The Duke University Chapel is constructed in an English Gothic architectural style, though located in central North Carolina [1]. It was completed in 1932 – approximately seven to eight centuries after the height of Gothic architecture in Europe [2]. With a tower that is 210 feet tall, the Chapel acts as a focal point on Duke University’s West Campus and as a beacon in western portions in Durham, North Carolina. This was by design; James Buchanan Duke commissioned the building in 1925 as a “central” built monument on the university campus to be “a great towering church which will dominate all surrounding buildings” in order to promote reflection, spiritual life, and intellectual pursuit amongst students [1]. Duke awarded the commission to the architectural firm Horace Trumbauer (Philadelphia), and Julian Abele – a famed African American architect from the firm – took on design responsibilities. [1] As a university church space, the Duke Chapel embodies *erudito et religio* – knowledge and faith – for students and community members [3].

The Chapel’s structure (exterior) is constructed of flagstones that were quarried in Hillsborough, North Carolina, at the Duke Quarry [4]. James Buchanan Duke bought the quarry in 1925 [4]. With its tower that rises above the rolling, wooded topography, and its exterior constructed of local stone, the Duke Chapel is a space for the university and surrounding community. (The interior of the Chapel is also constructed of Indiana limestone and Guastavino tile. [1])

The value of *erudito et religio* can be seen in the portal sculptures. The southeast-facing main entrance to the Chapel is adorned with sculptures of Methodist missionaries and preachers – Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, and George Whitefield – and American intellectuals – Sidney Lanier and Thomas Jefferson – in niches [1]. Medieval Gothic ecclesiastic architecture included cathedrals, churches (including parish churches), and abbeys. Many of these European structures contained relics and reliquaries of martyrs, saints, and the true cross; these locations would often become sites of pilgrimage, and Christians would make journeys to these relics for sanctified worship. Abbeys were monasteries were clergymen lived largely ascetic lifestyles and – in some instances – produced illuminated manuscripts. Additionally, the Gothic architectural style can be seen in medieval universities and civic buildings. The Duke University Chapel is not a space of pilgrimage, devotion, or piety as ecclesiastic spaces would be understood to medieval Christians. In fact, the Chapel’s portal sculptures feature Methodist missionaries – a denomination that did not gain a foothold until the 18th century. Instead, it is a space where *erudito et religio* meet.

Once inside the Chapel, the structure’s rib vaulting, stained glass windows depicting biblical scenes, and altar visually dominate the space. As one moves in the nave, from a pew down the central aisle towards the crossing (such as in the act of receiving communion during a Catholic service), the height (73 feet) and length (291 feet, including the altar and choir) of the chapel are apparent [1]. On the altar, the chancel is decorated with sculptures of biblical figures. In these details, the interior embraces *religio*, though it is also embedded in university history and culture. Entombed in the Memorial Chapel are members of the Duke family, including Washington Duke, James Buchanan Duke, and Benjamin Duke. Moreover, former university presidents are interred in the Memorial Chapel’s crypt [1]. While European Gothic structures entomb and inter important figures in the ecclesiastic community, the Memorial Chapel’s inclusion of important figures in Duke University’s history renders a palpable connection to the university. The Memorial Chapel is located off of the transept and to the left of the chancel.

As one moves about the Duke University Chapel, its more secular elements become apparent in the experience of the space. Entering through the portal and across the narthex, the chapel’s citation of American intellectual heritage, and the Duke University brand, are apparent [5]. Within the nave, the space takes on a more typical Christian atmosphere and Gothic spatiality. The Duke University brand, history, and connection become more apparent in the Memorial Chapel and near exits off the transepts. Indeed, the Chapel is inherently embedded within the university ecosystem and reflects the heritage of the property on which it stands.

[1] “History & Architecture” *Duke University Chapel*. <https://chapel.duke.edu/about-chapel/history-architecture>. Accessed February 5, 2022.

[2] Julien Chapuis, “Gothic Art.” In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2000-  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mgot/hd_mgot.htm> (October 2002).

[3] *Erudito et religio* is the Duke University motto.

[4] “Duke Quarry” *Open Orange*. <https://openorangenc.org/content/duke-quarry>. Accessed February 5, 2022.

[5] The accessible entrance to the chapel is located off of the right (east-facing) transept; it does not proceed through the portal and narthex.