instructor: Daves Rossell

course title: American Cultural Landscape

institution: Savannah College of Art and Design

date offered: Fall, 2002

stable URL: www.vafweb.org/resources/syllabi/rossell1.pdf

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MISSION STATEMENT OF THE COLLEGE
The Savannah College of Art and Design exists to prepare talented students for careers in the visual and performing arts, design, the building arts, and the history of art and architecture. The college emphasizes learning through individual attention in a positively oriented environment.

Office Hours: Barnard Office B; Monday-Thursday: 2:30-3:30pm, by appointment
Office number: 525-6054
Office Fax: 525-6050
E-mail: erossell@scad.edu (feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments)
Prerequisite: AH110: Survey of Western Arts II

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Through reading and discussion and explorations in the field this seminar will introduce students to a variety of North American landscapes and methods used in analyzing them. The bulk of the course will concern itself with looking at everyday environments as a means to understanding the culture of ordinary people. Everyday homes, highways, factories, stores, and recreation areas of the twentieth century provide the subject matter. How do these ordinary environments help us to understand the culture of ordinary people? How have we created the dominant world around us and how have we become who we are today? To understand these questions we will explore how "landscape" or "cultural landscape" are terms that link an ordinary social group and their spaces. The guiding question is: can ordinary landscapes help us understand the environmental experience and meaning of the majority of Americans?

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE
To introduce students to cultural landscape studies and the skills needed to read the landscape themselves. To understand how America's ordinary landscapes such as homes, highways, factories, stores, and recreation areas were formed and evolve.

SKILLS TO BE MASTERED
By means of extensive reading, class discussions, written assignments, and presentations, students will strengthen their research, analytical, and communication skills. Research projects will involve a wide variety of research skills and approaches, including work in archives as well as in the field. Formal presentations will test student's organizational skills in coordinating research, visual material, and help to develop self-confidence in public speaking.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Attendance at all class sessions
2. Participation with scheduled leadership in classroom discussion
3. Completion of all reading assignments
6. Two writing assignments

SCAD ATTENDANCE POLICY
There are no excused absences. The accumulation of more than four absences results in the student's failure for the class. Missing more than 15 minutes of a single class constitutes an absence. No exceptions possible.

GRADING OPPORTUNITIES

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20th-century American cultural landscape

This Architectural History seminar will introduce you to a variety of American cultural landscapes. In doing so we will touch on familiar subjects, such as homes, highways, factories, stores, and recreation areas, but we will look at them critically for what they can tell us about our cultural history. Rather than attempt to look at every possible cultural landscape, we will look at those that are dominant in the twentieth-century America and that have received the most study. Our reading and discussion of landscapes, and the various means of interpretation people have used on them, will help us to understand how we live in a complex web of meaning linking material objects and spaces with culture. We will hopefully end up being able to relate our experience driving on the freeway, buying ready-made clothes, or taking tennis lessons with broader cultural movements occurring at a variety of scales and in a variety of locations.

Course requirements

1. Regular attendance at meetings, conscientious reading, and active participation in discussions.

2. Two short writing exercises designed to help you learn to investigate cultural landscapes on your own.

   a. A 10-page analytical essay about some typical landscape element. You should address how the element reflects social meanings and the interweaving of people and places. Stucco, plate glass, palm trees, and ornamental lampposts are just some landscape elements that have stories behind them. Thrift shops, playgrounds, front porches, and yards are also suitable. What can check-cashing stores tell us about our culture?

   b. Either:

      A 10-page analytical essay about some aspect of a particular cultural landscape. You should address how that aspect reflects social meanings and the interweaving influences of people and places. Where is the "Generation-X" landscape? What distinguishes the current craze for billiards halls from the old pool hall? What kind of place is the Savannah Mall? Why are there miscellaneous log cabins in Oatland Island Nature Preserve?

      Or, A 10-page analysis about the intersection or contact-zone of two different landscapes. Where are landscapes in conflict? How do different social groups define their space? What determines the differences: age, race, sex, income, taste? How is the landscape a reflection of this boundary?
READING ASSIGNMENTS

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Reader

The texts and the reader are available at the SCAD bookstore and should be purchased at the beginning of the quarter. There are also copies on reserve in the Jen Library.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Depending on what type of landscape or landscape element that you choose to write about, these will help you think about your research topic and how to research it.

Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (1973)
GRADING STANDARDS

A  90-100  Superior  
In writing assignments: careful attention to requirements;  
In general: real engagement in class; mastery of both broad concepts and specific detail;  
clear fulfillment and comprehension of reading assignments; leadership in class discussion.

B  80-89  Above Average  
In writing assignments: less careful attention to requirements;  
In general: less engagement in class; less mastery in both broad concepts and specific detail; less clear fulfillment or comprehension of reading assignments; conscientious participation in class discussion but no real leadership.

C  70-79  Average  
In writing assignments: only fair attention to requirements;  
In general: attendance but not engagement; general understanding of concepts and detail; apparent lack of fulfillment of reading assignments; occasional participation in class discussion.

D  60-69  Below Average  
In writing assignments: poor attention to requirements.  
In general: spotty attendance; often late or often leaves early; falls asleep; does not do the reading; only participates rarely.

F  below 60  Failure  
In writing and project assignments: All of the D aspects, only worse, a vacuum.  
In general: All of the D aspects, only worse.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Students are required to be engaged in class and to participate actively in the discussions that are the heart of the seminar. Relevant questions and observations greatly aid everyone's learning experience. Students are also strongly encouraged to take detailed notes as part of the final grade will reflect this participation.

Participation grades begin at 80 (above average) and go up or down depending on attendance, positive or negative spirit, and engagement expressed through quality class discussion and office hour consultation. You will get an 80 in participation, if, by the end of the class, you have perfect attendance. Participation grades will go down 5 points from 80 for each absence. To get higher than 80 students must positively engage the professor and the class in questions or comments in class or be proactive in office hour consultation. You can receive lower than 80 with negative attitudes or actions, such as sleeping.
LATE ASSIGNMENTS
Late assignments are cheerfully accepted, but they will be marked down 2.5 points per day they are late, unless accompanied by a doctor’s note. Assignments not turned in will receive a zero. No exceptions possible.
Outline of meetings and readings

**Week 1 (September 19)  Organizational meeting**

**Part 1. Introduction**

**Week 2 (September 24/26) What is a cultural landscape?**
Introduction to elements, orders, and axioms that help people read the cultural landscape

All Read: 74 pages.


**Graduate Report:** Edward T. Hall, “Culture as Communication,” “Perception of Space: Distance Receptors—Eyes, Ears, and Nose,” “Perception of Space: Immediate Receptors—Skin and Muscles,” “The Language of Space,” “The Anthropology of Space: An Organizing Model,” “Distances in Man,” and “Proxemics and the Future of Man” in...


Fieldtrip: Bustrip

Week 2 + (September 28) Library Orientation [NB: This is a makeup for October 24]

Part II. Domesticity

Week 3 (October 1/3) The house as a cultural landscape element

All Read: 115 pages.


Fieldtrip: Garden City

**Week 4 (October 8/10): The Suburb and Variations**

1st paper due

All Read: 46 pages


**Graduate Report:** Selection from Murray Forman *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002). [reserve]


**Fieldtrip:** Suburban Contrasts (Florence S. Gibson / Eastside Savannah / Emeralde Pointe / Wilmington Island)

### Part III: The City

**Week 5 (October 15/17): The City and Commercialism**

All Read: 89 pages


Fieldtrip: Broughton Street

**Week 6 (October 22): Recreation**

All Read: 69 pages


**Fieldtrip:** Forsyth Park / Daffin Park / Sallie Mood Drive

**Week 6 (October 24):** Class Cancelled. See September 28 for makeup.

**Part IV: Workplace**

**Week 7 (October 29/31):** Workplace

All Read: 69 pages


**Graduate Report:** Oliver Zunz, "Inside the Skyscraper," in *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920* (Chicago 1990): 103-24. [reserve]


Fieldtrip: Great Dane / Port Authority

**Part V: Street and Highway**

*Week 8 (November 5/7): Transportation, Settlement, and Commerce*

All Read: 125 pages


Fieldtrip: 17 South / West Bay Street / Garden City / 516/21

**Week 9 (November 12/14): Highway**

Second paper due

All Read: 11 pages


Fieldtrip: Amtrak / Intermodal Transport / 16 / 95 / 80

**Part VI: Conclusions**
Week 10 (November 19/21): Themes to take with you

All Read: 45 pages


Week 10 + (November 26)

All Read: Fellow seminar participants papers.

Field Trip: There will be many fieldtrips throughout the quarter.

Midterm Conferences: Individual conference to review each student's performance will be arranged following the midterm week.
Selected Bibliography

Introduction and Cultural Identity


Dear, Michael, and Steven Flusty, eds. *The Spaces of Modernity: Readings in Human Geography.* Blackwell, 2001. [See Foucaut's essay "Of Other Spaces" to introduce the term "heterotopia." See Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City" suggests how pedestrians create space in their perambulations.]


The Internet Moving Images Archive contains about 100 social guidance films from 1945-60, as well as a number of films relating to youth cultures and subcultures from the post-World War II period. All are available for free downloading and reuse. The URL: [http://www.moviearchive.org](http://www.moviearchive.org).


*The Professional Geographer* (November 2000) Focus Section: New Memorial Landscapes in the American South, with Introduction by Derek H. Alderman, and the following articles: Owen J. Dwyer, “Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement: Place, Memory, and Conflict,” Derek H. Alderman, “A Street Fit for a King: Naming Places and Commemoration in
the American South,” and Toby Moore, “Emerging Memorial Landscapes of Labor Conflict in the Cotton Textile South.”


**The House and Suburb**


Lee, Spike. *Do the Right Thing*. [Film]


O'Hare, William, and William H. Frey, "Booming, Suburban and Black", *American Demographics* 14 (1992), 30-38. [An example of the current scholarly material on recent African American suburbanization using sociology and demography]


The City


**Commerce**


Recreation and Faith


Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles: http://www.aafa.com/search/search_frmst.htm


The National Recreation and Park Association, (a descendant of the Playground Association of America founded in 1906) www.activeparks.org


The North American Society for Sport History: http://www.nassh.org/index1.html


Pearlman, Jeff. “At Full Blast.” *Sports Illustrated*, (December 27, 1999), pp. 60-63.


**The Workplace**


**Transportation: RR, Road, Street and Highway**


Macdonald, Austin F., ed., *Planning for City Traffic.* Special number of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 133 (September 1927).


The Petersen Automotive Museum WWW page at http://www.petersen.org/, especially "A slide show of the automobile's early influence on architecture and culture in Los Angeles".


Enrichment Website at
http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us:8080/tserve/nattrans/nattrans.htm


**Further Considerations**


Miller, Laura. "Women and Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier." In *Resisting the virtual life: the culture and politics of...*


Incomplete:
A grade of incomplete may be granted to students who have suffered serious personal illness or critical, emergency circumstances during the academic term, resulting in failure to complete all assignments by the end of the quarter. A student who has missed over 20% of the class sessions may not be eligible for an incomplete. **Documentation from a physician is required and must be attached to the petition for a temporary grade of incomplete.** Please see the college catalog for additional information on incompletes.

Academic Honesty:
Under all circumstances, students are expected to be honest in their dealings with faculty, administrative staff, and fellow students. In speaking with members of the college community, students must give an accurate representation of the facts at hand. In class assignments, students must submit work that fairly and accurately reflects their level of accomplishment. Any work that is not a product of the student’s own effort is considered dishonest. Students may not submit the same work for more than one class. A student may be suspended or expelled for academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Student Handbook for additional information regarding the policy on academic honesty.

Americans with Disabilities Act
In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, SCAD offers integrated educational services to assist students with disabilities to obtain a college education. For more information on services for students with disabilities, please contact the Coordinator of Disability Services at 525-5000.

Classroom Building Safety - Evacuation Information
It is important that each student familiarize himself or herself with the most appropriate route to emergency exits in the classroom building. Emergency exits are indicated on charts posted in classrooms, hallways, or in the stairwells. Should a drill or emergency occur that would require evacuation, the class is to meet in a predetermined location away from the building. Professors will take attendance in an effort to account for all students.

Classroom Building Safety - College Identification Badges
All students must present a valid SCAD photo ID card to the greeter or security person upon entering all college buildings. Additionally, all faculty and staff are to wear visible identification badges whenever on college property. These procedures are intended to help ensure the safety of all students and college personnel at SCAD.

Classroom Building Safety - Material Safety Data Sheets
The College is committed to providing a safe environment for students and staff. This commitment is reflected in the development of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) on file in each building. Chemicals and solvents utilized in the building must have an MSDS on file. Please consult the MSDS log before using any chemicals or solvents. The departmental administrative assistant can advise students of the location of the building log. Students and staff who wish to use chemicals and solvents not currently in the MSDS log, must provide appropriate MSDS information to the departmental administrative assistant and receive approval for use.
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