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Assistant Professor

Graduate Course
ARC 388R/ CRP 388 /AMS 391
Fall 2018
Thursday 2-5 West Mall Building 101

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U.S. Cultural Landscapes and Ethnographic Methods

What is a cultural landscape and how can landscape and building elements narrate unique histories of people and place? This class is organized around discrete methods used to investigate the history of everyday places. This includes archival research (architectural plans, town plats, aerial photographs, Sanborn maps, city directories, building permits), and architectural analysis (walking a building plan, and analyzing buildings *in situ* using Google Maps and on-site observation). A fundamental premise of this class is that spatial research (of buildings, places, and cities) is inherently social research (of people as envisioners and users of space). Thus, we fold ‘light ethnography’ (site observation, informal conversations, and formal interviews) into our methodological toolkit. These research methods will be used to address the form, style, and context of buildings types and landscape elements at multiple scales—from the assembling of the American grid to the building and inhabitation of individuals’ workers cottages—to examine 19th and 20th century U.S. built environment history. The American landscape, i.e. bungalows, shopping malls, libraries, courthouses, plazas, apartments, the grid, is a composite of overlapping building types and landscape elements that embody social, political, and cultural processes. Our micro exploration of one building type or landscape element points toward the larger histories, identities, and cultural transformations of individuals who are often excluded from canonical histories. Each student will conduct a research project that examines one building or landscape element **in Austin** using the mixed methods explored in class. We will workshop possible arguments related to this building in class as a group and approach class projects in an experimental fashion that promotes critical processes rather than finalized products.

Course Goals:

- * reading buildings in their spatial context
- * using archival sources (maps, deeds, wills, directories)
- * critical engagement with city through observation, mapping, interviews
- * social interpretations of architectural representations
- *repeating methodological inquiry, “how would we research this?”
- *spatial detective

Course Requirements:

1. Class Attendance and Readings: Students are expected to attend classes regularly and to discuss the readings. Since we do not meet the final week of class, only one absence is permitted. Please contact me ahead of class if you have to miss more class due to a medical issue. More than one unexcused absence will automatically lower your grade by one whole letter.

* See Canvas website for syllabus, handouts and readings, all materials under “module.”

2. There are weekly course assignments that revolve around one building or a particular landscape element. Throughout the class students research the history and meaning of one building. Each week (see below) spells out the assignment. The reading load is light on purpose to give students the opportunity to do research.

3. Quick Building History or/and Interview with local resident/shop owner for Tour 2: city directories and Sanborns, analysis of the building itself, any relevant context.

4. Context Workshop Presentation: During the last 3 weeks of class, students will present their one building for 5-7 minutes and we discuss it as a group for 10. Students will use a template for presenting that I provide in advance. We will brainstorm how to turn each site into a full fledged research project, what arguments can be made? How would we structure the research? What is the context at hand?

5. Urban Drift II and Reflection Piece: see last week for full explanation. This is a long, smart, letter to me and to your future-self describing the content and take-aways of the course, and the meaning of the built environment as you see it.

there are **THREE urban walking tours during class time.*

**required text:*

Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs* (Harvard: Harvard University Press). Available at the University Coop.

Grading Structure

Attendance and Participation (reading discussion): 30%

Short Weekly Assignments and Context Presentation (derive, quick building history, interview I and II, city directories, Sanborns, etc): 50%

Reflection Piece: 20%

Office Hours: By appt., Sutton 2.118, and Wednesday's 12-1pm.

**I reserve the right to change the syllabus according to group discussion/needs. Please look out for e-mails I send or canvas updates regarding any changes to the syllabus.

WEEK 1

August 30

Subject: Introduction to the History of the Built Environment (Cultural Landscapes / Vernacular Architecture / Ordinary Landscapes)

Subject: Nuts and bolts of Cultural Landscape Studies and Why Methods.

Reading:

- Groth, Paul, "Frameworks for Cultural Landscapes Studies," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, eds. Groth and Bressi, 1-24.

Going Further:

- Thomas Carter, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture* (ch. 1)
- Paul Groth and Chris Wilson, *Everyday America* (ch. 1)
- Groth, "New Connections in Vernacular Architecture"
- Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, and *Topophilia*
- Cosgrove, "New Directions in Cultural Geography"
- Upton, "Architecture and Everyday Life"

*In class exploration: Examples of "building types" in Austin.

WEEK 2

September 6

Marking the Land

Subject: Initial Settlement, City and Nation Gridding

Reading:

- Hildegard Binder Johnson, "Gridding a national landscape," *Making the American Landscape* (142-161)
- Dell Upton, "The Grid and the Republican Spatial Imagination," *Another City* (113-144).
- Guy Debord, *Theory of the Dérive*, 1958 (read this BEFORE you do your assignment for the week)

*In class exploration: USGS digital and hard-copy maps (also note: Google, and satellite imagery). How can we read maps for built environment histories, and how do digital maps compare to paper maps? Demonstrate how to overlay historic maps with contemporary maps to glean rate of change.

Assignment: Dérive (Wander through the city with no planned itinerary or expectations. The mode of wandering is on foot. Do the best you can to drop your ordinary motivations for urban navigation and open yourself to the atmospheric qualities of space and place. You may want to take notes, photographs, or make drawings while in the 'field', or

reflect after the fact. There is no right way to do this Send me one slide of your representation of the experience the morning of class by 12pm).

WEEK 3

September 13

National Infrastructure

Subject: The Post Office and Post Roads: defining civic infrastructure, rural-urban connections, national ideologies

Reading:

- Gray Brechin, "The fading genius of the US post office," (1)
- Jesse Vogler, "Correct and Perfect," unpublished, (1-16)
- *NYT*, "A Fight for Post Offices and Town's Souls" (4)
- *NYT*, "Post Office Buildings with Character and Maybe a Sales Price" (3)
- William Whyte, "How do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture," *History and Theory*, 153-177.

Going Further:

- David Henkin, *The Postal Age*
- Dell Upton, "Architectural History or Landscape History?"

*In class exploration: Sanborn Maps (how to), and USGS, where.

Assignment: Initial in situ and web observation of case study building. Choose a building or specific place as your semester long case study (if the site you choose now changes, that is okay but give it thought). Go to the building and observe how the place used for one hour. If you are not able to enter, observe the building skin, footprint, location, details, and form. Next, "check out" your building on-line for reviews or websites. Write a one paragraph summary of initial observation (for your notes, do not turn in) and be prepared to discuss.

WEEK 4

September 20

Victorian Landscapes and Streetcar Suburbs

TOUR: Meet in Hyde Park, 2:20, exact corner TBA.

Subject: Spatialization of housing by class, historical development of neighborhoods

Reading:

- Sam Bass Warner, "Streetcar Suburbs" (Ch. 1-5, pgs. 1-116, glance at the "suburban architecture" section on pg. 141)
- Shoppell's Modern Houses, ad from 1880s (3)

*In class exploration: Walking Tour of our Streetcar Suburb

Assignment: Find your building in Sanborn, check if there are multiple years, create a file with your building and a few tiles from the surrounding streets. If Sanborn does not record your area, use Google Maps and USGS to try and get a sense of the built and environmental context of your site. Create a one-sheet document that shows your sight (screen capture of the Sanborn or Google) and lists relevant features and patterns nearby that you notice. Email to me by the start of class, but we will not discuss, this is for your files.

WEEK 5

September 27

Central Business District and Main Street

Subject: Downtown and Main Street

Reading:

- Gabrielle Esperdy, *Modernizing Main Street* (Intro, Ch. 1 and 4)

In class exploration: *Austin History Center*, a resource, City Directories and historic Newspapers...How and why?

Assignment: Establishing research connections. Is there anybody you can talk to about the history of your site, or are there specific people who use the site that may share their perspective? If there are workers, owners, or clients, make informal introductions with personnel. Explain the class, and your assignment of writing a history of the site and its current use. If they are open, ask initial questions, and explore the possibility of a future interview. When you are doing this, sketch a plan of the site noting how it is used (yes, even if you are not an architecture student!).

WEEK 6

October 4

Commercial and Civic Landscapes in Austin

TOUR: Meet at west entrance to Sutton Hall for tour of Guadalupe Street

Reading:

- Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They are Built*, ch. 1, 2-23.

In class exploration: City Directory Information about your building from Austin History Center (AHC) and other materials.

Assignment: at the AHC record the history of ownership/occupancy of your building for your files using City Directories. You can see if they have other materials on your site as well. Note, this is a hinge week with very light reading, and the assignment is “in class,” so use it to catch up on other previous or upcoming assignments.

WEEK 7

October 11

Multi-person Housing

Subject: Apartments / Tenements / SROs

- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1-7)
- Paul Groth, *Living Downtown*, Outsiders and Cheap Lodging Houses (131-167)
- NYT's, Dasani series (5 parts on-line, narrative read, see “files” or view at <http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/invisible-child/#/?chapt=1>)
- Sen and Silverman, “Intro: Embodied Placemaking: An Important Category of Critical Analysis,” in *Making Place* (1-18)

For reference:

- Low, Setha. *Spatializing Culture: Ethnographies of Space and Place*, (Intro, and ch. 5)

In class exploration: Interviewing.

*Assignment: Historic information (Austin History Center, House files, Statesmen Articles, **Building Permits** for Construction Work, Deeds). Compile a one-sheet narrative about the changes in ownership and/or historic findings, email to me by 12p.m.*

WEEK 8

October 18

Ethnicity and the Built Environment

Subject: Migration Spaces

Reading:

- Bruce Berg, “A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing,” in *Qualitative Research Methods for Social Sciences*. (skim 29-64)
- James Rojas, “Enacted Environment: Examining the Streets and Yards of East Los Angeles,” in *Everyday America* (2003): 275-292.

- Arijit Sen, *Transcultural Placemaking: Intertwined Spaces of Sacred and Secular on Devon Avenue, Chicago* (31-62)
- Dell Upton, Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Invented Traditions, *Historical Archeology* (1997): 1-7.

Going Further:

- "Transnational Performances in Chicago's Independence Day Parade," *Transnational Cities: Past into Present*, Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz and Nancy H. Kwak (Eds.), (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017)
- "Awe and Order: Ethno-Architecture in Everyday Life," in *Ethno-Architecture and the Politics of Migration*, Mirjana Lozanovska (editor), (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis/Routledge, 2015), p. 151-164.

In class exploration: Interviewing II, discuss issues and strategies (cognitive mapping as interview strategy) and practice. And, choose your site for Chicon Tour.

Assignment: Formal interview (if their schedule permits). If you don't have a person to talk with, interview anybody about the site you choose. Practice asking people questions and learning how to elicit answers. Be prepared to discuss in class.

WEEK 9

October 25

Workers Housing, Urban Segregation and Spaces of Solidarity

TOUR: Meet at Chicon Street, time and place TBA.

Subject: Workers Cottages and Speculative Housing

Reading:

- Eliot Tretter. *Restricted Austin, Texas: Progressivism, Zoning, Private Racial Covenants, and the Making of a Segregated City* (70, many pictures)
- Sarah McTarnaghan, "Development and Displacement: Single Family Home Demolitions in Central East Austin," *Planning Forum* (47-65).

In class exploration: Students give a tour, each responsible for one building along the street.

Assignment: Prepare for the tour using Sanborns, City Directories, Google Maps, Historic Newspapers, and/or formal analysis.

WEEK 10

November 1st

Public Infrastructure

Subject: Prisons and Civic Environments

Reading:

- Mary Ryan, “A Laudable Pride in the Whole of Us:” City Halls and Civic Materialism, *American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 4 (Oct., 2000): 1131-1170.
- Jackson-Retondo, “Manufacturing Moral Reform: Images and Realities of a Nineteenth-Century American Prison” (117-137)
- Sperry, “Is Justice Architecture Just?,” *Aggregate*, 1-5.

Going Further:

- Tocqueville, *On Penitentiary*
- Robin Evans, *English Prisons*

In class exploration: Built Environment Research Questions and Building an Argument

Assignment: Depending on the particularities of your site, either do another interview, another installment of observation, or a visual representation (cognitive map or Sanborn mapping). Also, identify how the social story and the spatial story do or do not align. Submit a one paragraph summary and any representations by email of this installment.

WEEK 11

November 8

Workers’ Landscapes

Subject: Company town to Corporate Outposts—the architecture of capitalism

Reading:

- Herod, Andrew, “Social Engineering Through Spatial Engineering” in *Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working-Class Communities* (ch. 1, 21-44)
- Jesse Vogler, “Company Towns,” theamericanbottom.org (15)
- Jesse LeCavilier, “Patrons and Prototypes: Walmart’s Catalytic Urbanism” (27-35)

Going Further:

- Jesse LeCavilier, *The Rule of Logistics: Walmart and the Architecture of Fulfillment*

In class exploration: Context 1 Workshop (Built Environment Argument, Austin Context)

Assignment: 6 or so students will present their site, they will end with inquietudes and questions, and as a class we will brainstorm how to push the argument and context of the exploration further.

WEEK 12

November 15

Suburbs

Subject: Post War Suburbs

Reading:

- Margaret Ruth Little, “Getting the Dream for Themselves: Postwar Modern Subdivisions for African Americans in Raleigh, North Carolina,” *Buildings & Landscapes* (73-85)
- Diane Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Intro, 1-25, also ch. 1, 27-58, is posted for reference only)
- Becky Nicholaides and James Zasadiatz, “Design Assimilation in Suburbia: Asian Americans, Built Landscapes, and Suburban Advantage,” *Journal of Urban History* (332-371)

Going Further

- Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia*

Exploration: Context 2 Workshop (Built Environment Argument, Austin Context)

Assignment: 6 or so students will present their site, they will end with inquietudes and questions, and as a class we will brainstorm how to push the argument and context of the exploration further. How can this group build upon the discuss we had last week?

WEEK 13

November 22

THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14

November 29

Summation

Readings: NONE

Exploration: Context 3 Workshop (Built Environment Argument, Austin Context)

Assignment: 6 or so students will present their site, they will end with inquietudes and questions, and as a class we will brainstorm how to push the argument and context of the exploration further. How can this group build upon the previous two discussions?

Assignment for everybody: Derive II. After you finish the derive, take time to reflect on how your experience of the surrounding landscape compared with the first time you did an urban drift/derive. From this comparative place, reflect on your experiences in this class. Write an INFORMAL (informal does not mean unedited, it means loose and experimental, but still smart, tight, good writing) 5-page double-spaced reflection piece on how you currently think about the built environment, on aspects of doing built environment research that you like (and what is of value?), that you question (and what seem problematic?), on what your current burning questions are. How did you think about the built environment before this class started? You may write this up as an op-ed style narrative, "Reflecting on the built environment as a Graduate Student of _____" or as a letter to me, or your future self. Make it clear who this write-up is intended for.

Week 15: December 6

NO CLASS

Websites:

UT historic map collection: <https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/>

The Portal to Texas History (which is linked to the Austin history Center and includes digitized images/newspapers/etc): <https://texashistory.unt.edu/>