

ARTH 4919, section 003
University of Colorado
Instructor: Robert Nauman
Office: Fleming 415

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT SEMINAR
Fall 2009
e-mail: nauman@friu.com
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00 – 3:00, and by app't

COURSE INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This is an undergraduate “capstone” seminar, which presents upper level undergraduates the opportunity to develop skills learned in their previous art history classes. The seminar focuses on a particular topic, in this case the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, and culminates in a research paper and oral report on that topic.

Frank Lloyd Wright may be one of the best-known, yet least understood, American architects. Casual students of Wright’s architecture often misunderstand his organic approach to design as simply reflecting a desire to integrate his designs with nature. As Wright indicated in his many publications, nothing could be further from the truth (one has only to experience the numerous Wright buildings that shut out or turn their back on “nature” to realize that something more complex is at work). His design approach was indebted to 19th-century writers and philosophers such as John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horatio Greenough, and Walt Whitman, and architects such as Viollet-le-Duc, Henry Hobson Richardson, Frank Furness, and Louis Sullivan. In addition, Wright was influenced by the educational philosophies of Friedrich Froebel, the feminist writings of Ellen Key, and John Dewey’s Chicago School of Pragmatism.

But to fully understand Wright’s work is not simply a matter of understanding these various philosophical and architectural antecedents. To come to terms with Wright’s design it is also necessary to wrestle with the relationship his architecture has with other modernist design (particularly Japanese, German and Russian design, which he knew well from his visits, publications, and commissions in those countries), technology, World’s Fairs, and a utopian vision to construct an environment suitable for free men in a democratic society.

This is no mean task. The literature on Wright is extensive. Wright was also prolific in his own writings, which necessitate a careful untangling of self-promotional rhetoric and profound insights into architecture and design. In addition, reading about Wright and looking at images of his work are not sufficient in understanding his approach to design. To understand Wright’s architecture is to experience his architecture. In that regard, I will have to supply the experiential background for the buildings you may not have experienced yourself, in the hope that one day you will discover the complex and contradictory nature of Wright’s architecture for yourself.

This course will address not only the influences that shaped Wright’s work, but also the impact Wright’s work had, and continues to have, on generations of architects in the United States and throughout the world.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: Since this class is a seminar format, lectures are considered mandatory. Lectures and discussion are designed to serve as a supplement (not substitute) to the

readings, and are essential to an understanding of the material. You will be responsible for both lecture material and readings on the exams. **Your grade will be lowered if you miss the seminar classes without a signed medical excuse.**

Disability Services: Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide a letter from Disability Services (DS) and discuss specific needs with the professor during the first two weeks of class. DS determines accommodations based on documented disabilities: Willard 322; 492-8671; www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices.

Readings: The required texts for this class are The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright by Neil Levine and Frank Lloyd Wright, by Robert McCarter. There may also be a few additional readings placed on electronic reserve at the library or handed out in class (those are indicated in the syllabus, or will be announced in class). All readings are intended to supplement the lectures and are required.

Note: The readings for this class are extensive and dense (approximately 75 pages per week). It is expected that you will spend approximately 6 hours per week outside class with reading and writing assignments.

Short Essays: There will be a total of 5 short papers (3 - 4 pages) assigned in this seminar that cover the weekly readings and topics. These essays are intended to summarize and analyze information gleaned from class discussion and the readings, and may include Xeroxes or illustrations in addition to the 3 - 4 pages of text. **Those papers will be due at the beginning of the class for which they are assigned. I do NOT accept late work or electronically submitted work.** These short essays should be thought of as mini-research papers. They must refer to the assigned readings (or outside material you have read) and **MUST BE FOOTNOTED**. Avoid lengthy quotations in these papers. Summarize and analyze the material and footnote the ideas you reference.

Discussion Groups: Each person in the class will be assigned to two of these groups. The groups of 2 - 3 people will be responsible for critically evaluating the major aspects of the readings for that day, and guiding the class in discussion. Groups and the day(s) for which they are responsible will be assigned during the semester. **These presentations will each count 10% of your semester grade.**

Research paper: You will be required to submit a research paper of approximately 10 -12 pages (typed or word processed, double spaced, on 8" x 11" paper) with appropriate footnotes and a bibliography. Use proper footnote and bibliographic format. A Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press) provides information on footnoting and bibliography citations. Footnote all quotations, statements of fact, and interpretations attributable to specific authors. Use endnotes or footnotes, but **do not footnote the text internally** (using parentheses or brackets). Plagiarism is cheating and will result in a paper receiving a failure grade and possible disciplinary action by the university. The paper will be due **Tuesday, December 1 during class. Late papers will be penalized 10% for each class they are late. The term paper counts 30% of your semester grade.**

Research topic proposal: To be sure you have a suitable topic, a paper topic proposal, including your thesis statement, must be turned in by **Tuesday, October 6. That assignment will consist of two parts:** 1) a **thesis statement** or abstract that states the subject matter and method of analysis of your paper -- how you will critically discuss your topic; 2) a **bibliography** consisting of at least **five specific** sources (**not general**

biographies or art history texts or websites). **WEBSITES ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE SOURCES UNLESS THEY ARE PRIMARY SOURCES!!!** Research papers will not be accepted without completing this assignment! Late topic proposals will result in your research paper being penalized 10% for each class period they are late. Choose a topic that interests you. Your paper may focus on technological, social, functional, political, or other aspects of architectural history. Remember to keep the paper topic within the range of this course. A good thesis statement will give the paper a strong focus and organization. It does not merely state your topic or a fact about your topic, but should explain why this topic is worthy of investigation.

Final Presentation: Each person in the seminar will share their research findings with the class in an oral presentation the final two weeks of class. **Presentations should be 15 minutes**, with 5 minutes following the presentation for comments, discussion, and questions. **This presentation will count 10% of your semester grade.**

Grading Policy: Discussion leadership, 20%; short essays, class discussion, and attendance, 40%; final presentation 10%; term paper 30%. Class participation in the discussion groups will be factored into the grade. You **MUST** complete the research paper and final oral presentation components of this class to receive a passing grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE

| <u>DATE:</u> | <u>TOPIC/READINGS</u> |
|--------------|--|
| Aug. 25 | Introduction/background Readings: Levine, Introduction; McCarter, Introduction |
| 27 | Background, part 1 (Jefferson, Transcendentalism, Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, the Picturesque) Readings: McCarter, chap. 1 |
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| Sept. 1 | Background, part 2 (Froebel, Dewey, James, Sullivan) Readings: Levine, chap. 1 |
| 3 | Early Wright (Wright and Winslow houses) Readings: McCarter, chap. 2 |
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| 8 | Oak Park Years (domestic work: Wright house renovations; Willetts, Dana, Robie and Cheney houses) Readings: Levine, chap. 2 McCarter, chap. 3 and 5 |

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| 10 | Oak Park Years (public work: Larkin Building and Unity Temple) Readings: McCarter, chap. 4 |
| 15 | Fiesole/Taliesin East Readings: Levine, chap. 3 and 4 McCarter, chap. 6 |
| 17 | Film (FLW to the 1920's) |
| Sept. 22 | Barnsdall, etc. Readings: Levine, chap. 5 |
| 24 | Courtyard Public Space (Midway Gardens, Imperial Hotel, Wright and Japan) Readings: McCarter, chap. 7 |
| 29/31 | LA+ Readings: Levine, chap. 6 and 7 McCarter, chap. 8 |
| Oct. 6/8 | 1930's Domestic (Taliesin West, Fallingwater) Readings: Levine, chap. 8 and 9 McCarter, chap. 10 October 6: Research Topic Proposal Due |
| 13 | 1930's Public Readings: McCarter, chap. 13 |
| 15 | Film (FLW through the 1930's) |
| 20 | Urban Concepts, Broadacre Readings: McCarter, chap. 11 and 9 |

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| 22 | Urban Concepts, Usonia Readings: McCarter, chap. 12 |
| 27 | Religious Architecture Readings: McCarter, chap. 14 |
| 29 | Film (FLW through the 1950's) |
| Nov. 3/5 | Guggenheim Museum and Its Precedents Readings: Levine, chap. 10 McCarter, chap. 15 |
| Nov. 10/12 | Late Work Readings: Levine, chap. 11 McCarter, chap. 16 |
| 17/19 | Conclusion/Legacy Readings: Levine, conclusion McCarter, conclusion Cronin article |
| 24/26 NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING BREAK | |
| Dec. 1 | 4 Student Presentations (20 minutes each) December 1: ALL Research Papers Due at beginning of class |
| 3 | 3 Student Presentations (20 minutes each)/FCQs |
| Dec. 8 | 4 Student Presentations (20 minutes each) |
| 10 | 4 Student Presentations (20 minutes each) |