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## Vernacular Architecture Forum Syllabus Exchange



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**instructor:** Thomas Carter  
**course title:** Introduction to American Architecture  
**institution:** University of Utah

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COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING  
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

ARCH 3212: Introduction to American Architecture

Instructor: Thomas Carter, Professor. Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-3pm in AAC 332; for appointments [tcarter@arch.utah.edu](mailto:tcarter@arch.utah.edu)

Course Description

The aim of this course is to offer students a brief history of the American architectural landscape as it evolved from prehistoric times to the present. Lectures cover the major architectural styles, building types, and construction technologies as well as the contributions of particularly prominent architects and theorists. Considerable effort is made to place the American built environment within a framework of social and cultural development and change. What is “American” about our architectural landscape? What do our cities, towns, and buildings say about us as a people? As “historians of things” we will attempt to answer these and other questions by using the architectural landscape as a “text” for understanding the American past, present, and hopefully something of the future as well.

Course Readings

One textbook is required: Leland Roth’s *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001). The book is available at the bookstore or on-line.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grades will be determined on the basis of performance on three tests and a three-to-four page field report on architectural styles (see below for details). The three tests and field report all count equally toward your final grade.

*Tests*

The course is arranged in three parts: Part I: Creating the American Landscape, from the beginning to 1820; Part II: The American Response to Industrialization, 1820-1920; and Part III: The Rise and Fall of Modernism, 1920-2000. Each part runs for five weeks and concludes with a short test. Tests consist of (1) several slide identifications of significant American buildings (NB: only buildings that are over-emphasized in class and/or are found in Roth’s book will be on the tests); (2) several definition/short answer questions; and (3) a short essay question which will allow you to write (wax eloquent) about specific issues or themes raised in class. Please bring bluebooks.

*Field Report*

You will also be asked to prepare a three-to-four page field report. The assignment is to locate and briefly describe a building in the Avenues area of Salt Lake City from each of four style/type categories: Neoclassical (style), Victorian Eclectic (style), Bungalow (type),

and either Moderne (style), International (style), or ranch (type). For each of the four buildings you should include a photo, address, history (available from the Preservation Office at the Utah State Historical Society/Rio Grande Depot), brief architectural description (its basic features), and a short discussion of historical meaning (how does the particular style/type express the social/cultural needs/values of its time). For quick reference, you may want to check Karl Haglund and Phil Notarriani, *The Avenues of Salt Lake City* and Thomas Carter and Peter Goss, *Utah's Historic Architecture*.

**FIELD REPORT DUE IN CLASS ON APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup>.**

Accommodations Policy

Some of the lectures, readings, and presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

Semester Outline.

**Part I: Creating the American Landscape**

Jan 9 T Introduction to Architectural/Landscape History  
Jan 11 TH Native Settlements

Reading: Roth 9-37

Jan 16 T House Form and Culture  
Jan 18 TH Cities in the Wilderness

Reading: Roth 28-67

Jan 23 T The English House in America  
Jan 25 TH Meetinghouse to Church

Reading: Roth 68-105

Jan 30 T Republican Virtue  
Feb 1 TH Economies of Scale

Reading: Roth 106-149

Feb 6 T An American Landscape  
Feb 8 TH Test #1

## **Part II: The American Response to Industrialization**

Feb 13 T A Changing World

Feb 15 TH Looking Backward

Reading: Roth 150-209

Feb 20 T Cosmopolitan Aspirations

Feb 22 TH Eclecticism as an Ideal

Reading: Roth 210-263

Feb 27 T Cites, Suburbs, and the Cult of Domesticity

Mar 1 TH HHR, the Beaux Arts, and the Search for Order

Reading: Roth 264-337

Mar 6 T Tall Buildings

Mar 8 TH The Prairie and Arts and Crafts Styles

Readings: Roth 264-337

Mar 13 T The City Beautiful Movement

Mar 15 TH Test #2

## **Spring Break: March 19-23**

## **Part III: The Rise and Fall of Modernism**

Mar 27 T Reluctant Moderns

Mar 29 TH Horizontal Cities

Reading: Roth 338-409

Apr 3 T The International Style

Apr 5 TH The Populux Agenda

## **FIELD REPORT DUE IN CLASS**

Reading: Roth 411-473

Apr 10 T The American Dream

Apr 12 TH Postmodern Challenges

Reading: 474-556

Apr 17 T Commodification and Spectacle  
Apr 29 TH Current Trends in American Architecture

Apr 24 T Summary  
Apr 26 TH Test #3