

ARTH 371: American Architecture and Material Culture

3 credit hours. Studies in the history of American architecture or decorative arts in cultural context.

Class meeting: Tu/Th 3:00-4:15

Classroom: Horizon Hall 3012

Instructor: Dr. Vanessa Schulman

Office Hours: virtual by appointment

Email: vschulma@gmu.edu

Office: Horizon Hall 3158

The Basics

Course Description

Architecture encloses the spaces where we live, work, and play, and material culture consists of the things we use in our daily lives. These art forms have been called the “arts of the everyday,” but they also communicate important social and political meanings. In this class, we will ask how people in North America have built their homes and decorated their spaces, clothed their bodies and organized their cities. This course will examine the architecture and material culture of the lands that became the United States, from the pre-colonial period to the present. By looking thematically at urban design, architecture, furniture, and fashion, we can better understand the diversity of lived American experiences in historical context.

Course Materials

The following textbook is available to unlimited logged-in GMU users through Fenwick e-books: Leland M. Roth and Amanda C. Roth Clark, *American Architecture: A History*, 2nd. edition (2016). Additional short readings will be available as PDFs or links on the Blackboard (BB) site.

Mason Core

This course satisfies the Arts requirement in Mason Core. Students who successfully complete a course in the Arts category will meet the learning outcomes listed on the Mason Core homepage at <https://masoncore.gmu.edu/arts-2/>

Class Learning Goals

By participating in this course, students should meet the following goals:

- synthesize information to articulate critical responses to buildings and texts
- analyze and evaluate plans, sections, elevations, and photographs of architectural sites
- develop skills of academic communication, both written and oral
- evaluate primary source documents by architects and designers
- gain awareness of major movements and stylistic forms in the history of architecture

Class Communication

I will send communications to your GMU email only. It is the student’s responsibility to read and follow up on all emails. I try to respond to all emails within 36-48 hours, but if you do not hear back from me after that time, please send a follow-up to vschulma@gmu.edu.

Enrollment

You must be enrolled to attend this class and to access materials and assignments on the BB site. Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes:

Last day to add: Mon. 1/31

Last day to drop: Mon. 2/7

Last day to drop with 50% refund: Mon. 2/14

Withdrawal period: Tues. 2/15 – Tues. 3/1

Selective withdrawal period: Wed. 3/2 – Mon. 4/11

Assignments and Evaluation of Student Work

There are 600 possible points to earn. These points equate to the following grades:

A+ (588-600 pts)	A (558-587 pts)	A- (540-557 pts)
B+ (522-539 pts)	B (498-521 pts)	B- (480-497 pts)
C+ (462-479 pts)	C (438-461 pts)	C- (420-437 pts)
D (360-419 pts)	F (0-359 pts)	

Your grade will be calculated as a running total and all grades will be posted on BB My Grades.

Breakdown of points

Illustrated Essay = 75 pts

Three mini-projects, at 50 pts each = 150 pts

Three in-class group activities, at 25 pts each = 75 pts

Two midterm exams and one final exam, at 100 pts each = 300 pts

Explanation of assignments

Illustrated Essay: During weeks 1-2, we will learn some key architectural terms. You will find and photograph examples in the local community, campus, or anywhere else that illustrate **seven** key words of your choice. You will photograph the element, note where it was found, and define the key term it illustrates. This assignment is due Tues. 2/8. Full instructions are on BB.

Mini-Projects: Throughout the semester, you will complete three short writing assignments of around 300-400 words each. These mini-projects are designed to get you thinking creatively about the architecture and material culture all around you. There are **five** mini-project options and you can choose **any three** of them. Due dates are Thurs. 2/24, Thurs. 3/10, Tues. 4/5, Thurs. 4/21, and Tues. 5/3. Full instructions for each project are on BB.

In-Class Activities: During some class days, we will engage in group work to enrich our understanding of focused, thematic topics. Small groups of students will have about 30 minutes to work together to research and prepare a “flash presentation” (about 3 minutes) to give to the rest of the class. Flash presentations will be in class on Thurs. 2/17, Thurs. 3/24, and Thurs. 4/14.

Exams: Two written midterm exams will be given in class on Tues. 3/1 and Thurs. 4/7. The midterm format will consist of image IDs and a comparison essay. The final exam will be given on Thurs. 5/12 at 1:30 PM (date and time set by the Registrar’s Office). The format will be the same as the midterms with the addition of a longer essay.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

I have a **zero tolerance** policy for academic dishonesty, whether intentional or not. Students who violate standards of academic honesty will earn a zero for the assignment and may risk failing the course or being subject to disciplinary action. More information at <https://oai.gmu.edu>

Attendance Policy

I understand that life is complicated and sometimes class conflicts with your responsibilities. Attendance is not required, though frequent attendance (combined with good note-taking) is the best way to do well in this course. You do not need to notify me if you will be missing lecture. I will take daily attendance only with the goal of noticing unusual patterns of absence and reaching out to students who may be struggling.

Submitting Written Work

Written work submitted to BB is date-stamped in Eastern Time. It is your responsibility to ensure submissions are properly uploaded and submitted. I will not accept work that is emailed or sent as a link. You may type your work into BB's submission function or upload as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file.

Extensions and Late Work

A one-time extension on any writing assignment *may* be granted in extenuating circumstances. To request an extension, you must contact me in writing at least two business days before the due date. There is no penalty for taking an extension. Unexcused late work is penalized -10% per 24 hours past the due date. This applies to writing assignments. See below for policies on other missed work.

Missed In-Class Work

If you miss in-class group work, it can only be made up *at the discretion of the instructor* and with appropriate written documentation. If you need to miss class on a day when there is a group activity, contact me ahead of time whenever possible.

Missed or Postponed Tests

Exams may be rescheduled without penalty in case of serious illness or emergency, religious observance, or longstanding academic or professional obligations. Please give as much advance notice as possible and be prepared to show documentation in writing. Any other reasons for missing an exam (overslept, missed bus, etc.) will incur a -20 point penalty on a make-up. If you miss an exam and do not contact me within 24 hours, it will become an automatic zero.

GMU policies allow you to request to reschedule a final exam if you have more than two exams scheduled on the same day; or two exams scheduled at the same time (rare). Please notify me at least four weeks before the final exam date if either of these cases applies to you.

Support Resources for Students

Accommodations

Disability Services (DS) at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Students can begin the registration process with DS at any time during their enrollment at George Mason. Visit <https://ds.gmu.edu>, email ods@gmu.edu or call 703-993-2474. I am committed to providing all approved accommodations. Provide a copy of your letter as early as possible in the semester to assist me in implementing your accommodations in a timely fashion.

LGBTQ+ Resources

LGBTQ+ Resources “works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies.” <https://lgbtq.gmu.edu>

Diversity

By fostering willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources, we gain competence in communication, critical thinking, and global understanding. The Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment provides support for an inclusive campus. <https://ccee.gmu.edu>

Emotional and Mental Support

College life and our current reality are complicated. Students may find it helpful to talk with a professional. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help address both personal and academic concerns. Services are free and confidential. <https://caps.gmu.edu>

Bereavement

Students dealing with loss are encouraged to speak with the Dean of Student Academic Life for their College. The Dean's office can help you contact your professors and deal with the academic challenges of bereavement. CHSS students contact chssdean@gmu.edu.

Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

GMU is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment free from discrimination and a campus free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence to promote community well-being and student success. As a designated "Responsible Employee," I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator. <https://diversity.gmu.edu/sexual-misconduct>

Course Calendar

Date	Class Meeting Topics	Read Before Class	Turn In
Tues. 1/25	Policies and Expectations	Go over syllabus/BB site	
Thurs. 1/27	What is Architecture? What Makes it Stand Up?	(PDF) Leland M. Roth, <i>Understanding Architecture</i> , pp. 1-5, 19-43	
Tues. 2/1	Architectural Terminology: Space, Function, and Visual Elements	(PDF) Leland M. Roth, <i>Understanding Architecture</i> , pp. 9-17, 45-55, <u>skim</u> 65-80	
Unit One: Pre-Contact and Colonial America			
Thurs. 2/3	Pre-Contact Indigenous Architecture and Urbanism	Roth and Clark, 1-16	
Tues. 2/8	Post-Contact Indigenous Architecture	Roth and Clark, 17-26	Illustrated Essay due at 11:59 PM
Thurs. 2/10	Spanish Colonial Architecture and Urbanism	Roth and Clark, 37-41	
Tues. 2/15	Architecture, Furniture, and Urbanism in Colonial New England and Virginia	Roth and Clark, 49-67	
Thurs. 2/17	Inclusive and Exclusive Spaces: Group Work 1 in class	Bring a device for group work	Flash presentations at end of class
Tues. 2/22	Georgian Architecture and Interior Design	Roth and Clark, 69-70, 73-79, 86-88, 94-96, 107-109; Daniel Ackermann, "American Georgian Interiors"	
Thurs. 2/24	Colonial Stuff: Consumer Goods, Fashion, Textiles, and Decorative Arts	David Jaffee, "Art and Identity in the British North American Colonies, 1700-1776"	Mini-Project Option 1: Visual Analysis of a Building, due at 11:59 PM
Tues. 3/1	Midterm Exam 1 in class		

Unit Two: The Early Republic through 1900			
Thurs. 3/3	The Architecture of the Early Republic	Roth and Clark, 117-127, 130-137, 140-147	
Tues. 3/8	Vernacular Architecture, Race, and Power	John Michael Vlach, "The Plantation Landscape"	
Thurs. 3/10	The Age of Revivals, 1820-1865	Roth and Clark, 161-170, 183-191, 193-198	Mini-Project Option 2: Architecture and Identity, due at 11:59 PM
Spring Break (no class 3/15 and 3/17)			
Tues. 3/22	Walk around campus (weather permitting)	Wear comfy shoes! Roth and Clark, 207-214, 245-248	
Thurs. 3/24	Nature and Culture: Group Work 2 in class	Bring a device for group work	Flash presentations at end of class
Tues. 3/29	The Gilded Age: Public Buildings	Roth and Clark, 225-241, 266-273, 302-310	
Thurs. 3/31	The Gilded Age: Furniture, Décor, and Consumerism	Kenneth L. Ames, "First Impressions: Front Halls and Furnishings in Victorian America"	
Tues. 4/5	An Alternative to all the Overstuffed Stuff: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Design and Fashion	Monica Obniski, "The Arts and Crafts Movement in America"; University of Missouri, "Arts and Crafts (Re)Forms: Reform and Aesthetic Dress"	Mini-Project Option 3: Object Biography, due at 11:59 PM
Thurs. 4/7	Midterm Exam 2 in class		
Unit Three: The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries			
Tues. 4/12	The Birth of the Tall Office Building	Roth and Clark, 279-280, 284-297; Louis Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered"	
Thurs. 4/14	Back to the Future: Group Work 3 in class	Bring a device for group work	Flash presentations at end of class
Tues. 4/19	Frank Lloyd Wright	Roth and Clark, 316-328, 396-405, 452-454; Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Nature of Materials"	

Thurs. 4/21	Art Deco and Jazz Age Modernism	Roth and Clark, 372-374, 384-396	Mini-Project Option 4: Primary Source Evaluation, due at 11:59 PM
Tues. 4/26	High Modernism	Roth and Clark, 405-409, 427-442, 447-451	
Thurs. 4/28	Brutalism, Organic Modernism, and Countercultural Forms	Roth and Clark, 454-459; Peter Hjersman, "Dome Notes"	
Tues. 5/3	Postmodern Architecture and Design	Roth and Clark, 499-500, 513-518, 522-541, 548-555	Mini-Project Option 5: Zillow Blurb, due at 11:59 PM
Thurs. 5/5	Current Trends in Architecture, Course Evaluations	Roth and Clark, 581-608; bring a device for course evaluations	
Thurs. 5/12	<u>Final Exam, 1:30 PM*</u>		

*This date and time are set by the Registrar's Office. Double check exam location/time on GMU Final Exam Locator.