**Boston: Architecture and Urbanism**

Art and Art History (FAH 95/195)  •  Spring 2014  •  Wed. 10:30-11:45 & Fri. 9-11:30
Daniel Abramson
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**Summary**

This class presents a history of Boston from the seventeenth through the twenty-first centuries, as seen through the region’s architectural and urban history. Major buildings, architects, and urban planning schemes are examined primarily in terms of economic, political, social, and institutional histories, with a secondary focus on styles of architecture.

The course is structured thematically and chronologically with an emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Different classes will examine various areas of the city and region — for example its parks, suburbs, and the Back Bay — as well as expressions of stylistic trends — for example modernism and postmodernism. Each of these classes, combining lecture and discussion, requires close preparation of several readings, which will be tested with brief in-class writing assignments.

Four other assignments offer different means by which to learn about Boston’s architectural and urban history. 1) A short paper (5-7 pages) reviewing the book *Common Ground* surveys broad social, urban, and historical issues related to Boston’s 1970s busing crisis. 2) A redesign project for Copley Square presents the opportunity to study and reconfigure one of Boston’s major public spaces. 3) A neighborhood survey, done in teams, involves visiting, studying, and photographing the architecture of one of the region’s distinctive locales. 4) The term project offers the opportunity to research an aspect of one’s choosing related to Boston’s architectural and urban history, from an individual building or architect, to a district or architectural style. Note that class presentations will be made in conjunction with the Copley Square, neighborhood survey, and term projects. Students taking the course as FAH 195 will be required to produce a slightly larger and more detailed term project.

Field trips constitute a significant and required part of the class. The trips will be scheduled for Friday mornings. Visits will be taken to Beacon Hill, Back Bay, Government Center/West End, the Financial District/Greenway, the South End, and MIT/Kendall. These trips offer opportunities to study Boston’s architecture first-hand, with examination focused on formal, thematic, and contextual aspects of individual buildings and urban ensembles.
Requirements
Preparation and participation (15%): Daily
In-class writing (15%): Regularly
Short paper (15%): Due Feb. 7
Copley Square redesign project (15%): Presentations on February 19 and 21
Neighborhood survey (10%): Team presentations on March 12 and 26
Term project (30%): Presentations (5%), April 18 and 23
Final version (25%) due May 5

Note: A failing grade in any of these requirements may result in a failing grade for the course.

Texts
Lawrence W. Kennedy, Planning the City Upon A Hill: Boston Since 1630 (1994) (also on reserve)
J. Anthony Lukas, Common Ground (1986)

All other readings available on course Trunk site.

Field Trips
Field trips are scheduled for the following Fridays: January 31, February 7, March 7,
March 14, April 7, and April 11. Attendance is required.

SCHEDULE

Week 1
Jan. 15 Introduction

Jan. 17 Colonial Boston and Its Topography
Kennedy, pp. 11-21
Warden, "Inequality and Instability in Eighteenth-Century Boston: A Reappraisal" (excerpt)
Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History (excerpt)

Week 2
Jan. 24 Bulfinch and the Architecture of Oligarchy and Control
Kennedy, pp. 23-41
Goodman, "Ethics and Enterprise: The Values of a Boston Elite, 1800-1860"
Dickens, American Notes (excerpts)

Week 3
Jan. 29 Commerce and Expansion: South End and Back Bay
Kennedy, pp. 43-71
Handlin, Boston's Immigrants (excerpt)
Domosh, Invented Cities (excerpt)
Jan. 31 **Trip to Beacon Hill**

Lynch, *The Image of the City* (excerpt)
Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians* (excerpt)
Cromwell, "The Black Presence in the West End of Boston, 1800-1864: A Demographic Map"

**Week 4**

Feb. 5 **Parks, Cemeteries, and Monuments**

Kennedy, pp. 65-108
Von Hoffman, *Local Attachments* (excerpt)
Olmsted, *Civilizing American Cities* (excerpts)

Feb. 7 **Trip to Back Bay**

Krieger and Green, "The Shaping of a Square: Copley Square"

**Common Ground**

*Short paper due*

**Week 5**

Feb. 12 **Culture, Education and Art**

DiMaggio, "Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston"
Harris, "The Gilded Age Revisited: Boston and the Museum Movement"
Floyd, *Architectural Education and Boston* (excerpt)

Feb. 14 **Neighborhoods and Suburbs**

Kennedy, pp. 67-71
Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs* (excerpts)
O'Connor, *Bibles, Brahmins, and Bosses* (excerpt)
Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins* (excerpts)
Deutsch, "Reconceiving the City: Women, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1910"

**Week 6**

Feb. 19 **Copley Square redesign project presentations**

Feb. 21 **Copley Square redesign project presentations**

**Week 7**

Feb. 26 **Tradition and Modernity**

Kennedy, pp. 109-155
Holleran, "Boston’s ‘Sacred Skyline’: From Prohibiting to Sculpting Skyscrapers, 1891-1928"
Shand-Tucci, *Built in Boston: City and Suburb, 1800-1950* (excerpt)
Bush-Brown, "Cram and Gropius: Traditionalism and Progressivism"

Feb. 28 **Urban Renewal, Blockbusting, Mission Hill and the Miracle of Boston**

Kennedy, pp. 157-192
Fried, "Grief and Adaptation: The Impact of Relocation in Boston’s West End"
Levine and Harmon, *The Death of an American Jewish Community* (excerpts)
Week 8
Mar. 5  Postmodern Boston
        Kennedy, pp. 193-245
        Fincher, "Urban redevelopment in Boston: rhetoric and reality"
        Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (excerpt)
        Rawn, "The Waterfront: An Urban Pattern"

Mar. 7  Government Center trip
        Miller and Morgan, Boston Architecture (excerpt)

Week 9
Mar. 12 Neighborhood survey presentations

Mar. 14 South End trip
        Kennedy, pp. 218-245
        Peirce and Guskind, Breakthroughs (excerpt)

Week 10
Mar. 26 Neighborhood survey presentations

Mar. 28 no class

Week 11
Apr. 2  Big Dig Boston
        reading to be announced

Apr. 7  Financial District & Greenway trip
        Frieden and Sagaly, Downtown, Inc. (excerpt)
        Miller and Morgan, Boston Architecture (excerpt)

Week 12
Apr. 9  Regional Boston
        Rowe, Making a Middle Landscape (excerpt)
        Garreau, Edge City (excerpt)
        O'Connell, Hub's Metropolis (excerpt)

Apr. 11 MIT/Kendall trip
        reading to be announced

Week 13
Apr. 16 Contemporary Boston
        reading to be announced

Apr. 18 Term project presentations

Week 14
Apr. 23 Term project presentations

Apr. 25 Conclusion: Current and Future Issues