

URBDP 587
PRESERVATION AND THE VERNACULAR ENVIRONMENT
Winter 2007

Instructor: Manish Chalana, Dept. of Urban Design and Planning

Meeting time: T Th: 6-7:20 pm

Meeting place: Gould 424

Credits: 3

Format: Graduate seminar

Course Website: <http://faculty.washington.edu/chalana/urbdp587>

Instructor office hours: M 3-4pm

Instructor contact info: 410 Gould, chalana@u.washington.edu, 206-616-6051

Course audience:

- Students in Track II of the Preservation Planning and Design Certificate Program.
- Graduate Students (architecture, landscape, planning) with an interest in historic preservation and the everyday environment
- Upper-level undergraduates with special permission from the instructor

Course Description

The majority of the built environment around us is “vernacular”, i.e. shaped by people who are not trained design professionals *per se*. These environments can be as complex, interesting, and informative about our cultures and our pasts as their more elite cousins. Yet, preservation practice has traditionally focused only on high-style buildings and landscapes designed by trained professionals, and also those that are associated with notable individuals or mainstream events in American history. Recent scholarship and practice have led to more attention being placed on the preservation and management of vernacular environments. As a result, planners, architects and landscape architects are increasingly asked to consider the merit of such environments in their work by way of rehabilitation projects, contextual design and community design guidelines. Understanding these environments is an important first step in being able to make design and planning decisions concerning them.

This seminar will provide such a framework, by exploring the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of preserving the everyday environment. The subject will be approached through a combination of readings, discussion, and research, all drawing from the fields of vernacular architecture, landscape architecture, cultural geography and planning. The majority of examples will be drawn from throughout the United States. In a class project, students will have the opportunity to focus their research on documenting the historical significance, physical character, current condition, and future possibilities for preserving some element of the everyday environment that holds particular interest for them.

Course Requirements:

The course is oriented towards reading, discussion, and independent research. There will be some instructor-led discussions throughout the course to provide necessary background information on a variety of topics. However, most of the course will involve student-facilitated discussion of common readings and student presentation of research. The course assignments include:

- preparing for, attending, and participating in seminar
- facilitating two seminars
- documenting and presenting one case
- writing a research paper

Seminar participation: Students must actively participate in seminar. This begins with completing the **readings** and **posting your comments** on the readings on the assigned seminar discussion boards on the course webpage **by midnight before class**. To get full credit for seminar participation you **need to read all the articles**, and **post comments for at least 20** of them spread evenly through the quarter.

Seminar facilitation: A successful seminar session requires that each participant be thoughtful and engaged, critical yet respectful. Each seminar will be facilitated by **either one or two students**. You will facilitate twice over the course of the quarter. The first task of the facilitators will be to **synthesize the postings on the discussion boards into a short list of discussion catalysts**. The facilitators will also prepare a **30 minute PowerPoint presentation** for the class covering the themes covered in the readings. During the seminar, the role of facilitators involves a number of objectives:

- ensuring that **discussion probes into the major critical issues** raised by the reading in relation to the knowledge and experience of the group
- ensuring that discussion **does not wander repeatedly** into unproductive territory while still allowing for spontaneous exploration
- ensuring that **dialogue remains respectful** while still allowing for critical disagreement
- ensuring that **all voices are heard**

Case study: Students will select one component of the vernacular environment (structure and/or landscape) in the Seattle area that has not been described in the assigned readings, and briefly document it. You will identify the following features: location, designer/builder (if applicable), building or landscape type, cultural traditions from which the property draws, materials, method of construction, form, function, current condition, and why it is a good example of a vernacular property. You will develop this information into a 10 minute slide presentation for class on 30 Jan or 1 Feb. A visit to the site for photo documentation and archives for historic materials is required for the case study presentation.

Research paper: The research paper represents the main course assignment. The topic must be geographically limited to the Cascade Region (including British Columbia). The specific topic of the research paper is open to student selection; however, the topic is subject to instructor approval, and must remain true to the course's focus on vernacular preservation issues. A preliminary research proposal (two pages plus bibliography) is due in class on 15 Feb. The final research paper is due on **13 Mar by noon** in 410 Gould Hall.

Grading

Seminar Contribution (incl. e-posts)	20%
Seminar Facilitation	20%
Case Study	20%
Research Paper and Presentation	40%

Required Readings (On E-Reserve):

Course readings are available on e-reserve. You can access the e-reserves from the UW libraries home page or the course website after you agree to abide by the copyright rules. The following books have also been placed on reserve in the AUP Library, as many of the class readings come from them.

Carter, Thomas, ed. **Images of an American Land: Vernacular Architecture in the Western United States** (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

Cromley, Elizabeth and Carter L. Hudgins, eds. **Gender, Class and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture** (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995) Volume V.

Dubrow, Gail and Neile Graham, eds. **Preservation of the Vernacular Environment I and II** (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Preservation Planning and Design Program. Volumes I and II of the Working Papers Series). (Distribution to be arranged)

Glassie, Henry. **Folk Housing in Middle Virginia** (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975).

Groth, Paul and Todd Bressi, eds. **Understanding Ordinary Landscapes** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

Hayden, Dolores. **The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History** (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

Lowenthal, David. **The Past is a Foreign Country** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Lynch, Kevin. **What Time is this Place?** (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972).

- Stilgoe, John R. **Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
- Upton, Dell. **America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups That Built America** (New York: John Wiley, 1995).
- Upton, Dell and John Michael Vlach, eds. **Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture** (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986).
- Vlach, John Michael. **Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).
- Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture (complete set)
- U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division. **National Register Bulletin No. 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes.** Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division. **National Register Bulletin No. 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties.** Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992.
- Upton, Dell, ed. **America's Architectural Roots: The Ethnic Groups that Built America.** Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986.