ARCH 6231: Architecture, Landscape, and History in the American West.
Fall Semester 2007. Monday, Wednesday from 10:45am to 12:05pm, AAC Room 227.
Instructor: Thomas Carter. Office hours Mondays from 1:30-3:30pm, or by appointment at tcarter@arch.utah.edu

Course Description

The intent of this course is to propose a method for studying the cultural landscape of the western United States. Cultural landscapes are human-produced environments which include buildings but also such things as town plans, streets and fields, work spaces and campgrounds, civic monuments and cemeteries, public and household art, and even furniture. In short, when we speak of cultural landscapes we are referring to the totality of the built environment, even though we may choose to focus our research attention on but a small part of that larger entity (houses for instance). The advantage of adopting a cultural landscape approach to both architecture and history is that it allows us to see objects operating within larger, more all-encompassing thought processes. Cultural landscapes, as we will see, are inherently symbolic: they are material worlds that stand for conceptual systems—what we think of as structuring “ideologies.” Our work during the semester will be directed toward exploring the symbolic content of the western American cultural landscape. The time frame for the work begins in the early years of the nineteenth century with the Louisiana Purchase and extends into the present.

The underlying proposition in the class is that the cultural landscape of the western United States is best understood from the standpoint of what people have asked it to do and be. Such demands are embodied in four main cultural stories or myths—The West as Eden, The West as Commodity, the West as Conquest, and the West as Refuge—which structure symbolic life in the region and give us the landscape we see before us. Butte, Montana, will serve as a laboratory for the investigation of these materials and ideas.

Course Readings

There is no single text. Individual readings are placed on reserve in the Marriott Library. I would suggest, however, several book purchases.


Recommended (on reserve): William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, eds., Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past (New York: WW Norton, 1992). We will be reading several essays from this collection, which is on the whole an excellent survey of contemporary issues in western American history.
Recommended (on reserve): Robert Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: a New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). This is a good overview of western history and I would strongly recommend having this or some other general text in your library.


Strongly recommended (on reserve): William Cronin, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: WW Norton, 1991). Cronin’s study of Chicago and its relations with the region surrounding it remains the single-most important study in western landscape history studies and applies directly to our work in Butte.

Recommended (on reserve) Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997). An outstanding treatment of how the Santa Fee “style” was invented—a must read for every architect working in the West.


**Requirements and Grading**

Course grades will be determined on the basis of class participation, attendance, two short exams, a term research project, and in-class presentation of your project. The two exams will be an hour in length and will consist of definitions and identifications as well as several short essay-type questions dealing with the basic concepts dealt with in class. The exams are intended to keep you up on your reading and note-taking and count for 50% of your grade. Test #1 will be given on October 3rd, while #2 is schedule for the last day of the semester, which is December 6. This last test is NOT a final, but rather, an exam dealing with material from the second half of the course.

Your main effort (which counts for the other 50% of your grade) will be directed toward a term research project. This year our class research topic will be the cultural landscape of Butte, Montana. You may work alone or in teams of two on research that explores and interprets various aspects of the city’s built environment. Each person/team should choose one of the following project topics (you may devise your own but be sure to have it approved before you begin your research):

1. town planning (how did Butte come to look the way it does)
2. population patterns/enclaves (mapping race and ethnicity)
3. residential densities (urban forms)
4. contested terrain/boundaries (how space is appropriated and marked)
(5) aesthetics and palette (the stylistic use of color and texture)
(6) materials and technologies (process and product)
(7) industrial design strategies (the look of the land)
(8) commercial building typologies (main street study)
(9) boarding house/apartment typology (ideas for packing them in)
(10) pattern language (formal rhythms)
(11) Add-ons and additions (organic architecture?)

Again, I’d like you to choose from the above list if possible. Alternative topics may be proposed, but you must have permission from the instructor to proceed. Background research and reading should be accomplished before our field trip in early September.

Each person or team will submit a term paper of roughly 20-25 pages including illustrations. Remember, landscape-based history/analysis revolves around the study of objects, so your project/paper should be in some way artifactually-centered. We will talk more about this in class, but essentially this means that the built environment itself forms the primary data for your research. Fieldwork, photos, and drawings are required unless otherwise specified.

Research project grades will be based on (1) punctuality: late projects will penalized a grade per day; (2) conceptual rigor: you must put to use the ideas and methods introduced and covered during the semester; (3) originality: I expect your research to cover new ground and not merely summarize the work of others; (4) depth: your bibliography should be extensive and include references/sources other than those on the syllabus; and (5) interpretation: description is necessary but not an end in itself—your project should have a point to make about western life and culture.

Equal Opportunity

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020. CDS will work with you to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Accommodations Policy

Some of the lectures, films, readings, and presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.
Weekly Course Outline

Week 1: Introductions and Definitions

Aug 20  M  Goals, Expectations, and Assignments
Aug 22  W  Stories to Build By


Week 2: Myths and Realities

Aug 27  M  American Heroes movie and discussion
Aug 29  W  Theoretical Propositions


Week 3: Research Methods

Sept 3  M  Labor Day (no class)
Sept 5  W  Fieldwork Methods/Background on Butte, Montana


**Friday September 7 to Monday September 10, Field Trip to Butte Montana**

Leave SLC Friday morning and return Monday. Vans provided.

Schedule: Friday, drive to Butte and brief tour of the city; Saturday, fieldwork for projects; Sunday morning, open; Sunday afternoon, complete field research; Monday, return to Salt Lake City.

**Weeks 4 and 5: The West as Eden**

*Film: TBA*

Sept 10  M  No class/return from Butte
Sept 12  W  Paradise in Oregon and California


Sept 17  M  Mormons in Utah


Sept 19  W  Southern California

Week 6: The West as Resource/Commodity (Part 1)
Film: TBA
Sept 24 M Mining the West
Sept 26 W No Class (Tom’s away)


Week 7: Midterm
Oct 1 M Review
Oct 3 W Exam #1

Week 8: Fall Break
Oct 8 and 10: no class (Tom is in Ireland visiting his daughter)

Week 9: The West as Resource/Commodity (Part 2)
Oct 15 M Lumber Camps


Oct 17 W Ranching


Weeks 10 and 11: The West as America/Conquest
Film: TBA
Oct 22 M Manifest Destiny


Oct 24 W Indians

Thomas Carter, Timothy Mc Cleary, and Edward Chappell, “In the Lodge of the Chickadee: Architecture and Cultural Resistance on the Crow Indian Reservation,” in

Oct 29  M  Mexicans

Chris Wilson, “When a Room is the Hall: The Houses of West Las Vegas, New Mexico,” in Images of an American Land, 113-128; and “Pitched-Roofs Over Flat: the Emergence of a New Building Tradition in Hispanic New Mexico,” in Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture IV, ed. by Thomas Carter and Bernard Herman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 87-97.

Oct 31  W  Race and ethnicity


Weeks 12 and 13: The West as Refuge/Renewal

Film: TBA

Nov 5  M  Invented Traditions


Nov 7  W  Call of the Wild


Nov 13  M  Eco-Tourism

TBA

Nov 15  W  Spamodification

TBA
**Week 14: Thanksgiving Break**

Nov 19    No class
Nov 21    Thanksgiving

**Week 15: Project Presentations**

Nov 26    M    Presentations TBA
Nov 28    W    Presentations TBA

**Term Projects Due in Class**

**Week 16: Review and Exam #2**

Dec 4      M    Review
Dec 6      W    Exam #2