

Core Curriculum Course

Architecture and Meaning in the Middle Ages

Monday and Wednesday, 9.30-10.45
Silver Building, Room 408

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Recitations: Wednesdays/Thursdays, times TBD

Course Description:

We all watched helplessly on April 15th, 2019, as the cathedral of Paris burned. We felt great sadness, even if we didn't fully grasp the profound sorrow and loss shouldered by French citizens. How could we understand the full range of meanings this building has for them? It was the loss of a beautiful building, yes, but also the loss of a historical site of Christian worship and a monument of national pride and memory. Notre-Dame is, in many ways, a symbol of and for France. The tragic moment was a reminder of just how deeply buildings, even those of the distant past, continue to shape our understanding of ourselves today.

Tapping into the meaning of pre-modern buildings presents challenges, but that is the aim of this course. It provides an introduction to the built environment of the Middle Ages. From the fall of Rome to the dawn of the Renaissance, a range of architectural styles shaped medieval daily life, religious experience, and civic spectacle. We will become familiar with the architectural traditions of the great cathedrals, revered pilgrimage churches, and reclusive monasteries of western Europe, as well as castles, houses, and other civic structures. We will integrate the study of architecture with the study of medieval culture, exploring the role of pilgrimage, courts and civil authority, religious reform and radicalism, crusading and social violence, and rising urbanism. In this way we will explore ways in which the built environment profoundly affected contemporary audiences and shaped medieval life. Throughout, we will also reflect on how medieval architecture is still present with us today – whether through medieval revivals here in New York, museum exhibitions (we will visit the Met's collections) or tragedies such as that of 2019.

No previous experience in art/architectural history is needed.

Course Objectives:

Although we will focus our efforts on understanding medieval architecture, this course also has other, more general objectives:

- first, to gain familiarity with the culture of the Middle Ages broadly speaking;
- second, to introduce diverse methods of visual interpretation, offering opportunities for exploring how meaning is constructed through the creation, use, and transformation of architecture;
- third, to sharpen skills of critical visual analysis (extremely useful well beyond the classroom!) and to offer students an opportunity to discover their own personal engagement in the history of art and architecture.

More generally, keep in mind that Expressive Culture courses are intended to introduce the study and appreciation of human artistic creation and to foster your ongoing engagement with the arts. Expressive Culture courses seek to develop students' critical engagement with primary cultural artifacts and to learn methods of their interpretation to understand their importance in social and historical contexts. Part of the College Core

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Curriculum, these courses are designed to extend your education beyond the focused studies of your major, preparing you for your future life as a thoughtful individual and active member of society.

Course Format:

The course will be conducted in lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays and a third meeting in recitation format. Lectures introduce broad themes, demonstrations of visual analysis, and discussion of meaning. Our recitations allow dedicated time in small groups to think about and debate the interpretation of objects and the cultural discourses surrounding them.

Course Format & Covid:

New York University requires all faculty to hold courses in person for Spring 2022. Given the shifting nature of the current public health crisis, that requirement may change. In the event of a significant deterioration, the course (lectures and recitations) may have to be offered entirely online for one or more class meetings. If so, the class will be held at the usual time, and a Zoom link will be distributed. Additional instructions will be emailed to students at that time.

Students are reminded that, as a precaution, they should not come to class if they are feeling sick. **Students who test positive for Covid should certainly not come to class until the tests return negative and all NYU guidelines are followed.** While sick, a student will have access to some lecture materials on NYU Brightspace and will be encouraged to set up an additional online section (via Zoom) to discuss the materials with the professor or assistants. Be sure to keep your Recitation Leader apprised of any covid developments so that alternate plans can be made.

Covid has been an incredible challenge and burden on all of us in many, many ways. Your teachers, too, have struggled. We will all try hard to make this semester as 'normal' as possible, and we ask for your understanding as we do our best with these difficult circumstances.

Course Requirements:

- Reading assignments
- One mid-term (15%)
- One final exam (25%) - date determined by the University Registrar.
- Four short (2-3 pages) writing assignments in which students engage critically with the reading or proposed issue of interpretation (20%)
- One five-page paper submitted at the end of the semester (20%), due at your last recitation meeting.
- Attendance and participation at lectures and recitations, including a visit to The Cloisters Museum (20%)

Please keep in mind:

- Lectures do not duplicate the readings; for the exams and recitations, you will be responsible for lecture material as well as the reading material.
- Exams consist of identifications and comparisons of architectural monuments discussed in class or readings, in addition to short- and long-answer essays. A set of images to study from will be provided.
- Unexcused absences from lectures and sections will affect the attendance/participation grade; more than three absences can result in a failing grade.
- Late written assignments can be penalized, so to avoid this, contact your section leader in advance to see if late work can be accommodated; repeated lateness can result in a failing grade.
- All assignments must be completed with a passing grade to receive a passing grade for the course.

How to Reach Me and your Recitation Leader:

Professor Maxwell's office hours are 11.00-12.00, Mondays, via Zoom; send an email at least one or two days in advance, so that we can be sure to fit you into the schedule. Alternatively, we can arrange appointments (Zoom) for other times. Having an office hours chat is a good time for us to discuss the readings, your writing assignments, or any other questions you have.

Your Recitation Leaders will be in touch to communicate their office hours and availability with you.

Where to find the Readings:

Unless otherwise indicated, all our reading will be available on our class's Course Reserves page (via Brightspace).

Many of our Mon/Wed readings draw from the following three books, which you may want to purchase on your own.

- Charles McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, Yale Univ. Press, 2006.
- Roger Stalley, Early Medieval Architecture, Oxford, 1999.
- Christopher Wilson, The Gothic Cathedral, Thames & Hudson, 1990.

Class Rules:

Plagiarism is using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment. If you present someone's words, thoughts, or data as your own, you are committing plagiarism. The location of the information is irrelevant: when it comes to plagiarism, information from the Internet is equivalent to information from a physical book or journal. To avoid plagiarism, you must cite your source every time you:

- Use an author's exact written or spoken words. In this case, you must identify the words by enclosing them with quotation marks or indenting on both sides of the margin.
- Paraphrase someone's written or spoken words.
- Use facts provided by someone else that are not common knowledge.
- Make significant use of someone's ideas or theories.

If you have doubts about any of the above points, or are wondering about related points, err on the side of caution: cite your source. It is also plagiarism to pay a person or Internet service for a paper, or hand in someone else's paper as your own.

NB: The definition of plagiarism is universal and applies inside and outside of the academy.

Cheating: It is a violation of NYU's standard for academic integrity and considered cheating: to submit the same or substantially similar work in multiple courses; to copy all or part of another person's homework, project or exam; to copy, purchase, or otherwise obtain someone else's work and pass it off as your own. All work that you submit must be your own.

- See NYU's policy on **academic integrity**: <https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html>

Cellphones: Cellphones should be turned off and stowed out of sight.

Laptops: Laptops or tablets may be used to take notes; any use of the internet (web browsing, email, etc.) will result in banishment of all devices for the remainder of the semester.

Food: Food is not permitted in any classroom.

Covid: Covid brings its own set of rules:

- Entrance to all NYU buildings requires a “Green” Pass.
- Students should wear a surgical or FFP mask **covering the mouth and nose at all times** in class.
 - Cloth masks, bandanas, or scarves (as face covering) are not sufficient unless paired with a surgical or FFP mask.
- Students may lower the mask momentarily to drink a sip of water, or they may choose to step out of the classroom. **No eating of any kind is allowed in class.**
- For more on NYU’s covid protocols,
 - see here: <https://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/coronavirus-information/safety-and-health.html>

Please Note: There is no margin of leeway for any of the above rules. Any student violating any of the above concerning covid, food, masks, cellphones, or laptops will be asked immediately to leave the classroom. Repeated violations will result in dismissal from the course.

NB: "Reading" should be completed before Monday's class; please complete the "Recitation" readings before your recitation.

Week 1

M: Introduction: What are the "Middle Ages"?

W: The Roman Legacy

Rec: No recitations

Reading:

- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 1-16.

Recitation:

- No recitation this week

Week 2

M: Empire in the West

W: Empire in the East

Rec: Rise of Holy Spaces

Reading:

- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 16-22, 23-34.
- Thomas F. Mathews, Byzantium: From Antiquity to the Renaissance (Yale Univ. Press, 1998), 16-33.

Recitation:

- Elizabeth C. Parker, "Architecture as Liturgical Setting," in The Liturgy of the Medieval Church, ed. Thomas Heffeman, E. Ann Matter (Medieval Institute, 2001), only up to p.286 (we'll read the rest later).

Week 3

M: Cult, Baptism, and Experience

W: Cultural Syncretism (I): The Case for Iberia

Rec: How Do We Interpret "Tradition" and "Innovation" in Multi-Faith Iberia?

Reading:

- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 35-58 (ch. 3).
- Jerrilynn Dodds, Art and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain (University Park, Pa., 1990), ch. 1.
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Recitation:

- Jerrilynn Dodds, Art and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain (University Park, Pa., 1990), ch. 2.

Week 4

M: Cultural Syncretism (II): Anglo-Saxon England

W: A New Empire, A New Capital: Aachen

Rec: What does the "Carolingian Renaissance" Tell Us about Architecture and Ourselves?

Reading:

- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 59-84 (ch. 4).
- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 85-104 (ch 5). – CUT?
- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 105-27 (ch 6).

Recitation:

- Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture," in his Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art (New York University Press, 1969), 1-33.

Week 5

M: Inventing Architecture for Communal Living: Monasticism

W: Changing Architecture for Liturgy & Cult

Rec: Radical Millennialism or Steady Evolution? Change in The Year 1000

Reading:

- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 149-72 (ch 8), 173-94 (ch 9).

Recitation:

- primary documents (Hariulf & Arno on Centula & Aniane; Raoul Glaber on the "White Mantel of Churches"), in Caecilia Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art 300-1500: Sources and Documents (University of Toronto Press, 1986), 92-99; 125-125.
- Paul Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Clastrum," Gesta (1973), 53-59.

Week 6

M: Formation of a New Architecture: What is "Romanesque"?

W: Pilgrimage Architecture

Rec: A Lonely Planet Guide for the 12th century

Reading:

- McClendon, The Origins of Medieval Architecture, 147-66; 167-89; 195-209 (ch 10).
- primary documents (the "Pilgrim's Guide" to Santiago) in Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art, 147-56.

Recitation:

- Stefan Trinks, "The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela as Tactile Theater," in Bildakt at the Warburg Institute, ed. S. Marienberg, and J. Trabant (de Gruyter, 2014), 189-220.

Week 7

M: Architecture of Monastic Excess?

W: Architecture of Liturgical Reform

Rec: Debating the Role of Religious Art

Reading:

- Stalley, Early Medieval Architecture, 190-211 (Language of Architecture), 213-231 (Diversity).
- Parker, "Architecture as Liturgical Setting," finish this article that we began in week 2.

Recitation:

- primary documents (Abbot Odilo on Cluny; Abbot Bernard on aesthetic value), in Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art, 128-32; 168-70.

[Week 8]

Spring Break