Course Description:

As America ascended to its current position of hegemony during the late 19th and 20th centuries, its architects helped refashion the built environment to serve the needs of a growing and ever-diverse population. Hand in hand with the satisfaction of pragmatic requirements, American architects were called upon to fulfill deeper psychological wants, such as the country’s desire to have History. The American complex about the brevity, artificiality, and exterior dependency of its history, structured, with varying degrees of intensity, the evolution of the architectural discipline. Out of this deep seated, and by no means exhausted, anxiety about producing, preserving, and identifying American history, came a sophisticated architectural culture; one capable of foiling, exploiting, subverting, and manipulating the various contradictions of modernity.

From the standpoint of this relationship between history and modernity, we will analyze the American architectural struggle to be progressive and accepted, exceptional and customary, and to simultaneously capture the future and the past. Each lecture will analyze the production and reception of built (and written) works by renowned figures and anonymous builders. The question of History will help us discern the terms of engagement between architecture and other disciplines over time, such as: preservation, planning, real estate development, politics, health, ecology, sociology, and philosophy. By considering American architecture’s successes and failures in relation to these multidisciplinary realities, we will gain a richer sense of the historical characteristics that have informed its evolving nature.

Objectives:

This course is a survey of architecture built in the United States and its territories that begins in the present and moves in reverse chronology to 1876, the country’s first centennial. It is designed to help develop your competence in identifying, understanding, and analyzing historic structures, their significance, types, and styles. The intention is to make you proficient in the use of the methodological, historiographical, visual, and intellectual tools necessary to grasp fully the meanings of historic buildings in their various contexts.

Method:

In each class, we will examine the conditions of possibility for the emergence of private houses, public buildings, landscapes, parks, settlements, towns, and cities. That is, we will ask how it was that this particular structure came into existence here (in the United States and not there), at that precise time. To answer these questions we will study the
history of built form in the context of the intellectual, political, technological, cultural, social, and natural events that made it possible.

We will pay close attention to those projects which attempted to “overshoot” the accepted conventions of their times. For instance, we will look at the function of avant-gardism and traditionalism in resisting the status-quo. Insofar as they challenged established norms, we will study the function of these buildings in advancing new ways of making and of thinking—especially those that we might consider “American.”

Lastly, the reverse chronological format will foreground the way history is written, as an enterprise that begins in the present and tries to project itself into the past. Therefore, this course will ask you to think like a historian, and to consider your own position in relation to that of other past historians writing about architecture. Why are we interested in the past? How is our understanding of the past shaped by the subjective interpretations of other scholars?

**Course Format:**

Weekly lectures will provide the framework of the course. The slides for each lecture are available on the course website. There will also be a number of sessions outside of class in which we will meet in small groups in Avery Library to look at archival drawings.

**Short Paper:**
In September, the International Conference of Docomomo International will take place at Columbia University, hosted by the school’s Historic Preservation Program. Each of you will be required to attend one conference session, and prepare a critical essay on the successes and failures of the papers presented. You should try to attend a session in which at least one paper deals with American Architectural History—that is, papers dealing with buildings built in America, built by Americans anywhere, or buildings or architects influenced by American buildings or architects. Columbia Students may attend the conference for free, but you must register immediately at www.docomomo2004.org.

**Final Paper:**
Each student will be required to write a final research paper, double spaced, between 3,500 and 4,000 words. You will sign up for one of the lectures in the class and write an exegesis of one of the books in the “Important Books” section of your selected lecture. Your paper is expected to interpret the book in relation to the required and suggested readings assigned for that lecture day. In your essay you should be able to answer why the book was “important” to architecture.

**Discussion sessions:**
The preceptor for the course, will lead discussion sessions (hours TBA), to help you with your papers.
Field Trip:
There will be a field trip to Queens on Wednesday September 29th. Please contact Prof. Otero-Pailos if you have a conflict with other classes.

Avery Library Archives:
We will schedule viewing times outside of class for small groups to see and discuss some of the original architect’s drawing in the Avery collection.

Course Requirements and Grading:

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Docomomo Conference Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of paper with preceptor</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>50</td>
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Office hours:

Mondays 11:00 am – 12:00 pm, or by appointment (jo2050@columbia.edu).
Preceptor hours TBA. Please write Jen L. Gray at jlg2006@columbia.edu.

Textbook available for purchase at Labyrinth Books:


Class Reader:

Required class readings have been assembled into a reader for your convenience. The reader will be available for purchase at a local copy shop (Village Copier). A copy will also be on reserve in Avery Library.

Web resources:

Class website, with all lecture images, and useful research links:
http://www.learn.columbia.edu/american_arch/
Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments

Week 1: Monday September 13

Making History: An Introduction

Required:

Important Books:

Tuesday September 14th 5pm: Modern Architect Max Abramowitz Exhibition opening in Schermerhorn Hall.

Week 2: Monday September 20

Fragmentary History: Architecture as Critique

Neo-avantgardes; Politicizing practice; redefining eclecticism; formalism; critical historicism; feminism; post-structuralism; critical regionalism; neo-modernism; the computer and authorship; place and placelessness; the everyday and the exceptional; the search for architecture as autonomous art.

Required:
Manfredo Tafuri, 'L'Architecture dans le Boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language,' in Oppositions, n. 3 (May 1974), 37-62.

Textbook:
Gelernter, 306-318.

Important Books:
Kenneth Frampton, Peter Eisenman, and Mario Gandelsonas, Oppositions Journal.

Recommended:
Todd Marder, ed., The Critical Edge: Controversy in Recent Am. Architecture (Cambridge, 1985)
John Chase, Experimental Architecture in Los Angeles (New York, 1991)
Michael Hays and Carol Burns, eds., Thinking the Present: Recent American Architecture (New York, 1990)

**Week 3: Monday September 27**
Attend Docomomo International Conference Sessions on Monday September 27, and/or Tuesday September 28.

**FIELD TRIP to QUEENS:**
Wednesday September 29 all day. Lunch included.
Cost $28. (Price is $85/person, but GSAPP pays $57/person)
Required:

**Week 4: Monday October 4th**
Revolutionary History: Academicism, Postmodernism, and Phenomenology

The Whites, the Grays, and the Silvers; Postmodernism’s assertion of public opinion; from participation to spectatorship; historic preservation as avant-garde; responding to the site and the environment; marketing the space of identity. The intellectualization of Architecture; Phenomenology, Structuralism and Semiotics.

Required:
- Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form (Camb, 1977), 1-20
- Charles W. Moore, “You Have to Pay for the Public Life,” in Perspecta, n. 9-10, (1965) p. 57-106

Textbook:
- Gelernter, 284-306.
Important Books:


Recommended:


Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer, eds., *Preserving the Recent Past* (Washington, DC, 1995).
Week 5: Monday October 11

Objective History: Cold War Mainstream and Counterculture

The aestheticization of corporate culture; SOM and architectural bureaucracy; The university’s revolt against corporate architecture through Historic Preservation; The Texas Rangers; Saarinen’s expressive ambitions; the Cold War and the “New Monumentality.”

Required:


Textbook:

Gelernter, 279-283.

Important Books:

- Walter Gropius, *The Scope of Total Architecture* (New York, 1955)
Recommended:

**Week 6: Monday October 18: FIRST PAPER DUE**

**Projected History: The Future’s Good Life, Now.**

1945-1960s: The “normal family” in the suburbs; model houses and museum exhibits; mass-production and custom-building; exporting American values; the dilemma of public housing.

**Required:**
Elizabeth Mock, *Built in USA since 1932* (New York, 1945), pp. 9-47

**Textbook:**
Gelernter, 260-279.
Important Books:

Recommended:
  Andrew Hurly, *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York, 2001)
  John F. Bauman, et.al., eds., *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes* (University Park, Pa., 2000)

**Week 7: Monday October 25**

**Vacuous History: Bureaucratic Identity**

1930s-1940s: European vs. American Modernism; Art Deco, Stylized Classicism, International Style; The corporate office tower; Buildings for expanding government agencies (federal, state, and municipal); public space, public buildings and the “public sector.”

Required:
  Striner, Richard. “Art Deco: Polemics and Synthesis,” in *Winterthur Portfolio*, n. 25 (Spring 1990), 2-34.

Textbook:
Gelernter, 239-245.

Important Books:

Albert Kahn, architect, Detroit Michigan [New York, Architectural catalog Co., 1921]

Recommended:
Jose Luis Sert, “Can Our Cities Survive?” (1942)
**Week 7: Monday November 8**

**Logical History: Positivism and Rationalist planning**

1920s-30s, Factories, grain elevators, and the American industrial aesthetic; Henry Ford commissions Albert Kahn's Detroit assembly line; the International Style and the machine ideal.

**Required:**


**Textbook:**


**Important Books:**


**Recommended:**

- Federico Bucci *Albert Kahn, Architect of Ford* (New York, 1993)
Week 8: Monday November 15

Fantastic History: Colonialism, Capitalism and Regionalism

1910s-1920s Spanish Revival in Puerto Rico, the Southwest, and Florida; Total-experience-design in hotels, theaters, movie houses, universities, Sugar and mining company towns, and department stores; debates about ornament, excess and kitsch.

Required:
John Margolies, _Ticket to Paradise: American Movie Theatres and How We Had Fun_ (Boston, 1991)
Chris Wilson, _The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition_ (Albuquerque, 1997)

Textbook:
Gelernter, 230-237.

Important Books:
Sylvester Baxter, _Spanish-colonial architecture in Mexico_, (with photographic plates by Henry Greenwood Peabody and plans by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue), (Boston, J. B. Millet, 1901).
Carleton Monroe Winslow, _The architecture and the gardens of the San Diego exposition; a pictorial survey of the aesthetic features of the Panama California International Exposition_, (San Francisco: P. Elder, c1916).
Addison Mizner, _Florida Architecture of Addison Mizner_; (New York: W. Helburn, Inc., 1928.)

Recommended:

Karel Ann Marling, ed., *Designing the Disney Theme Parks* (Montreal, 1997)


**Week 9: Monday November 22**

**Outstripped History: F.L. Wright and the Psychologized Vernacular**

1900-1920s: Arts and Crafts; Progressive vs. conservative politics of design; regionalism and global culture; “household science” and the women's movement; prefabrication, mail-order and the aesthetics of invention.

Required:
- Frank Lloyd Wright, "Building the New House," from *An Autobiography* (1932), 164-71

Textbook:
- Gelernter, 117-225.

Important books of the period:
- Greene and Greene Architects, Architectural drawings collection at Avery Library.

Recommended:
Reyner Banham *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* (Chicago, 1969)


Esther McCoy, *Five California Architects* (New York, 1960)


**Monday Nov. 22 Buell Center Special Evening Lecture:**


**Week 10: Monday November 29th**

**Aestheticized History: American Beaux Arts and the City Beautiful**

Academic Eclecticism and homogeneity; the aesthetics of progressivism and cosmopolitanism; architecture and urbanism for bourgeois crowds; palaces for culture and commerce; the emergence of an American architectural profession.

**Required:**

Herbert Croly, "New York as the American Metropolis," *Architectural Record* 13(1904), 193-206


Sharon Irish, *Cass Gilbert: Modern Traditionalist* (New York, 1999), 74-113


**Textbook:**

Gelernter, 190-205.

**Important Books:**


Ernest Flagg, *The École des Beaux Arts,* (New York, 1894)
Plan of Chicago prepared under the direction of the Commercial Club during the years MCMVI, MCMVII, and MCMVIII, by Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, architects; ed. by Charles Moore (Chicago, The Commercial Club, 1909)

Recommended:

John Belle and Maxinne Leighton Grand Central Terminal Gateway (New York, 2000)


Leland M. Roth, McKim, Mead & White, Architects (New York, 1983)

Abigail A. Van Slyck, Free to All: Carnegie Libraries &American Culture (Chicago, 1996)

William H. Wilson, The City Beautiful Movement (Baltimore, 1989)

Max Page, The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940 (Chicago, 1999)


Week 11: Monday December 6th

Original History: The Chicago School and America’s Heartland.

Inventing the skyscraper through the integration of new technologies and the reorganization of office-work; the consolidation of the skyline and the central business district; Mnemonic devices

Required:


Daniel Bluestone, Constructing Chicago (New Haven, 1991), 104-151

Carol Willis, Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago (New York, 1995), 67-89


Textbook:
Gelernter, 205-216.

Important Books:
H. H. (Henry Hobson) Richardson, *Designs for new county buildings, Allegheny County, Penn.*, (17 photoengravings in album 56 x 76 cm.), [1885?]
John Nolen, city planner, Hale J. Walker--Justin R. Hartzog, associates, *A comprehensive city plan for San Diego, California, prepared for the City planning commission, the Harbor commission, the Park commission of San Diego, [San Diego] 1926.*
Hon. William E. Cameron, *History of the World's Columbian exposition,* (Chicago, Columbian history company, 1893)

Recommended:
Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York, 1982).

**Week 12: Monday December 13th**

**Sublime History: Arcadia**

History and Modernity; Colonial Revival; Post Civil War trauma; Memorials and Expositions; Experiencing History as Depression or Euphoria; the emergence of preservation consciousness in design and culture. The Refinement of America; Nature, Ethics, and Architecture; Queen Anne and the “Shingle Style” in American suburbia;
industrial standards redefine human comforts; multi-family living in apartment-hotels and tenements.

Required:
- Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (New York, 1981), pp. 93-113
- Margaret Floyd, Architecture after Richardson: Regionalism before Modernism (Chicago, 1994)

Textbook:
- Gelernter, 166-189.

Important Books:
- O'Gorman, James F., H. H. Richardson and his office, a centennial of his move to Boston, 1874 : selected drawings (Cambridge, Mass.: Dept. of Printing and Graphic Arts, Harvard College Library, 1974.)
- John McArthur Jr., [ for the Philadelphia (Pa.). Commissioners for the Erection of the Public Buildings. Joint Committee of Investigation], Report and proceedings of the Joint Committee of Investigation, appointed by the Commissioners for the Erection of the Public Buildings, to inquire as to charges and complaints made respecting the materials supplied and manner of construction of the public buildings of the city of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pa.: Press of Henry B. Ashmead, 1876).

Recommended:
- Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1876-1913 (Chicago, 1980)
- Clifford E. Clark, Jr., The American Family Home (Chapel Hill, 1986)
- Jessica Foy and Thomas Schlereth, American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services (Knoxville, 1992)
- Randolph Delehanty and Richard Sexton, In the Victorian Style (San Francisco, 1991)
- Elizabeth Cromley, Alone Together: New York's Early Apartments (Ithaca, 1990)