DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
HISP 325-01 VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICA
Spring Semester 2009

Mr. Stanton
MWF 10:00-10:50 am
Combs Hall Rm 348

“Vernacular, adj. 1. native, or originating in the place of its occurrence or use, as language or words. .
native or peculiar to popular taste, as a style of architecture.” The American College Dictionary

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Vernacular Architecture in America is a seminar that explores the theoretical basis and methodological
conventions used when studying the built environment as a product of vernacular design processes.
Commonplace buildings are investigated as complex historical resources that can be read for information
about intentions, attitudes, and needs of past generations. Ultimately any architecture can be studied as
vernacular and it is an approach, rather than a delineation of subject matter, that distinguishes vernacular
architectural research.
The study of vernacular architecture is an interstitial scholarly pursuit. The recognition of its potential has
drawn researchers from many diverse fields. Each researcher has brought his or her own background to
vernacular architecture, coloring through assumptions and methodologies how the research is conducted
and what conclusions are reached. One of the principal aims of this course is to develop or heighten the
skills of critical close reading of texts, whether they are books or buildings.
This is not an easy course, but the breadth of the subject matter and the freshness of the approaches that
researchers bring to their work can be exhilarating. The seminar is a combination of discussion, field trips,
in-class exercises. You should expect to come away from this course with an enhanced ability to evaluate
architecture for evidence of function and use, your ability to read critically will be enhanced and you will
have an understanding of what separates the study of vernacular architecture from standard academic
architectural research.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

TEXTS
The following books are required and will be available in the UMW Bookstore:
Carter, Thomas and Elizabeth Collins Cromley. Invitation to Vernacular Architecture. Knoxville:
University of Tennessee Press, 2005.
Upton, Dell, and John Michael Vlach, eds. Common places: Readings in American Vernacular
Reserve Reading. All other reading will be provided.

EXPECTATIONS
Each student is expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day both in
terms of the subject and the theoretical framework used by the author. Your participation in class is part of
the evaluation criteria. Your preparation should include reading the critical reviews that are posted on the
course web page. You will need to be able to access the class web page to prepare for classes, find
expanded explanations of assignments, and obtain some required reading.

TESTS
There will be a midterm examination covering theories of analysis as well as the structural and stylistic
features of American vernacular buildings on Monday, February 23rd and a comprehensive final
examination, Friday, May 1st.
OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

No Collaborative Work is Allowed on Any Written Assignments!!
1. Examine and describe the addition to the store at the northwest corner of Caroline and George Streets. Be sure to describe the physical evidence of reuse. The assignment is due Monday, February 16th.
2. Describe in no more than two pages, a hypothetical hypothesis for a vernacular study of a material, structural type, or landscape feature. The assignment is due Wednesday, April 22nd.
3. Write a two-page essay that critically examines one of the assigned readings. Selections may be made from the readings beginning with January 28th through April 17th. The essay is due to me as an email attachment on the day of the class prior to the day your chosen reading is to be discussed in class. Only one person can select a particular reading. The reviews will be posted on our class web page and are part of the assigned readings for that class.

MY OFFICE HOURS:
Tuesday 11am-12:45
Thursday 11am-12:45
I am happy to make an appointment to see you at some specific time that suits your needs--ask me in class, or write me an email message at <gstanton@umw.edu>

OFFICE
Combs 128
Phone: 654-1313

GRADING

FINAL GRADE
Please note: No passing grade can be achieved in this course without completion of all tests, final examination and out-of-class graded assignments. Your final grade will be based on the following scores--Class preparation and participation 15%; Test I, 25%; Out-of-Class Assignment #1 10%; Out-of-Class Assignment #2 10%; Critical Review 15%; Final Examination 25%. The Out-of-Class Assignments will be marked down by a letter grade (10 points) if handed in later than the beginning of class on the date due.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS, TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
1. Monday 12 January 2009
   Course Introduction: What is the difference between HISP 305 and HISP 325
   Required Readings: Camille Wells, “Reading Critically”

2. Wednesday 14 January 2009
   In Conclusion: categories and critiques of vernacular architecture
   Carter, Thomas and Elizabeth Cromley. Invitation to Vernacular Architecture, xiii-xv.

3. Friday 16 January 2009
   Examining a building
   Readings: Carter, Thomas and Elizabeth Cromley. IVA, 19-43.

   Martin Luther King Day --- no class

5. Wednesday 21 January 2009
   Reading Sequence
6. Friday 23 January 2009
   Looking for Change in a Building

7. Monday 26 January 2009
   Using Techniques of Construction and Materials to Plot Cultural Process
   Readings: Fred B. Kniffen and Henry Glassie, “Building in Wood in the Eastern United States: A Time-
   Place Perspective.” *CP*, 159-181.

8. Wednesday 28 January 2009
   Building in Wood

   **Fieldtrip #1: Meet at the corner of Princess Anne and George Street.**

10. Monday 2 February 2009
    Doing History with Architecture

11. Wednesday 4 February 2009
    Doing Architecture with History

12. Friday 6 February 2009
    The Classification of Buildings by Typology
    Readings: Fred B. Kniffen, “Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion.” *CP*, 3-26

    Structures and materials: Stone and Brick

14. Wednesday 11 February 2009
    Buildings as Domestic Space

15. Friday 13 February 2009
    Domestic Space Form and Function

16. Monday 16 February 2009
    Changing Function in Domestic Space
    Readings: Mark R. Wenger, “The Central Passage in Virginia: Evolution of an 18th-Century Living Space.” *PVA-II*, 137-149. **Assignment #1 due**
17. Wednesday 18 February 2009  
Buildings as Public Settings  

18. Friday 20 February 2009  
Buildings as Public Settings  

19. Monday 23 February 2009  
**MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

20. Wednesday 25 February 2009  
Vernacular Religious settings  

21. Friday 27 February 2009  
**Field Trip #2 The Berry Plain Slave Quarter**  
******Spring Break February 28—March 9******

22. Monday 9 March 2009  
The Vernacular Landscape  

23. Wednesday 11 March 2009  
History and the Vernacular Landscape  

24. Friday 13 March 2009  
African-American Ethnicity in House and Home  

25. Monday 16 March 2009  
Housing Slaves in the Urban Environment  

26. Wednesday 18 March 2009  
Buildings as Manifestations of German Ethnicity I  

27. Friday 20 March 2009  
Buildings as Manifestations of German Ethnicity II  
28. Monday 23 March 2009
   European Building Types in America

29. Wednesday 25 March 2009
   Tenants and the Working Class vernacular

30. Friday 27 March 2009
   The vernacular study of ‘Life in the Fast Lane’

31. Monday 30 March 2009
   The Vernacular study of Leisure Time

32. Wednesday 1 April 2009
   Mass Culture and Vernacular

33. Friday 3 April 2009
   Modernizing the Vernacular
   Readings: Elizabeth Collins Cromley, "Modernizing--or 'you never see a screen door on affluent homes,'" Journal of American Culture 5 (1982), 71-79.

34. Monday 7 April 2009
   Big Box Vernacular

35. Wednesday 9 April 2009
   Composing Survey Strategies

36. Friday 11 April 2009
   Assigning Meaning to Classification in Vernacular Design
   Readings: Thomas Hubka, “Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form.” CP, 426-432

37. Monday 13 April 2009
   Architects and the Vernacular Threshold

38. Wednesday 15 April 2009
    Changing Meanings in Public Lands
    Readings: Martha McNamara, “From Common Land to Public Space: The Frog Pong and Mall at Newburyport, Massachusetts, 1765-1825.” PVA VI, pp. 77-91.

39. Friday 17 April 2009
    Auto Architecture

40. Monday 20 April 2009
    Culturally-Oriented and Symbolic Approaches to Vernacular Architecture

41. Wednesday 22 April 2009
    Talk about what you did
    **Project #2 is due**

42. Friday 24 April 2009
    Course Review: So What?

Friday 1 May 2009
    8:30am–11:00 am Final Examination