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instructor: Abigail Van Slyck
course title: Domestic Architecture in the United States
institution: Connecticut College
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DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

AHI 326 ♦ Connecticut College ♦ Fall 2001

Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 AM -12:45 PM ♦ Cummings 307



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Office hours: Wednesdays, 10:00-11:00 AM, and by appointment

Home phone: 599-8928. Please limit your calls to my home and do not call after 9 PM.

American houses (and other domestic environments) are particularly potent artifacts, in that they function both as the containers and shapers of social interaction. This course is designed to acquaint students with the history of American domestic buildings as they relate to social, economic, political, and cultural factors, and to begin to develop each student's facility for field observation, library research, and historical interpretation.

AHI 326 is open to juniors and seniors, and to others with permission of instructor. Please see the instructor if you have questions about your preparation.

Required texts (available at the Connecticut College Bookshop)

Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (MIT Press, 1983)

Eleanor McD. Thompson, ed., The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space and Family Life (Winterthur, 1998)

Rachel Carley, The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture (Henry Holt, 1997)

Course Requirements

Field notebook (35% of final grade)

In order to understand the spatial qualities of American domestic architecture, we will visit six houses together over the course of the semester. These trips are an integral part of the course, and are required of all students. In addition, you are required to visit one additional house of your own choosing. In the field notebook, you will record your observations and impressions at the sites, comment on the readings associated with the field trips, and posit questions that the visits raised in your mind. You will bring your field notebook with you to the class meeting after each field trip, and will turn in your notebook as indicated on the schedule of assignments below.

Midterm and Final Examinations (20% and 25% of the final grade, respectively)

Both exams will include slide identifications accompanied by short-answer questions, comparative essays contrasting buildings or complexes discussed in lectures, and short essay questions on assigned reading. Your essays will be judged on a demonstrated ability to synthesize material from different readings and lectures, on your mastery of basic historical facts, on your clear description of architectural form, and on grammar and spelling.

Paper (20% of final grade)

Each student will write an 8- to 10-page paper on one of the houses that you have recorded in your field notebook (either one of the six that we will visit together or the one that you visit on your own). You will be expected to do some additional research on the building (or on buildings like it) and its historical context. Your paper will situate the house within the history of domestic architecture, and offer a critical assessment of the relationship between the building as a three-dimensional artifact and the human interactions it was built to support.

Informed class participation

Evaluation in this area is based on your willingness and ability to arrive at class on time, to give class activities your full attention (no bathroom breaks!), to come to class prepared to discuss the day's reading assignment, to listen to your peers when they speak, and to respond to them in a constructive way. Since these actions are well within the abilities of every Connecticut College student, they will not be assigned a letter grade. However, I reserve the right to **deduct up to five percent from your final grade** if you fail to carry them out consistently.

Values that guide my grading of your work. As I evaluate your work this semester, I will be particularly conscious of how you demonstrate the following characteristics:

Curiosity. Your work should demonstrate your eagerness to learn and your innate desire to engage with the subject matter of the class.

Initiative. Your work should demonstrate your willingness to let your curiosity take you beyond the minimum requirements for each assignment. Don't work to meet my expectations—work to exceed them!

Professionalism. Your work should demonstrate a high degree of professionalism by being neat, legible, clearly identified as yours, and turned in on time. In addition, your work should be literate, grammatically correct, free of misspellings.

How do these values translate into grades? Grades in the A range are reserved for work that demonstrates the student's curiosity and initiative by going beyond the basic requirements of an assignment and by doing so with a high degree of professionalism. Work that fulfills the basic requirements of an assignment with a high degree of professionalism will receive a grade in the B range. Work that fulfills the basic requirements of an assignment, but does so in a sloppy or half-hearted way will receive a C. Work that fails to fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment will receive a D or an F, depending on how far it misses the mark.

Late work policy: Unless you have made prior arrangements with me, late work will be marked down. You will lose a grade step for each day the work is late. (An example of a grade step is the difference between a B and a B-.)

Absence policy: Class attendance is mandatory. Absences will be permitted for documented medical or family emergencies, but a student who is absent from class four times without an excuse may be dropped from the class with a failing grade.

Honor Code: In this and all aspects of life at Connecticut College, students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code. Specifically, members of the academic community will not represent the work of others as their own, will neither give nor obtain unauthorized assistance in any academic work, nor modify academic work for the purpose of obtaining additional credit. The correct use of footnotes, both with direct quotes and with sections of paraphrased text, is essential to maintaining your academic integrity. If you have any questions about where, when, why, and how to use footnotes, see the instructor before you turn in any written work.

Schedule of lecture topics, readings, and other assignments

Readings are either in required texts (Wright or Thompson) or on reserve in Shain Library.

Week 1

Monday, September 3	Introduction
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Wednesday, September 5	European Background; Methodology
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Reading: Amos Rapoport, House Form and Culture (Prentice Hall, 1969) 46-82.

Assignment: Come to class with ideas about what observations we can make when we visit a house for the first time.

Week 2

Monday, September 10 Field Trip to Thomas Lee House, Niantic

Reading: Abbott Lowell Cummings, "Inside the Massachusetts House," in Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach (University of Georgia Press, 1986), 219-225.

Assignment: List room names typically used in 17th-century probate inventories, the location of these rooms, and the sorts of furnishings (and hence functions) associated with those rooms.

Wednesday, September 12 Colonial Roots: 17th-Century Anglo America

Reading: Wright, chapter 1

Marion Nelson Winship, "Safety and Danger in a Puritan Home: Life in the Hull-Seward House, 1676-1717," in Thompson, 257-271.

Assignments: Thesis statement for Winship
Bring in field notebook for review

Week 3

Monday, September 17 Colonial Roots: Hispanic America

Reading: Christopher Wilson, "When the Room is the Hall," in Images of an American Land, ed. Thomas Carter (University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 113-128.

Assignment: Thesis statement

Wednesday, September 19 Field Trip to Hempsted Houses, New London

Reading: Abbott Lowell Cummings, "Inside the Massachusetts House," in Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach (University of Georgia Press, 1986), 225-235.

Assignment: List the room names used in the 18th century in a house with four rooms on the first floor. Think about how the furnishings and room use in 18th-century houses differed from those of their 17th-century predecessors.

Week 4

Monday, September 24 18th-Century Refinement

Reading: Jan K. Gilliam, "The Evolution of the House in Early Virginia," in Thompson, 177-196.

Assignments: Turn in field notebook for review
Thesis statement

Wednesday, September 26 Plantation Landscapes

Reading: Wright, Chapter 3

Martha B. Katz-Hyman "'In the Middle of This Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot': The Furnishing of Slave Quarters at Colonial Williamsburg," in Thompson, 197-216.

Assignment: Thesis statement for Katz-Hyman

Week 5

Monday, October 1 Seeking a National Image: Federalist-Republican Debate

Reading: Marlene Elizabeth Heck, “‘Appearance and Effect is Everything’: The James River Houses of Samuel, Joseph, and George Cabell,” in Thompson, 5-23.

Assignment: Thesis statement

Wednesday, October 3 Seeking a National Image: Greek Revival

Week 6

Monday, October 8 Discussion and Exam Review

Wednesday, October 10 Midterm Examination

Week 7

Monday, October 15 Field Trip to Nathaniel Palmer House, Stonington

Wednesday, October 17 Downing and the Picturesque Landscape

Reading: Wright, Chapter 5

Assignment: Turn in field notebook for review

Week 8

Monday, October 22 Catherine Beecher and New Role for Women

Reading: Dolores Hayden, “Catharine Beecher and the Politics of Housework,” in Women in American Architecture, ed. Susan Torre, 40-49.

Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, American Woman’s Home (1869), peruse.

Assignment: Thesis statement for Hayden

Wednesday, October 24 Field Trip to the Avery-Copp House, Groton

Week 9

Monday, October 29 The Suburban House in Victorian America

Reading: Wright, Chapter 6

Sarah Luria, “Racial Equality Begins at Home: Frederick Douglass’s Challenge to American Domesticity,” in Thompson, 25-43.

Assignments: Turn in field notebook

Thesis statement for Luria

Wednesday, October 31 Household Technologies

Reading: Olive Blair Graffam, “‘These are Very Handy’: Kitchen Furnishings, 1875-1920,” in Thompson, 217-240.

Week 10

Monday, November 5 Mill Villages and Tenement Houses

Reading: Wright, Chapters 4 and 7

Wednesday, November 7 Field Trip: TBA

Week 11

Monday, November 12 Turn-of-the-Century Reforms

Reading: Wright, Chapters 9 and 10

Scott Erbes, "Manufacturing and Marketing the American Bungalow: The Aladdin Company, 1906-1920," in Thompson, 45-70.

Assignment: Thesis statement for Erbes

Turn in 3 copies of your paper by **Tuesday, November 13, at 4 PM**

Wednesday, November 14 Peer Review session

Week 12

Monday, November 19 Frank Lloyd Wright

Reading: Robert C. Twombly, "Saving the Family: Middle-Class Attraction to Wright's Prairie House, 1900-1909," American Quarterly 27 (1975), 57-72.

Assignment: Thesis statement

Turn in one copy of your paper by **Tuesday, November 20, at 4 PM**

Wednesday, November 21 NO CLASSES—Thanksgiving Break

Week 13

Monday, November 26 Visit to Winchester Road, New London

Wednesday, November 28 Levittown

Reading: Wright, Chapter 11

Assignment: Turn in notebook for review

Week 14

Monday, December 3 Modern houses in the postwar era

Reading: Sandy Isenstadt, "Richard Neutra and the Psychology of Architectural Consumption," chapter 4 in Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture, ed. Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, 97-117.

Assignment: Thesis statement

Wednesday, December 5 Government Housing for the Poor

Reading: Wright Chapter 12

Week 15

Monday, December 10 Recent Trends

Reading: Wright, Chapter 13

Wednesday, December 12 Review

Exam Week

Day and Time TBA Final Examination