UMBC UGC New Course Request: HIST 418: The American House

Date Submitted: 4/23/2015
Proposed Effective Date: Spring 2016

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COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Number(s) 418
Formal Title The American House: The History of Domestic Architecture and Life
Transcript Title (≤30c) Architectural History
Recommended Course Preparation HIST 101 or HIST 102; Hist 300
Prerequisite none

Credits 3
Repeatable? Yes
Max. Total Credits 3
Grading Method(s) x Reg (A-F) x Audit x Pass-Fail

PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION (no longer than 75 words):

Our homes are a central part of the American dream. This course explores the relationship between the ideal house and family and the reality of American domestic life from colonial settlement to the mid- twentieth century. Topics include the development of domestic architecture; evolving standards of living; the “consumer revolution” and household consumption; household labor and production; class formation and identity; residential space and domestic artifacts; industrialization and home life; and evolving domestic technologies.

RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE:

We want to create more upper-level courses that will of use to the Public History minors at Shady Grove as well as the main campus. Currently, the instructor for this new course teaches a 300 level course on the American city. For students at SG, this new course would be a logical follow-up. We don’t want to make the American city course a prreq, however, b/c we do not have the resources to offer it regularly on the main campus. So we want to create a 400 level course that moves at a higher pace than 300 level courses, that will be of interest to history majors, minors, and esp. Public History minors, but that is in principle open to any upper-level students at UMBC not afraid of reading a lot, writing a lot and catching up on what they do not know as non-majors. We run all of our 400 level courses that way. We do think that having taken an intro course in American history may be useful to suggest as a recommended course prep, along with History 300, which is the intro to public history course. Again, students do not absolutely HAVE to HAVE these courses under their belt, but making them recommended course preps clues them in that some prior knowledge of American history and the field of public history will be helpful.

ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):

See attached
Instructor: Melissa Blair  
Office: SG-Building III, Room 4131  
Office Hours: DAYS and TIME, or by appointment  
Phone: (301) 738-6283  
Email: mfblair@umbc.edu

Course Overview and Objectives:

This course provides an overview of American domestic life from colonial settlement to the mid twentieth century with an emphasis on domestic architecture. It is geared towards students of American social history who may not have extensive training in architectural history. In structuring the course I have avoided the “march through the styles” approach common to surveys of architecture. Instead, the readings draw on the work of social historians, architectural historians, and material cultural scholars to deepen students’ understanding of the historic contexts of domestic spaces, and to broaden their knowledge of the major transformations of American life. Students with little exposure to material culture studies will become more familiar with the role of things in history.

Throughout the course we will be discussing several themes and topics, including evolving standards of living; the “consumer revolution” and household consumption; household labor and production; class formation and identity; residential space and domestic artifacts; industrialization and home life; and evolving domestic technology. Each week during class we will engage in an “Architectural Investigation,” where we will learn more about architectural historians’ research methods or take virtual field trips to historic houses.

Course Requirements:

Readings: Your first responsibility is to do the reading and discuss your reactions in class. On most weeks, you will be required to read several articles or chapters related to the week’s major topic. Usually, this will be from 75 to 100 pages of reading per week.

The required books for the course are:


All other readings for this course will be available on Blackboard. Bring a paper or electronic copy, marked with your notes and questions, to class.
“The Material Culture of Home” Paper and Presentation: At the midpoint of the semester students will write an
nine- to ten-page paper on an object type found commonly in American homes. Examples include cooking utensils,
textiles, a furniture type, appliances, or technological systems. Alternately, students may chose to focus on a
specific room, such as kitchens or bathrooms, or a dwelling type, such a rowhouses or ranch houses. The students
will explore the history of their object, room, or structure and consider how and why it has changed over time. They
will present their findings to their classmates.

Mid-Term Examination: There will be a mid-term exam on DATE during the regularly scheduled class time. It
will concentrate on the assigned readings and class discussions.

Article Prospectus: In our final week, students will hand in an eleven- to twelve-page prospectus for an article on
an aspect of American domestic life. The prospectus should include ideas drawn from the assigned readings and
other books and articles pertinent to the topic. Student should explain the importance of their topic, state their
research question, relate the topic to the themes discussed in class, present the relevant literature, describe research
methods, and prepare a brief annotated bibliography (not included in page count).

Final Examination: There will be a final exam on DATE. It will cover the assigned readings and class discussions
since the mid-term.

Grading:

Class Participation 15%
Material Culture Paper (DUE DATE) 15%
Material Culture Presentation 5%
Mid-Term Exam (DATE) 15%
Article Prospectus (DUE DATE) 30%
Final Exam (DATE) 20%

Assignments receive grades on the following scale: A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, and F=59 and below. Individual assignments may receive pluses or minuses; the overall final grade will not. There will be no incompletes given in this class. You must complete all assignments and exams to receive credit for this class.

Class Policies:

Academic Integrity: Please be advised that the penalty for academic dishonesty – including plagiarism and other
forms of cheating – in any UMBC History Department course is an "F" for the course. ALL cases of academic
dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Conduct Committee. For further definitions on what academic
misconduct is and how to avoid it at all costs please see http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/.

Attendance: More than one unexcused absence from a scheduled class will have a significant adverse affect on your
participation grade.

Due Dates and Deadlines: Papers and projects are due at the beginning of class on the assigned dates. Any late
submissions will be penalized a grade level for each day they are overdue. For example, a C+ paper turned in one
day late would receive a grade of C; two days late, a C-; three days late, a D+, etc.

Electronics Policy: Use of electronic devices for non-class related activities is not permitted in this class. If you
ignore this policy I will mark your class participation for the day as a zero.
UMBC Statement on Disabilities and Information for Obtaining Accommodations:
UMBC is committed to eliminating discriminatory obstacles that disadvantage students based on disability. Student Support Services (SSS) is the UMBC department designated to receive and maintain confidential files of disability-related documentation, certify eligibility for services, determine reasonable accommodations, develop with each student plans for the provision of such accommodations, and serve as a liaison between faculty members and students regarding disability-related issues. If you require certain accommodations, please submit an application (found at http://sss.umbc.edu/files/2014/05/RequestForServicesForm-Updated-2.docx and all disability documentation to Student Support Services (Math/Psych Bldg, Room 213, UMBC, 1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore, MD 21250) as soon as possible. Please see the application for details on appropriate documentation guidelines. For information or questions about the application, please call 410-455-2459.

Once your accommodations have been approved, you will meet with the UMBCShady Grove Program Coordinator, Ms. Ashley Waters (awaters@umbc.edu), who will work with you and your instructors to ensure you receive the proper accommodations. If you have any questions or concerns, please notify Ms. Waters immediately. For students at the Shady Grove campus, the Center for Academic Success (CAS) provides additional support. CAS provides test proctoring services and can act as a liaison between students at USG and their home campus, as well as between students and their professors. For more information on the services CAS provides, please visit http://www.shadygrove.umd.edu/campus-services/cas/dss.

Class Meeting Schedule

**Week 1: Course Introduction**

*Architectural Investigation: Fieldwork Methods*

**Week 2: Domestic Life in Colonial America**


*Architectural Investigation: Working with Probate Inventories and Land Records.*

**Week 3: Gentility in the Eighteenth Century**


*Architectural Investigation: Exploring Hampton Mansion (use CDHE project)*

**Week 4: What about Everyone Else?: The Domestic Life of Slaves**

Week 5: What about Everyone Else?: The Domestic Life of Free Workers


Week 6: The Single-Family House as American Ideal


Week 7: Domesticity and its Critiques


Week 8: Student Presentations – The Material Culture of Home

Week 9: Housework and Domestic Technology: Part I


Week 10: Housework and Domestic Technology: Part II


Week 11: Domestic Interiors

Architectural Investigation: Trade Catalogs

Week 12: Government Involvement in American Housing


Architectural Investigation: Analyzing Floor-plans

Week 13: Twentieth-Century Suburbanization

Architectural Investigation: Working with Historic Aerials

Week 14: Article Prospectus and Class Evaluation
In our final week students will explain how the study of housing has contributed to developing the main themes of American history through discussion of their article prospectus.