ARCH 1720 How Houses Build People:
An archaeology of architecture and society
Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology of the Ancient World
Brown University

Spring Quarter, 2012

Tuesday/ Thursday 1:00-2:20
Rhode Island Hall, 008

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How Houses Build People
Archaeologists have spent a considerable effort to determine how early people built houses so this course aims to invert the emphasis and ask how houses build people. This course will explore multiple facets of domestic buildings from the perspective of anthropology, cultural geography, phenomenology and architectural theory. We'll initially deconstruct the term ‘house’ and ‘home’ and examine the social and ideological implications of these categories. Making use of an array of regional case studies, we will use domestic architecture to explore the connection between kinship, society and cosmology while questioning how cultural values and norms can be extracted from architecture.

The second half of the class will focus on household archaeology, using case studies from Greece, Mesoamerica and the prehistoric Near East. Using the archaeology of architecture, we will explore the idea of the domestication of humans through architecture and the development of settlements. As houses are the basic unit of social and economic organization, we will explore how the houses was the medium through which culture is passed down and transformed, in both the present and in the past.

Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will:
• Understand how to extract social meaning from vernacular architecture
• Gain an understanding of anthropological theory and its lateral application
• Strengthen independent research skills and apply these skills within the scope of their own research
• How to deconstruct and critically evaluate an argument
• To articulate and justify a position in writing
• Learn to communicate effectively during in-class discussions
• Engage with the work of others
Required textbooks


All other readings will be posted on the course wiki
http://proteus.brown.edu/housesbuildpeople12/home

Click on the ‘course private forum’ link and the password is: “housesprivate”

Assessment
- Attendance (10%)
- Regular participation during in-class (10%)
- Reaction essays (x 6) based on weekly reading assignments (20%)
- Class presentations (20%)
- Final presentation & paper (40%)

There is no mid-term or final exam for this class.

Attendance: Please contact me if there is an unexpected absence. If you have more than three unexcused absences, your final grade will drop one letter grade.

Reaction essays: An essay question is assigned for each week in Part I of the course. There will be a total of 6 short essays. This assignment is designed to be a reaction to and a discussion about the assigned readings; the essay question is more of a guide of the main theme. These essays are to be a minimum of 500 words in length (1-2 pages) and can also include concept maps, flow charts or diagrams to help illustrate your points. The objective is to be critical of the author's position, relate it to the weekly theme, the theme of previous weeks, and/or the overall course theme. Try and link the reading together in a coherent discussion. You are to submit a printed copy of this essay at the start of class every Thursday (Weeks 2-7).

Class presentations: In Part II of the course, students will be assigned topics for class presentations. Students will be expected to read, present and prepare to lead a discussion on the assigned topic.

Field Trips: There are several local field trips scheduled during class time. Participation in these field trips is mandatory and will be part of your final project.
- Aldrich House
- John Brown House Museum
- Governor Henry Lippitt House Museum
- Roger Williams First Baptist Church
- Tour of the home of Artemis and Martha Joukowsky
FINAL PROJECT
The task is to put the questions and readings from this course into practical application. Look at the space, how it is used and not used, and what does the house tell you about its occupants? Look through the eyes of an anthropologist: what cultural, social, economic, religious, gender, ethnic, etc. clues do you see? Observe the symbolism and be aware of the non-verbal clues. What message is the house telling us about its occupants? How is the space dictating the activities? Consider all aspects of the architecture, including the location, the building materials, the height, the division of internal space, lighting, decoration, temperature and ambience: what is being communicated by the architecture and the space?

Your project is to include four different houses, one of each category:
1) University housing, such as dorm room, shared housing, Fraternity or Sorority House.
2) Suburban house. Visit an open house or model homes on a weekend in the surrounding neighborhoods. You cannot visit the home of a friend; the objective is that do not know the occupants of the house.
3) One of the stately homes we visited on the field trip
4) First Baptist Church

The final report is a 1,500 word (6-8 pages, double spaced) critical summary your observations and findings. You are to compare these three different types of houses to answer the question, How Do Houses Build People? You are expected to deliver a 10- minute presentation on the last day of class. It is encouraged to include photographs, plan drawings, architectural sketches, video or any visual aids.
Week 1: Introduction- how do houses build people?

1/26 No readings

Week 2: Homes and Houses
Every society constructs shelters for themselves but each of these dwellings are culturally specific and are full of meaning & symbolism. This week we will explore the anthropological notions of a ‘home’ and a ‘house’, through cross-cultural explorations of different styles of vernacular architecture.

Read for Tuesday 1/31:

Read for Thursday 2/2:
- Oliver, Ch. 2 “Settling Down”
- Waterson, Ch. 1 “Origin”

Essay question: What does it mean to build a house and how are houses an adaptation to the environment?
** Please remember that essays are due at the start of class on Thursdays**

Week 3: House Form and Communication
Often the purpose of a house can be ‘read’ through its architectural features, form, materials and spatial position. This week we will explore how houses communicate non-verbally and how to read meaning from the built environment.

Read for Tuesday 2/7:

Read for Thursday 2/9:
- Oliver, Ch. 3 “True to Type”
- Waterson, Ch. 2 “Perceptions of the Built Form”
- Waterson, Ch. 3 “The Interrelation of Built Forms”

Essay Question: What social conceptions are expressed in the form of a house and how does house form communicate non-verbally?
**Week 4: Building Materials and Culture**
A house can be made from virtually any type of material, such as wood, mud, reeds, bone or brick. Yet the types of materials used in a house can reflect 1) the availability of natural resources, 2) socio-economic status and 3) technological skill. Also, the process of house construction can act as a vehicle for cultural transmission of knowledge and socialization.

Read for Tuesday 2/14:
  Ch. 5 “Construction, materials and technology as modifying factors”

Read for Thursday 2/16:
- Oliver, Ch. 4 “Built From the Ground”
- Oliver, Ch. 5 “Resources that Grow”
- Waterson, Ch. 4 “Technology and Symbolism”

*Essay Question:* How does the types of materials used in house construction contribute to the character and meaning of a house?

**Week 5: The Living House**
Many cultures imbue their houses with a ‘life force’ and regard the house as a living being and contributing member of the household. This week we will explore the animistic properties of houses and the process through which houses become ‘enlivened’ through deliberate and intentional actions.

*NO CLASS ON TUESDAY 2/21: President’s Day*

Read for Thursday 2/23:
- Waterson, Ch. 6 “The Living House”
  o Chapter 4: Houses are Human: Architectural Self-images

*Essay Question:* How do houses become human?

**Week 6: Space and Social Relationships**
Kinship is the backbone to all cultures and it is argued that kinship patterns can be read from domestic architecture and household composition. This week we will explore social groups, identity and gender as it relates to spatial relationships and use of space. Also, we will investigate the classic anthropological trope of a ‘house-society’.

Read for Tuesday 2/28:
Read for Thursday 3/1:
- Oliver, Ch. 7 “Spatial Relations”
- Waterson, Ch. 7 “Kinship and ‘House Societies’”
- Waterson, Ch. 8 “Space and the Shaping of Social Relations”

*Essay Question:* How does the use of space mirror the social organization and reflect social values and norms?

**Week 7: Houses and Cosmology**
Many cultures understand life on earth as a reflection of perceived life in the cosmos. Thus houses are orientated, decorated, and spatially structured according to religious beliefs and worldview.

Read for Tuesday 3/6:

Read for Thursday 3/8:
- Oliver, Ch. 8 “House and Cosmos”
- Waterson, Ch. 5 “Cosmologies”

*Essay Question:* How is a house a map of the cosmos?

**PART II: Archaeology of Houses**

**Week 8: Domesticating Humans (through architecture)**
After the last ice age, human societies slowly transitioned from a nomadic lifeways to eventual sedentism. It has been argued that humans became domesticated through the construction of permanent architecture and village life. This week we will explore two perspectives of how humans were domesticated through architecture.

Read for Tuesday 3/13:
  - Chapter 3, “The House in Order”
  - Chapter 2: “The Domestication of Society”

Thursday 3/15: Visit Pendleton House, RISD Museum
Week 9: Neolithic Houses
Read for Tuesday 3/20:
    o Banning and Chazan, Structuring Interactions, Structuring Ideas: Domestication of Space in Prehistoric Near East, p. 5-14
    o Chapter 5: The House.

Thursday 3/22: Tour through the Gov. Lippitt House Museum, 199 Hope Street

Week 10: SPRING BREAK; NO CLASSES

Week 11: Mesoamerican Houses
Read for Tuesday 4/3:

Thursday 4/5: Tour through the First Baptist Church, 75 North Main Street

Week 12: Greek Houses
Read for Tuesday 4/10:
    • Chapter 1, “Domestic space and ancient Greek society”
    • Chapter 2, “Approaches to the material record”
    • Chapter 3, “From pots to people: towards a framework for interpreting the archaeological material”

Thursday 4/12: Tour of the John Brown House museum
Week 13: Greek Houses
Read for Tuesday 4/17:

- Chapter 4, “The city of Olynthos: a detailed case-study in domestic organization”
- Chapter 5, “Olynthos in context: houses in northern, central and southern Greece and the Aegean Islands”
- Chapter 6, “Regional patterns in domestic organization: Greek houses from Sicily

Thursday 4/19: Tour of Joukowsky’s House

Week 14: Last Class: projects due
Tuesday 4/24: class presentations
Thursday 4/26: class presentations