instructor: James Peters

course title: North American Building Traditions

institution: University of Massachusetts, Amherst

date offered: Fall, 2009

posted date: April, 2014

stable URL: www.vafweb.org/resources/syllabi/peters1.pdf
Traditional knowledge and selection of building materials is based on a deep understanding of nature and the uses and limitations of natural materials. Because traditional methods are handed down from generation to generation, today’s craft builders participate in traditions that originated deep in pre-history. The course will provide students with an opportunity to learn about North American handcraft, log and timber frame building. After reviewing the properties of wood, craftsmanship, and traditional knowledge and the geography of North American forests, the class will discuss studies of building technology, vernacular architecture, and cultural geography. Student projects will document historical and contemporary log and timber frame craftsmen and craft structures. Course content includes:

- Wood, craftsmanship, and traditional knowledge; geography of North American forests;
- Pre-European contact Native American building;
- European log and timber frame building traditions implanted in N. America;
- The N. American settlement landscape (building on the frontier and during the early European settlement period);
- The development of stick built methods, the craftsman movement, development of the iconography of early American building;
- Contemporary handcraft log and timber frame design and construction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>Overview of the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>Properties of wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>Craft and craftsmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/17</td>
<td>Traditional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/22</td>
<td>Geography of North American forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/24</td>
<td>Pre-European contact Native American building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/29</td>
<td>Pre-European contact Native American building cont'd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/1</td>
<td>European log/timber frame building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/6</td>
<td>European log/timber frame building cont'd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>The N. Am. settlement landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/13</td>
<td>No class (Monday schedule)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/15</td>
<td>Building on the N. Am frontier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/20</td>
<td>Building during the early settlement period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/22</td>
<td>Development of “stick-built” methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/27</td>
<td>The Craftsman movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/29</td>
<td>The Iconography of early American building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11/3</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>Mid-term examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>Contemporary handcraft LOG intro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>Contemporary handcraft TIMBER FRAME intro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Contemporary handcraft LOG (PROJECT summary due)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/19</td>
<td>Contemporary handcraft TIMBER FRAME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/24</td>
<td>Contemporary handcraft TIMBER FRAME cont'd. (PROJECT proposal due)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/26</td>
<td>No Class (Thanksgiving recess)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>12/1</td>
<td>Student PROJECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/3</td>
<td>Student PROJECTS cont'd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>12/8</td>
<td>Student PROJECT presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>Student PROJECT presentations cont'd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conzen, 1990, *The Making of the American Landscape*


Sobon & Schroeder. *Timber Frame Construction: All About Post-and-Beam Building*

**Textbooks (not required)**
Properties of wood

Hoadley. 2000. *Understanding Wood*


Larsen & Marstein. 2000. “Like seasoned timber, never gives: the durability of wood as a building material” in *Conservation of Historic Timber Structures*


Craft and craftsmanship


Green. 2006. “Shelter” in *Wood: Craft, Culture, History*
Traditional knowledge

Snively. “Honoring aboriginal science knowledge in an environmental education graduate program” in Menzies, 2006, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Natural Resource Management


Geography of North American forests


Bailey. 1995. “Description of the Ecoregions of the United States” (USFS online)

Eyre. 1980. Forest Cover Types of the United States and Canada


### Pre-European contact Native American building


Driver & Massey. 1957. “Comparative Studies of North American Indians” (housing and architecture) in Transactions of the American Philosophical Society

Vastokas. 1969. “Architecture and Environment: The Importance of the Forest to the Northwest Coast Indian” in Forest History

### European log and timber frame building


The North American settlement landscape, building on the frontier


Development of “stick-built” methods


The Craftsman movement/iconography of early American building


McClelland. 1998. “Sources of rustic architectural design” in Building the National Parks

Kaiser. 1982. “The camp era begins,” “William West Durant: the man and his camps,” and “A camp is a camp” in Great Camps of the Adirondacks
Contemporary handcraft log construction

Mackie. 1997. *Building with Logs*


International Log Builders’ Association. 2009. Website (www.logassociation.org)

Contemporary handcraft timber frame construction


Timber Framers Guild. 2009. Website (www.tfguild.org)