

CourseNo: ARCHA4341_001_2013_1
Meeting Location: AVERY HALL 114
Meeting Time: T 11:00A-01:00P

Instructor Information:

[Jorge Otero-Pailos](#)

Course Description:

This course is a survey of American Twentieth Century Architecture. As America ascended to a position of hegemony during the 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 a national history of cultural achievements on par with Europe. 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 efforts of American architects 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 during the twentieth century. 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 reasons why a new style or a new type of building emerged in a particular moment, including suburban houses, high rise apartment and office buildings, commercial strips, corporate campuses, landscapes, and cities. 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 course will interrogate the writing of American architectural history. You will be encouraged to consider why historians have written on this subject, and to take a critical position with regards to their work. Why are you interested in the past? How is your 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 sessions outside of class in which we will meet in small groups in Avery Library to discuss specific topics in relation to archival drawings.

Textbooks:

Required books:

Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History*, (Boulder: Icon Editions, Westview Press, 2001).

Suggested books:

Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1998)

Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture's Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern*, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

Class Reader: Required class readings are posted as pdfs on Courseworks in the Syllabus section

Assignments and Grading:

Building Fiche 25 %

Create a chronology of the lifespan of a modern building, including when it was built, altered, and (in some instances) demolished. Find images of the building at different points in its life. Then use that information to complete a fiche for your building according to the DOCOMOMO standard. Your statement about the history of the building should describe its full chronology. DUE: FEBRUARY 12

Paper Abstract, Outline and bibliography 25%

With knowledge of the facts gained from writing the fiche, write a 200 word paper abstract/landscape, clearly stating your thesis. Your paper should interpret the history of the building/landscape within a larger context of your choice (e.g. the disciplinary, political, cultural or economic context of the time). Include a bibliography with 3-5 primary and 5-10 secondary sources. DUE: MARCH 05

Final Paper: 50%

Write a research paper, between 4500 and 5000 words (in Times New Roman, 12 point, double spaced). DUE: APRIL 23