

# Course Syllabus

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**TRADITIONAL AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE** A4341 Fall 2018

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## Objectives of the Class

This class will explore the architecture of the United States from the first buildings erected by Europeans in the early seventeenth century through the architecture of the late nineteenth century. In class, we will examine the iconic architectural monuments erected during this period, ranging from surviving colonial homes to the works of amateur and professional architects such as Peter Harrison, Charles Bulfinch, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, John Mills, A. J. Davis, Richard Upjohn, Frank Furness, and Henry Hobson Richardson. We will also explore lesser known and vernacular buildings reflecting both folk traditions and the spread of architectural ideas from centers of innovation into small towns and rural landscapes. We will review the evolving forms and styles of architecture and forces behind developments in American design, discussing the impact of the ideas of such designers and theoreticians as Frederick Law Olmsted, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Richard Morris Hunt. Class lectures will be supplemented with visits to the rare books and architectural drawings collections at Avery and by two required walking tour in New York City.

## Requirements

1. Research Paper.

Topic Due: October 16 (at the latest)

Paper Due: November 20

Each student will prepare a 12-15 page paper on a topic relating to some aspect of American architecture during the period covered by this class. You can choose any topic that interests you, so long as I have approved it. You can focus on a building or group of buildings, on a building material, on the development of a building type or style, on the work of a particular architect, on architecture in a particular locale, on the restoration of a particular building, etc. What you must do, is analyze your topic within the larger framework of the architecture of America. Your paper will not simply be a description of the topic chosen, but must place this material within a larger context. This is an academic paper and will include:

-a full bibliography of all sources consulted (published and archival)

-full end notes or footnotes (notes with author's name and page number, placed within the body of the text are not acceptable)

-appropriate illustrations with the source of each noted

If you are not sure how to create notes and a bibliography check a style guide such as *A Manual of Style* (often referred to as the "Chicago Manual" since it is published by the University of Chicago) which is available online.

<https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/16/contents.html>

2. House Museum Presentations, October 30. Students will be assigned in small groups to visit a house museum in the metropolitan area and give a five-minute presentation on the house and the level of interpretation of architecture at the house.

Each group will hand in a brief synopsis of its findings and recommendations for how architecture has been or could be interpreted at the site.

3. Final Exam. The exam is optional; however, the highest grade that you can receive without taking the exam is a pass.
4. Readings. The basic text for the class will be Leland Roth and Amanda C. Roth-Clark, *American Architecture: A History*. I have ordered copies of this book from Book Culture at 536 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue. The book is also available as an ebook on CLEO.

Additional readings will be assigned for each class and they have been compiled in a reader that can be purchased at Village Copier on Amsterdam Avenue and 118<sup>th</sup> Street. Most readings are also available online through Avery Library (copyright issues prevent me from placing all readings online). I have tried to limit the readings so that each of you has time to complete all of the assigned pages.

5. Attendance. Your attendance is expected at each class, including the walking tour. Three absences can lead to an unofficial withdrawal.

### **Traditional American Architecture Schedule** (subject to change)

Class I: September 4. Introduction; Spanish, French, and Dutch Colonial Architecture

Class II: September 11. Early Architecture of the English Colonies

Class III: September 18. The Triumph of Georgian Classicism

Class IV: September 25. Neo-Classical Architecture I: The Federal Style

Class V: October 2. Neo-Classicism II: Rational Design and the Greek Revival

October 9. No class (class will be held on October 11)

Class VI: October 11. Architectural Pattern Books and Hand Books (Meet in Avery Library seminar room – go downstairs, turn left and walk into Art History books stacks –

follow the purple floor to Avery Archives). Class will be split into two groups – beginning at 2:30 and 3:45. Paper topic due.

Class VII: October 16. American Utopias?: Prisons, Religious Communities, and Mill Towns

Class VIII: October 23: Downing, Davis and the Romantic Picturesque vs New Technologies and New Forms in American Architecture.

Class IX: October 25 (Thursday): Central Park Tour (Meet at 10:00 at the General Sherman statue on Fifth Avenue north of 59<sup>th</sup> Street).

Class X: October 30. House Museum Presentations

Class XI: November 13. Eclecticism After the Civil War.

Class XII: November 20. New Roads: Hunt, Furness, Richardson and the American Aesthetic. Paper due.

Class XIII: November 27: Final class.

November 29 (Thursday), 2:30. (Special Class) The Architectural Drawing. Avery Library Specials Collections. View drawings from Avery's rich collections relating to our period (Upjohn, Davis, etc.) and discuss developments in architectural representations.

Class XIV: December 6 (Thursday). New York City as a Case Study: Greenwich Village Tour (Meet at 10:00 at the northeast corner of Sixth Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Street).

Final: date to be announced