INTRODUCTION TO HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Drew University Continuing Education Program (2 CUE’s)
Fall Semester 2011

Instructor: Margaret Newman
mnewmanhistory@comcast.net
609.273.7003 (cell)

This course is an introduction to the preservation of the built environment, examining the history and philosophy of historic preservation and how the discipline is practiced today. It will provide the historic framework of how preservation has emerged as a field of specialization and will expose the students to the terminology used by its adherents.

Reading assignments will accompany each class, leading to lively class discussion.


Required readings are required, information may appear on quiz. Suggested readings are not required, but contain valuable information and are provided to students as supplemental resources. Additional readings may be assigned during the course.

Week 1 (September 8) – Why Preserve? An Overview
Explore the manifold rationales for engaging in historic preservation. Why do historic resources matter to us? What are the benefits of preserving historic resources? Aesthetic, commemorative, economic, educational, environmental and quality of life rewards will be discussed.

READ
Chapter 1: Introduction, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice*

Week 2 (September 15) – Preservation Perspectives: A Brief History of the Movement
An overview of the history of historic preservation in the United States. Together we will examine key properties that have been saved over time, and who saved them. We will analyze how our collective sense of what constitutes a landmark has changed over time. A key point of discussion will be the centuries old dilemma of “Scrape versus Anti-Scrape.”

READ
Chapter 2: The Preservation Movement in the United States


Suggested Reading:
Week 3 (September 22) – Establishing an Architectural Vocabulary
Students will gain a better understanding of architectural styles common in the United States. An enhanced ability to read visual clues and place buildings in the appropriate historic context will result.

READ
Chapter 3: Architectural Styles, Contextualism and Technology

Week 4 (September 29) – What is Historic?
The National Register of Historic Places has been developed over four decades as the list of America’s significant historic resources. How do things get on that list? What does being a registered property mean? What happens to resources once they have been listed? Aside from National Register listing, how are properties recognized as significant?

READ
Chapter 5: The Designation of Individual Historic Properties
National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation
http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/

Assignment 1 is due at the end of class.

Week 5 (October 6) – The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards
Knowledge of The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties is essential for anyone serious about protecting historic properties in the United States. Developed by the federal government, these standards guide acceptable preservation practices when doing physical work on historic properties.

READ
Chapter 7: Intervention Approaches, Documentation and Technology
The Secretary of the Interior’s Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings
http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/TP5/tax/rhb/guide.htm

Week 6 (October 13) – Significance and Interpretation of a Resource — if you preserve it, will they come?
In the National Register, one of the key questions to be answered is the resource’s “Period of Significance.” Having a clear idea of the period of significance is key to good preservation projects and helps to clarify decisions for all interventions on the building. Once the significance of the building is determined, how it is successfully conveyed and interpreted to the public? We will look at case studies of The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards in practice from planning documents to the rehabilitation and interpretation of several historic resources.

READ
Chapter 11: Heritage Tourism, Cultural Landscapes and Heritage Areas
How to Research the History of a House brochure by the Historic Preservation Office
http://www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/4sustain/houseresearch.pdf
Week 7 (October 20) – Preserving Communities
Historic preservation is just one aspect of the many “quality of life” issues communities face today. Open space preservation and Smart Growth are others that have made headlines. How can these things be brought together so that they build on each other’s successes? How do you keep historic preservation on the table?

READ
Chapter 6: Historic Districts and Ordinances
Chapter 9: Preservation Planning
Assignment 2 is due at the end of class.

Week 8 (October 27) – Preservation Regulations: The Stick
Regulation has been a cornerstone of the American Preservation Movement. Learn about the differences between different levels of regulation (Federal, state, and local). Discuss tools and approaches for making regulation a user-friendly process.

READ
Chapter 4: The Legal Basis of Preservation

Week 9 (November 3) – Current Issues in Historic Preservation
Together we will explore current issues in historic preservation. Including, but not limited to: house museums, the significance and preservation of recent past resources and the Green Building Movement. Each presents unique challenges and opportunities.

READ
Chapter 8: Preservation Economics
Chapter 10: Sustainability and Partnering with the Environmental Community

Week 10 (November 10) – Final Project Presentations
A brief test focusing on topics covered in lectures and required readings will be given.
ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAM

Assignment 1—Architectural Terminology, Due September 29

Provide visual representations (photograph, digital photo, magazine) of two historic buildings focusing on the terms listed below. Clearly label each with the correct architectural term. In addition to the correct terminology, try to include architectural style and date of construction.

OVERALL PLAN
ROOF
FENESTRATION
CORNICE
ENTRANCE
PORCH

Assignment 2—Visit a Historic Site, Due October 20

Visit a historic house, park, ruin, architectural site, battlefield or other publically interpreted site. The purpose of this assignment is to have you visit, explore and observe what makes a historic site—the site itself, interpretation, visitation practices, providing for visitor needs, etc.

At a minimum, collect the following information:

- Any hand-out or interpretive documentation available
- What is the historic significance of the site?
- Is this significance easily understood and well-conveyed?
- Hours of operation/visitation
- How the historic site is operated, specifically, who owns and/or operates the site
- If available, the site or operating organization’s mission
- Is the operating organization a membership organization? If so, what is the cost of membership and what are the benefits of membership?

Investigate/Observe the following:

- How the site is used (house museum, historic park, memorial)
- How visitation is conducted (docent guided tour, self-guided, etc.)
- The focus of interpretation (architecture, history of the occupants if a house museum, collections)
- How is the historical significance of the site interpreted? When you are at the site, how do you understand or perceive its significance?
- What, if anything, has been added to the site specifically for visitors? ADA ramp? Toilet rooms? Lighting? Security systems? Raised walkways through an archaeological site? Ropes or carpeting to control visitor access to historic spaces? Do these additions take away from the interpretive experience?

Analyze

- Did you learn anything?
- Did you enjoy yourself?
- Will you revisit?

Your submission should be brief, limited to a couple of pages.
Final Project—Short Presentation, last class, November 10

The goal of historic preservation should be to make historic buildings relevant and useful in today’s society. How can we as preservationists ensure that historic buildings are a living part of our community? Find a public historic building in your community that you believe is successfully used. Whether an adaptive use, historic site, or a historic building that continues to serve the purpose for which it was constructed, examine and explain why you find it a productive community asset. Some examples could be:

- It is well-used and provides the public with consistent access to a well-preserved historic resource
- It has all the necessary and expected modern amenities but still conveys a sense of its history
- It is an important anchor of a downtown district and a symbol of the town
- It is a historic site that has innovative programming, reaches a wide audience and is an important asset to the community

Some additional questions you should consider:

- Is the building you are looking at listed on the National Register? If it is, how has listing helped? If it isn’t, should it be? Would it make a difference?
- If the building has been rehabilitated, were the Secretary of the Interior Standards followed? Which overall philosophy was applied? In what way was the chosen preservation philosophy effective?
- Are there other preservation issues that apply? Have green design principles been used? Is the building from the recent past?

The presentation should be short, about 5 minutes, and should be supplemented with photographs. Be creative and try to remember that historic buildings should be used buildings. Historic means old, not necessarily significant. Unless a building can be made useful for today, it won’t be saved.

Exam—there will be a brief test during the last class, November 10.

Receipt of a passing grade is dependant on course attendance, class participation, successful completion of the written assignment, and test score.

More than two absences may result in a failing grade.