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Vernacular Architecture Forum Syllabus Exchange



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course title: Vernacular Architecture

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HP 723 : Vernacular Architecture

Spring 2007

Mondays, 4 – 6:30 p.m.
Pence Hall, Room 306

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Office hours: Wednesday afternoons

Course Description and Approach

Vernacular architecture is at once a type of architecture and an approach to the study of architecture. It is also a multidisciplinary field of study that emerged in the mid twentieth century in response to limitations many perceived in historical disciplines. Historic preservation has close ties to vernacular architecture's emergence as a distinct field of study and approach to understanding the past through surviving buildings and landscapes, since the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act mandated historic buildings survey nationwide. Preservationists should know something about vernacular architecture because the majority of buildings with which they concern themselves are vernacular types; many would argue that knowledge of vernacular architecture is more important to preservation than familiarity with monumental or high style architecture. From the vernacular architecture scholar's point of view, even many architect-designed or high style buildings have "vernacular" aspects, and a vernacular approach to their interpretation reveals new things about them, as well as about the people who made and used them.

This course will touch upon vernacular architecture in each of its senses. We will begin by considering vernacular architecture as a field of study, discussing both the history of the movement and intellectual contributions to it. We will next reflect upon a number of essays that take a vernacular approach to interpreting buildings and landscapes (as well as their makers and inhabitants), and which concern some of the important issues in the field. We will end by examining, both through literature and in the field, several types of vernacular architecture. Because most students have already read a great deal about American vernacular architecture of the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, most of our readings in the third section of the course will concern late 19th and 20th – century vernaculars.

Evaluation

Each student's grade for the course will be determined by three factors in combination:

Class participation 35%

I will conduct this class as a true graduate seminar, in which your engagement counts for a great deal. Part of this engagement takes place through commitment: I expect each student to attend class weekly, arrive on time and complete the weekly assigned readings. Another part of engagement occurs through participation: each student must not only do the readings and attend weekly classes, but must also become involved in class discussions each time class meets. Further, each student will be responsible for leading group discussion for one class meeting. The two field trips, scheduled during regular class meeting times, are regular class sessions. Anyone who misses more than one class without good reason will lose 10 points from his or her final grade.

Notebook 20% percent

Each of you should bring to the class one or more images of a building you think is (or might be) vernacular. I will post these images in the seminar room area of Bowman Hall. Each of you should keep a notebook for the duration of the class, making weekly entries in it that apply class readings to the buildings depicted in the images. You may write about the same image each week, about a different image/building each week or any combination in between. You may also choose to group images and write about several simultaneously. Notebook entries may be any length you wish, so long as you produce at least one page per week of thoughts, questions, or hypotheses about at least one of these images/buildings. I will review notebooks at the middle of the semester and grade them at end. I will be looking first to see whether or not weekly entries are present, but more importantly at how each student's analytical, interpretive, and other critical skills have developed over the course of the semester.

3 Short essays 15% each for a total of 45%

Each student will write three short (5 to 7 page) essays throughout the course of the semester. The first, due Monday 2/26 in class, will be a review of Henry Glassie's *Vernacular Architecture*. The second, due Monday 4/2 in class, will answer a question I pose. (Each student will not necessarily receive the same question). The third, due by 4:30 p.m. Tuesday May 1, will be on a topic of your choice, so long as it has something to do with the interpretation of an example of vernacular architecture or landscape.

Class meetings, topics and readings

1/15 **Martin Luther King's Birthday: Academic Holiday: No Class**

1/22 **Introduction to class and topic**

1/29 **Vernacular architecture as a field of study**

Camille Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1986): 1-10.
[E-Journal]

Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, "Introduction," *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1986: xiii-xxiii.

Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman, "Introduction: Toward a New Architectural History," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 4 (1991): 1-6.
[E-Journal]

Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: A Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and Landscapes*. Vernacular Architecture Studies, Diane Shaw, series editor. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press for the Vernacular Architecture Forum, 2005: xiii-43. (Introduction and chapters 1 and 2)

2/5 **Material culture and a vernacular approach**

Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," in *Material Life in America, 1600-1860*, Robert Blair St. George, editor. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988: 17-37.

Dell Upton, "The Power of Things: Recent Studies in American Vernacular Architecture," in *Material Culture: A Research Guide*, Thomas J. Schlereth, editor. Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1985: 57-78.

Carter and Cromley, 2005: 20-81 (chapters 3 and 4).

Bernard L. Herman, *Townhouse: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1850*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2005: 1-76. (chapters 1 and 2)

2/12 **Issues and interpretations: typology and nomenclature**

Fred Kniffen, "Louisiana House Types," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Dec 1936): 170-193.
[E-Journal]

Norman Morrison Isham and Albert F. Brown, "Early Rhode Island Houses," in *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1986: 149-158.

Richard Longstreth, "Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 2 (1986): 12-23.
[E-Journal]

Jay Edwards, "The Evolution of a Vernacular Tradition," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 4 (1991): 75-86.
[E-Journal]

Anthony Rawe, "Architecture of the Kentucky Tobacco Sales Warehouse: Its Evolution and Development as a Unique Building Type," *Kentucky Places and Spaces*, Vol. 1 (2003): 39- 49.

Hubka type/nomenclature survey; to be handed out

2/19 Issues and interpretations: acculturation, diffusion and building cycles

Robert Machin, "The Great Rebuilding: A Reassessment," *Past and Present* Vol. 77 (Nov 1977): 33-56.
[E-Journal]

Charles Bergenren, "The Cycles of Transformations in Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania Houses," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture IV*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press (1991): 98-107.
[E-Journal]

Robert Blair St. George, *Conversing By Signs: The Poetics of Implication in Colonial New England*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998: 16-113 (chapter 1). [E-book]

2/26 Issues and interpretations: race, class and gender

Essay #1, review of Glassie's *Vernacular Architecture*, due

Angel Kwolek-Fowland, "Gender as a Category of Analysis in Vernacular Architecture Studies," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5 (1995): 3-10.
[E-Journal]

Herman, 2005: 119-230 (chapters 4, 5 and 6).

M. Ruth Little, "The Other Side of the Tracks: The Middle-Class Neighborhoods That Jim Crow Built in Early Twentieth-Century North Carolina," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 7 (1997): 268-280.
[E-Journal]

Jessica Sewell, "Sidewalks and Store Windows as Political Landscapes," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 9: 85-98.
[E-Journal]

3/5 Domesticity and Victorian vernacular

Notebooks due for mid-term review

Sally McMurray, *Families and Farmhouses in 19th-Century America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988: 87-134; 209-221 (chapters 4 and 7)

Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1983: 93-151 (part 3: accommodations for an industrial society).

Jan Jennings, "Cheap and Tasteful Dwellings in Popular Architecture," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5 (1995): 133-151.
[E-Journal]

Thomas C. Hubka and Judith T. Kenny, "The Worker's Cottage in Milwaukee's Polish Community: Housing and the Progress of Americanization, 1870-1920," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 8 (2000), 33-52.
[E-Journal]

3/12 Spring Break: No class

3/19 The 'progressive' movement and the early twentieth century

Wright, 1983: 155-214 (part 4: domestication of modern living).

Susan Mulchahey Chase, "Rural Adaptations of Suburban Bungalows, Sussex County, Delaware," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5 (1995): 179-189.
[E-Journal]

Pamela H. Simpson, "Cheap, Quick and Easy: The Early History of Rockfaced Concrete Block Building," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 3 (1989): 108-118.
[E-Journal]

Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The "Industrial Revolution" in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, Thomas J. Schlereth, editor. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1982: 222-236.

Lizabeth A. Cohen, "Embellishing A Life of Labor: An Interpretation of the Material Culture of American Working-Class Homes, 1885-1915," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, Thomas J. Schlereth, editor. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1982: 289-305.

3/26 Field trip

3/28-3/31 Annual Meeting of the Vernacular Architecture Forum

4/2 Suburbanization and post-war housing

Essay #2 due

Wright, 1983: 217-261 (chapters 13 and 14).

Annmarie Adams, "The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbia," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5 (1995): 164-178.
[E-Journal]

Greg Hise, "From Roadside Camp to Garden Home: Housing and Community Planning for California's Migrant Work Force, 1935-1941," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5 (1995): 243-258.
[E-Journal]

Tom Wolfe and Leonard Garfield, "'A New Standard for Living': The Lustron House, 1946-1950," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5 (1995): 51-61.
[E-Journal]

Becky Gatewood Rapier, "From Suburb to Subdivision: Late Nineteenth-Century to Mid Twentieth-Century Suburban Ideals at Pewee Valley, Kentucky," *Kentucky Places and Spaces*, Vol. 2 (2006): 39-55.

4/9 Roadside and commercial landscapes

Timothy Davis, "The Miracle Mile Revisited: Recycling, Renovation and Simulation along the Commercial Strip," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 7 (1995): 93-114.
[E-Journal]

Stephanie Dyer, "Designing "Community" in the Cherry Hill Mall: The Social Production of a Consumer Space," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 9 (2003): 263-275.
[E-Journal]

Cynthia Johnson, "New Town Landscapes at Eastland Shopping Center," *Kentucky Places and Spaces*, Vol. 1 (2003): 23-38.

Timothy Davis, "'A Pleasant Illusion of Unspoiled Countryside': The American Parkway and the Problematic of an Institutionalized Vernacular," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 9 (2003): 228-246.
[E-Journal]

Bruce A. Lohof, "The Service Station in America: The Evolution of a Vernacular Form," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, Thomas J. Schlereth, editor. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1982: 251-258.

Susan B. Spellman, "All the Comforts of Home: The Domestication of the Service Station Industry, 1920-1940," *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2004): 463-477.
[E-Journal]

4/16 Field trip

4/23 Appalachian Regional Vernacular

Margaret M. Mulrooney, "A Legacy of Coal: The Coal Company Towns of Southwestern Pennsylvania," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 4 (1991): 130-137.
[E-Journal]

Charles E. Martin, *Hollybush: Folk Building and Social Change in an Appalachian Community*.
Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993 [1984].

4/30 Finals Week

Essay #3 due
Notebooks due

5/7 Grades due for Spring 2007