Johnson)

**Textbook:**


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Required:


Further Reading:
Diane Harris, Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America (University of Minnesota Press, 2013).


Elizabeth Mock, “Built in the USA since 1932 (New York, 1942).


Barbara Kelly, Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown (New York, 1993).


MARCH 28

Architecture or Bureaucracy: Science, Corporate Identity, and the Cold War

Aestheticization of corporate culture; architectural bureaucracy; the United Nations; Miesian purity of towers, slabs, and plazas; emergence of American corporate identity; Saarinen; corporate campuses

Textbook:
Roth, 412-426, 434-458
Required:


Further Reading:


**APRIL 4**

**Visit to Avery Drawings & Archives**

**Critiques of Liberal Individualism: New Monumentality, New Empiricism, Brutalism, and the New Normalcy**

1950s, 70s; the New Monumentality; expressionist responses to modernism (Wright, Saarinen, Kahn, Rudolph, Aalto); concrete; the new empiricism; “bunker architecture” in the Cold War; contemporary concepts of target architecture; surveillance, security, and public space; modern memorials (e.g. St. Louis Arch, Vietnam Memorial, Reflecting Absence)

**Textbook:**

Roth, 434-471

**Required:**


Further Reading:


Sarah Williams Goldhagen, Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism (New Haven, 2001).


**APRIL 11**

**Sub/Urban Utopias and Dystopias: Rationalist Planning, Public Housing, New Towns, and New Urbanism**

CIAM; Robert Moses; Title I and slum clearance; urban renewal; successes and failures of public housing; zoning; “white flight”; automobile culture and urbanization; defensible spaces; gated communities; New Towns; New Urbanism; contemporary responses to low-income housing (e.g. Estudio Cruz, privatization of affordable housing; demolition and replacement low-rise construction); rural poverty and housing (e.g. Rural Studio, Alabama); housing for homeless and displaced populations (e.g. Mad Hatter project, Atlanta)

**Textbook:**

Roth, pp. 395-407; 461-471.

**Required:**


Further Reading:

Elizabeth Wood, The Beautiful Beginnings, the Failure to Learn: Fifty Years of Public Housing in America (Washington DC, 1992).


**APRIL 18**

**Politics of Public Space**

**Downtown site visit**

Military urbanism; target architecture; place annihilation; democracy and public space; terrorism and cities; architecture as social practice

**Required:**


**Further Reading:**


David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (University of California Press, 2000).


**APRIL 25**

**The Everyday and the Academy**

Postmodernism; structuralism and semiotics; phenomenology; the intellectualization of architecture; deconstructivism; the Whites, the Grays, and the Silvers; historic preservation as avant-garde; site sensitivity; marketing the space of identity; regionalism

**Textbook:**

Roth, pp. 475-548.

**Required:**


Further Reading:


Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer, eds. *Preserving the Recent Past* (Washington DC, 1995).


