

Western Michigan University Department of History

HIST 6440: Material Culture

3 Graduate hours

Spring 2015

Hist 6440

W 6:30–9:00

Dunbar 4201 (moved to Friedmann 4413)

Web: See GoWMU coursepage

Office Hours: TR 11:00–12:00 and W 4:00–6:00. I am also available before and after class and by appointment. If you have any questions about the class or need assistance please do not hesitate to ask.

Prof. David Benac

Office: 4428 Friedmann

Phone: 387–5361

david.benac@wmich.edu

Course Description: This course will explore theories and understandings of material culture in United States history through a rigorous catalogue of readings regarding the built environment and landscapes. Through an analysis of this material students will be equipped to interpret the cultural and historical significance of landscapes and structures and to ground their own work in the literature of the field.

Learning Outcomes: The purpose of this course is to provide students with a thorough understanding of material culture as expressed in the built environment and designed/interpreted landscapes.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to: 1) Demonstrate an informed knowledge material culture, the built environment, and landscapes in history, 2) Explain the historiographical context for the work of other historians and experts in the field, and 3) Demonstrate the ability to write book reviews to professional standards.

Required Course Texts:

Paul Groth and Todd Bressi, eds., *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*

Mark Spence, *Dispossessing Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*

Katherine Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the inland Empire*

Carolyn Kitch, *Pennsylvania in Public Memory: Reclaiming the Industrial Past*

Course Assignments: You will demonstrate your success in this class by your performance in class discussion and formal book review.

Book reviews: Reviews will be written according to the Chicago Manual of Style and be approximately 750 words. Follow the review guidelines provided for reviewers by H-Net. See <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/guidelines.php>; http://www.h-net.org/reviews/guidelines_books.php; and <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/standards.php>. All book reviews will be submitted digitally via the elearning dropbox.

Participation is awarded based on attendance, preparation, and positive contributions to class.

Course Calendar:

Week of: Lecture topics, readings, and assignments

1/14: Introduction

1/21: Interpretation
Groth and Bressi

1/28: Interpretation 2

2/4: Place and identity

2/11: Social and cultural landscapes

2/18: Urban and associated landscapes

2/25: Frontier
Morrissey

3/4: Frontier 2

3/11: No Class—Spring Break

3/18: Nature
Spence

- 3/25: Nature 2
- 4/1: The landscapes of rural America
- 4/8: Tourism and recreation
- 4/15: No Class—NCPH
- 4/24: Commemoration and memory
Kitch
- 4/29: Commemoration and memory 2

Course Grading Policies: All grades will be posted in the Elearning system's grade book.

Assignment	Percentage of final grade	
Book review1–8	5% each	40% aggregate
Book review9–13	10% each	50% aggregate
Participation	10%	

Rubric and guidelines for effective essay writing:

1. **Development of an argument or interpretation.** Good history does not merely tell what happened. *It interprets events of the past.* Given the nature of your assignments, writing interpretive essays will not be difficult. But be sure you convey clearly the argument or interpretation you wish to make. Do this by developing a descriptive title, *a clear thesis statement* in an opening paragraph, and a conclusion. (25%)
2. **Substantiation of your argument with historical data.** While interpretation is the ultimate goal, every interpretation of a historical subject is meaningful only if it rests on *concrete evidence.* In writing history it is important to demonstrate your evidence, not only to support your argument, but also because the details of human activities give history its interest and bring readers into the historical situation. Merely restating the conclusions of historians is not a good way to substantiate your argument. Using the data you find in their work is what is important. It is essential to *identify the sources of your information.* (25%)

3. **Utilizing historical perspective.** History is characterized by a concerned with *change over time*. Historians deal with all facets of human experience including economics, culture, religion, politics, and social customs, but they always focus on how the issues they are investigating are shaped by the particular *historical context*. Historians always avoid judging historical situations by standards belonging to a different era from the one they are investigating. (25%)
4. **Clear communication.** Use a precise, grammatical, well-organized writing style. Write your paper before the deadline so that you can complete *multiple revisions*. Make sure your paper is readable and communicates *exactly what you intend*. (25%)

Course Grade Scale:

Grade	Honor points	Numerical Value/Significance
A	4.0	90% outstanding, exceptional, extraordinary
BA	3.5	85%
B	3.0	80% very good, high pass
CB	2.5	75%
C	2.0	70% satisfactory, acceptable, adequate
DC	1.5	65%
D	1.0	60% poor
E	0.0	59% failing
X	0.0	failure (unofficial withdrawal)
W		official withdrawal
I		incomplete
CR		credit
NC		no credit
AU		audit (noncredit enrollment)

Academic Ethics and Integrity: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the University policies and procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. (The academic policies addressing Student Rights and Responsibilities can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=882> and the Graduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=23&navoid=938>.) If

there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s) and if you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Non--Discrimination Policy: Western Michigan University prohibits discrimination or harassment which violates the law, or which constitutes inappropriate or unprofessional limitation of employment, University facility access, or participation in University activities, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, protected disability, veteran status, height, weight, or marital status.

WMU Human Rights Statement: It is a fundamental policy of Western Michigan University not to discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, color, race, age, religion, national origin, height, weight, marital status, or handicap in its educational programs, admissions, employment, promotions, salaries and social activities. Through its example and teaching, Western strives to foster in its students, faculty, and staff respect for basic human rights. In its external relationships, the University is supportive of those activities that seek constructive change in the development of human rights in this country and abroad.

Specific Needs: Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the professor and/or Disability Services for Students, (269) 387--2116, at the beginning of the semester. Disability information provided to the instructor will remain confidential. DSS recommends that students with disabilities bring their accommodation letters to the instructor during office hours or by special appointment. During the appointment, the particulars of arrangements for accommodations can be discussed and agreed upon in private.

Classroom Decorum & Etiquette: Every member of this learning community has the right to freely express his/her opinion as long as this is done in such a way as to not impede the rights of other members of the learning community. Along this line, it is expected that all participants in this class will treat all others with respect and dignity. Behavior that is disrespectful, intimidating, threatening, or disruptive of the learning environment will not be tolerated. If any participant in the class has a concern regarding another participant's behavior he/she is encouraged to speak with the instructor.

WMU E-Mail Account is the Official Channel of Communication: Students are expected to use their WMU e-mail accounts regularly, as this is the official channel of communication between the University and student. Students receive notifications of class cancellations, campus emergencies and closures, and other important information through this channel. Problems sending or receiving e-mail through the WMU address may be addressed at the Help Desk (387-HELP), online at <http://www.wmich.edu/oit/helpdesk/>, or in person at the front desk in any on-campus computer lab.

Reading List

* denotes required reading for all students

Interpretation

*Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi, eds. *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*

Michael Conzen, ed. *The Making of the American Landscape*

N. Thomas Hakansson and Mats Widgren, eds., *Landesque Capital: The Historical Ecology of Enduring Landscape Modifications*

D. W. Meinig, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*

Thomas Schlereth, *Reading the Road: U.S. 40 and the American Landscape*

Paul Shephard, *The Cultivated Wilderness: Or, What Is Landscape?*

John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845*

Place

John Findlay, *Atomic Frontier Days: Hanford and the American West*

Larry Ford, *The Spaces Between Buildings*

Ian Frazier, *Great Plains*

J. Ritchie Garrison, *Landscape and Material Life in Franklin County, Massachusetts, 1770-1860*

Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*

Tony Hiss. *The Experience of Place*

Michael Hough, *Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape*

J. B. Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Ari Kelman, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans*

John McPhee, *The Pine Barrens*

William Warner, *Beautiful Swimmers: Watermen, Crabs, and the Chesapeake Bay*

Richard White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington*

Michael Williams, *Homeplace: The Social Use and Meaning of the Folk Dwelling in*

Southwestern North Carolina

Yi-fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*

Stephanie Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston*

Identity

Clifford Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800–1960*

Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*

Douglas Flemming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884–1984*

Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States*

Laurie Mercier, *Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana's Smelter City*

Anthony Stannonis, *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South*

Paul Starrs, *Let the Cowboy Ride: Cattle Ranching in the American West*

Religion

David Chidester and Edward Tabor Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space, Religion in North America*

Stephen Miller, *From Shaker Lands and Shaker Hands: A Survey of the Industries*

Race/ethnicity

James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850–1970*

Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930*

Donna Gabaccia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930*

Michael Innis-Jimenez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915–1940*

Liam Kennedy, *Race and Urban Space in Contemporary American Culture*

LeeAnn Lands, *The Culture of Property: Race, Class, and Housing Landscapes in Atlanta, 1880–1950*

Douglas Monroy, *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression*

Jane Simonsen, *Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860–1919*

Richard Westmacott, *African-American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South*

Gender/sexuality

Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*
Joseph Boone, Martin Dupuis, Martin Meeker, Karin Quimby, Cindy Sarver, Debra Silverman, and Rosemary Weatherston, eds., *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations*
George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940*
Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*
Paula Lupkin, *Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture*
Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England*

Architecture

Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*
Abbott Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625–1725*
Alice Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History*
Bernard Herman, *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700–1900*
David Monteyne, *Fallout Shelter: Designing for Civil Defense in the Cold War*
Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*
John Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*

Urban

Maria Balshaw and Liam Kennedy, eds., *Urban Space and Representation*
Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785–1850*
Daniel Bluestone, *Constructing Chicago*
Grady Clay, *Close-Up: How to Read the American City*
Dora Crouch, Daniel Garr, and Axell I. Mundigo, *Spanish City Planning in North America*
Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*
John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940*
Michael Holleran, *Boston's 'Changeful Times': Origins of Preservation and Planning in America*
Judith Leavitt, *The Healthiest City: Milwaukee and the Politics of Health Reform*
Peirce Lewis, *New Orleans: The Making of an Urban Landscape*
Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900–1940*
John Repts, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States*
Kian Tajbakhsh, *The Promise of the City: Space, Identity, and Politics in Contemporary Urban Thought*

Joel Tarr, *Devastation and Renewal: An Environmental History of Pittsburgh and Its Region*

Sam Bass Warner, *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City*

Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York*

Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*

Suburbs

Donald Albrecht, *World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation*

Catherine Bishir and Lawrence Earley, eds., *Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina: Essays on History, Architecture, and Planning*

John Dorst, *The Written Suburb: An American Site, an Ethnographic Dilemma*

Andres Duany, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*

Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*

Rob Kling, Spencer Olin, and Mark Poster, eds., *Postsuburban California: The Transformation of Orange County Since World War II*

Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles. 1920–1965*

John Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820–1939*

Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870–1900*

Frontier

*Katherine Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire*

Ray Billington, *The Far Western Frontier, 1830–1860*

Douglas Comer, *Ritual Ground: Bent's Old Fort, World Formation, and the Annexation of the Southwest*

William Cronon, George A. Miles, and Jay Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*

Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880–1940*

Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630–1860*

John Repts, *Town Planning in Frontier America*

William Truettner and Nancy K. Anderson, *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920*

Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*

Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*

Richard White, Patricia Nelson Limerick, and James Grossman. *The Frontier in American Culture: An Exhibition at the Newberry Library, August 26, 1994 – January 7, 1995*

Nature

*Mark Spence, *Dispossessing Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*

Eleanor Agnew, *Back from the Land: How Young Americans Went to Nature in the 1970s, and Why They Came Back*

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*

William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*

William DeBuys, *Enchantment and Exploitation: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range*

George Perkins Marsh, *The Earth as Modified by Human Action*

Char Miller, *Cities and Nature in the American West*

Char Miller, *Public Lands, Public Debates: A Century of Controversy*

Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*

Paul Shepard, *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature*

Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*

Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West*

Borders

Daniel Arreola and James R. Curtis, *The Mexican Border Cities: Landscape Anatomy and Place Personality*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993

Nancy Langston, *Where Land & Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed*

John Stilgoe, *Alongshore*

Lissa Wadewitz, *The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea*

Rural/farm/forest

Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900–1940*

Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*

Kathryn Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland*

John Hart, *The Land that Feeds Us*

Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the*

Inland West

John Hart, *The Rural Landscape*

Samuel Stokes and A. Elizabeth, *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation*

Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains*

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*

Michael Williams, *Americans and Their Forests: A Historical Geography*

Tourism/recreation

Warren Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910–1945*

Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century*

Grady Clay, *Real Places: An Unconventional Guide to America's Generic Landscape*

Dana Frank, *Local Girl Makes History: Exploring Northern California's Kitsch Monuments*

Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*

David Nassaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*

Martha Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California*

Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920*

Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*

Robert Rydell, *Fair America*

Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*

Richard Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*

Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity 1880–1940*

Ken Wilkins and Doug Kirby, *The New Updated and Revised Roadside America*

Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*

David Wrobel, *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*

Commemoration/memory

*Carolyn Kitch, *Pennsylvania in Public Memory: Reclaiming the Industrial Past*

Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*

Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*

Kristin Haas, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*

Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek*

Edward Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*

Sherry Linkon, *Steeltown U.S.A.: Work and Memory in Youngstown*

Paul Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape*

Robert Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy*