<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>instructor:</strong></th>
<th>Louis P. Nelson</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>course title:</strong></td>
<td>Early American Architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>institution:</strong></td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
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**posted date:** June 2008  
**stable URL:** [www.vafweb.org/resources/syllabi/nelson1.pdf](http://www.vafweb.org/resources/syllabi/nelson1.pdf)
Scope: This class will examine American architecture from the seventeenth century into the early nineteenth century. The class will cover a wide range of buildings, from institutional, public buildings to kitchen buildings and slave quarters. Rather than a traditional chronological narrative woven along stylistic trends, the course will concentrate on major themes that cut across geographies and ethnicities. Through a series of readings, lectures, and class fieldwork, students will also be introduced to the interpretive methods that characterize the study of early America. Themes covered in this survey include the adaptation of European building patterns to the new world, the materials and technology of traditional building, house planning, regionalism, religion, acculturation, emergent professionalism, and the design process. As a period with few architects in the modern sense of the term, our conversations will focus more on the social and cultural implications of the materials, forms, and finishes employed by the traditional cultures that constituted the early American landscape. The class will conclude with lectures that consider the architectural formation of American national identity. Although we will become familiar with the well-known examples of early American architecture, this class is designed to introduce the student to the questions and interpretive methods that have dominated the field over the last few decades.

Field Trip: There will be a half-day Saturday field trip to the Frontier Culture Museum near Staunton, Virginia. This museum has a collection of traditional Scotch-Irish, English, and German farmsteads and a nineteenth-century Virginia farmstead. It presents the unique opportunity to visit buildings from the “Old” and “New” worlds in the same day. There will be a nominal admission fee for this trip. Students are required to attend.

351 Requirements: Students in this class are expected to complete all the readings and attend all the lectures. Do not assume that lectures and readings will overlap. You will need to depend on both to succeed in the class. Students are expected to complete four A/S/R statements, write four short in-class essays, and write a research paper.

751 Requirements: In addition to the above, 551 students are expected to read four books, one for each unit, and prepare a two-page review of the book.

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<tr>
<th>Class Requirements</th>
<th>351</th>
<th>751</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 A/S/R statements</td>
<td>10% each*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 In-class Essays</td>
<td>10% each*</td>
<td>5% each</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Book Reviews</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10% each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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* the lowest grade from the A/S/R statements or the In-Class essays is dropped
**Required Text:**
Brillig Books Reader for ARH 351

**Recommended Texts:**
Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Indiana, 2000)

**ASSESSMENT/SUMMARY/REVIEW STATEMENTS:**
Students will notice that the semester is broken into four units: Architecture and Ethnicity; Politics and Religion; Houses and Social Order; and Revolutionary Changes. The student is to write for each unit an Assessment/Summary/Review statement (hereafter A/S/R). The A/S/Rs are 500-word statements that assess, summarize and/or review the readings and lectures for that unit. Each A/S/R should address one or more of the following questions:

- Are there common interpretive *themes* (not *subjects*) that seem to run through the literature of this unit?
- Do the various authors make common assumptions or ask similar questions of the buildings they study?
- Where is there consensus among the authors?
- Are any authors at odds with one another?

Each A/S/R is to be narrative, by which I mean it is a cohesive and well-written statement broken into paragraphs and unburdened with the restatement of the questions or subject headings. These statements are a test of the student’s ability to distill essential information, assess the quality of a scholarly argument, and recognize that scholarly articles are in dialogue with one another. The statements are to be NO MORE than 500 words. Part of your charge is to distill the central point(s) and communicate it clearly and concisely. The best A/S/R statements will be honed down to 500 words from much longer. If you turn in your first draft, do not expect to do well on the A/S/R. These are to be written independently and submitted via email before class on the due-date. They will not be accepted late.

To prepare for the A/S/R, I recommend that each student write a one-paragraph assessment of each article and lecture. Make this a habit; it will serve you well as you prepare the 4 A/S/Rs and as you review for the in-class essays. The assessment should summarize the essential factual information and, more importantly, should summarize the
article or lecture’s central argument. This is an exercise that is usefully done in groups and students are free to do so if they wish. In completing this exercise, students learn to distill essential information and to write concisely.

**IN-CLASS ESSAYS:**
Students will complete four short (30 minute) in-class essays. Each of the four units will end with one of these essays. For the essays, students will be shown two buildings that they have never seen before. Selecting ONLY ONE OF THE TWO, students will be asked to discuss that building in two ways. First, the student should make their best effort to situate the building in the context of the subjects covered in that unit. Does it relate to some group of buildings discussed in the lectures and/or readings? What information in the image leads you to make the associations that you do? The best answers will relate the building on the screen to specific buildings covered in the lectures or readings. In the second portion of the essay, the student will be expected to discuss the building in light of one or more of the class readings: Who might have discussed this building? What would they have said about it?

**RESEARCH PAPER:**
A complete discussion of the format and expectations for the research paper appear in a separate document. **Final Papers Due by scheduled final exam time: Wed, Dec 12 at 2:00.**

**751 BOOK REVIEWS:**
Those students enrolled in 551 will also read one book for each unit and produce a scholarly review of that book. These reviews will not only summarize the content, but will focus on distilling the central arguments and contributions of the book. Reviews might also comment on the book in light of the other readings assigned for that unit. Each review must also address the book’s weakest point(s). Students may wish to consult the book reviews found in JSAH or the Vernacular Architecture Newsletter for examples of scholarly book reviews.

**Weekly Schedule**

* can be found on ARH 351 Toolkit  
+ on reserve shelf in Kimball Library  
# in the reader

**UNIT 1: ARCHITECTURE AND ETHNICITY**

**ARH 751 book review options:**
James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*  
Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture*

**Week 1: Introduction**
Aug 29: Introduction and Native American prehistory
Week 2: English Traditions

Upton, America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups the Built America, 16-41, 55-61+

Sept 3: The Seventeenth-Century South
Sept 5: Seventeenth-Century New England

Week 3: German and Dutch Traditions

Upton, America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups the Built America, 68-74, 48-54+

Sept 10: Pennsylvania Germans
Sept 12: Dutch Architecture in the Americas

Week 4: French and Spanish Traditions

Upton, America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups the Built America, 62-67, 86-99+

Sept 17: French Architecture
Sept 19: Spanish Architecture

Sept 22: Saturday Field Trip to the Frontier Culture Museum
Week 5: African American Traditions


Upton, *America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups the Built America*, 43-47+

Sept 24: The African Architectural Experience

**Phase I of the research paper is due in class**

Sept 26: The African-American Architectural Experience

UNIT 2: RELIGION AND POLITICS

ARH 751 Book review options:
Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*
Gretchen Bugglen, *Temples of Grace*
Carl Lounsbury, *The Courthouses of Early Virginia*

Week 6: The Established Church


Oct 1: Catholicism

**Unit 1 A/S/R due before class; In-class essay**

Oct 3: Anglicanism

Week 7: Church and State


Oct 8: NO CLASS: Fall Break

Oct 10: Statehouse/Courthouse
Week 8: Orthodoxy and Dissent


Oct 15: Puritans and Congregationalists
Oct 17: Quakers and the Ephrata Cloisters

**UNIT 3: HOUSES AND SOCIAL ORDER**

ARH 751 book review options:
Bernard Herman, *Townhouse*
John Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort*
Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America*

Week 9: Georgianization and Landscapes of Power


Oct 22: Georgianization
**Unit 2 A/S/R due before class; In-class essay**
Oct 24: Landscapes of Power

Week 10: Architecture and Cultural Change: Diffusion, Creolization and Acculturation


Kniffen, “Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion,” in *Common Places*, 3-26+

Oct 29: Acculturation: Germans and the Cherokee
Oct 31: Creolization: Spanish, French, African

**Week 11: Climate, Comfort, and the Caribbean**


Michael Mulcahey, “Building for Disaster,” in *Hurricanes and Society#

Nov 5: Architecture of the “Greater Caribbean” I
Nov 7: Architecture of the “Greater Caribbean” II

**UNIT 4: REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES**

**ARH 751 book review options:**

Donna Rilling, *Making Houses, Crafting Capitalism*

Richie Garrison, *Two Carpenters: Architecture and Building in Early New England*

Maurie McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*

**Week 12: Builders and Architects**

Hubka, “Just Plain Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form,” in *Common Places*, 426-432+


Nov 12: Traditional Building Practice and Industrialization

**Unit 3 A/S/R due before class; In-class essay**

Nov 14: The Professional Architect

**Phase II: Rough draft due to first reader in class; first reader to deliver draft to second reader by Nov 16 at 5:00.**

**Week 13: The Refinement of America**

Gretchen Buggeln, “Elegance and Sensibility in the Calvinist Tradition: The First Congregational Church of Hartford, Conn.” in *Seeing Beyond the Word: Visual Arts and the Calvinist Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 429-452


Nov 19: The Refinement of America

**Phase II: Second reader to deliver rough draft to author in class**

Nov 21: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

**Week 14: The Farm and the City**


Nov 26: Neoclassicism in America

Nov 28: The Transformation of the Farm

Dec 3: The Rise of the City
Week 15
Dec 5: Class evaluations
   Unit 4 A/S/R due before class; In-class essay

Dec 12: Final Papers Due by scheduled final exam time: Wed, Dec 12 at 2:00

Books on Reserve Shelf:
Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture IV (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991)
Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V Cromley and Hudgins, eds., (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1995)
Exploring Everyday Landscapes: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VII McMurry and Adams, eds. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1997)

Finney, Paul Corby. Seeing Beyond the Word: Visual Arts and the Calvinist Tradition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999)
Martin, Ann Smart and J. Richie Garrison, eds, American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field. (University of Tennessee)
Miller and Tilley, eds., Ideology, Power, and Prehistory (Cambridge)
Noble, Allan, ed. To Build in a New Land: Ethnic Landscapes in North America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992)


Treib, Marc. *Sanctuaries of Spanish New Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)

Upton, Dell. *America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America*, (National Trust, 1986)
