Architecture of London: Field Study

**Location**
NYU London

**Class code**
ARTH-UA 9671 - 001

**Instructor Details**
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**Class Details**
Architecture in London: Field Study
Mondays 1.00-5.00
Room G03

**Prerequisites**
A serious interest in learning about British architecture and the history of London; enthusiasm for the subject, an ability to use one’s eyes and ask questions, combined with a commitment to consult and to read recommended texts, plus a tolerance for wet and cold weather on field trips.

**Class Description**
The course will trace the history planning and building in London from the 17th to the present, investigating the history of western architecture during this period more broadly, and the social and economic background in Britain that shaped the city.

The classroom sessions will involve illustrated lectures, amplified by discussion. The field studies will develop the themes by visiting parts of London that display successive movements in style and social thinking. Individual tutorial sessions will be held in preparation for the essays.

**Desired Outcomes**
A broad understanding of the history of London and of its architecture.

A greater understanding of the history of British architecture, and of British history, as illuminated by the actual experience of buildings in London.

A better ability to see: to use one’s eyes to study and understand buildings, combined with an ability to recognize and interpret architectural styles.

Basic knowledge of the literature in the field and its underlying methodologies.

**Assessment Components**
First essay (up to 2,000 words): 30%; second essay (up to 3,000 words) 50%;
final visual image test 20%.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.
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It is expected that essays should be clearly and well written with proper references. They should be based primarily on the student’s own reading of recommended print and internet sources, supported by additional visits to buildings.

The final one-hour test requires visual memory to identify buildings visited from photographs and drawings and to give essential information about them, plus a description of their main design features and their historical significance, following the themes presented in visits and classes.

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: Excellent work demonstrating a critical and observant approach to the subject, sound research and an ability to express thoughts cogently and persuasively.

Grade B: Very good work.

Grade C: Satisfactory work.

Grade D: Passable work.

Grade F: Failure to achieve a passable standard.

Required Text(s)


Supplemental Text

(not required to purchase as copies, are in NYU-L Library)


Other reading is listed week by week according to topic, and also on essay briefing sheets. Some useful material is available on NYU Classes, but for essays you need to read in more depth. Senate House is the only loan collection to which you have access. Be prepared to use the reference libraries listed below and check their electronic catalogues to discover whether the books or journals you want are available. Most these libraries allow you to photograph pages from books for study purposes.

RIBA Library, 66 Portland Place, London W1 (irregular opening hours – check before visiting)

RIBA Library

Paul Mellon Centre, 16 Bedford Square, London WC1
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Pau Mellon Centre
National Art Library, V&A Museum, SW7 (look at registration procedures before visiting)

National Art Library
Architectural Association Library, 34-36 Bedford Square, London WC1 (registration will be paid for you or request to Luke Harper)

Architectural Association Library

Other reference libraries with collections on the history of London:

Holborn Library, 32-38 Theobalds Road, WC1X 8PA. Reference collection in Local Studies

Holborn Library

London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, Clerkenwell, EC1R 0HB. Open shelf book collection

London Metropolitan Archives

Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, EC2V 7HH. In-depth resources for London history

Guildhall Library

Internet Research Guidelines

Internet sources can be useful, but it is the student’s responsibility to decide whether the information is of good enough quality to be used in an essay. The most valuable single online source (where it covers the relevant area) is the series of volumes of *The Survey of London*, 1900-2013, available on British History Online

Additional Required Equipment

While there is seldom enough time on field trips to make drawings, sketching and visual note taking are valuable ways of learning to see and understand the form of buildings and are encouraged outside class hours. Taking photos on visits will be helpful in remembering the buildings seen. These visual records may be included in essays as illustration.

*Note: all sessions start from classroom G03 at NYU London, 6 Bedford Square, unless otherwise stated.*

*Indicates that some or all of the text is available on NYU Classes

Session 1
Monday 3 September

The Shape of London and the impact of the Renaissance – lecture followed by visit to Covent Garden and Seven Dials


Session 2
Monday 10 September

After the Great Fire: Christopher Wren in the City –, lecture followed by visit to St Paul’s Cathedral and Wren churches. (Please ensure your Oyster card is topped up enough for at least one journey)

Session 3
Monday 17 September
Nicholas Hawksmoor and English Baroque – visit to Christ Church Spitalfields, St George in the East and St Anne, Limehouse


Meet at 1.30 p.m. at Liverpool Street Station, outside MacDonalds at street level on Liverpool Street. Please ensure your Oyster card is topped up enough for four journeys (including journey to start of class and journey home at the end)

Session 4
Monday 24 September
Georgian and Regency London, from the ‘Age of Improvement’ to John Nash – lecture followed by visit on foot to Fitzroy Square and Regents Park

*Denys Lasdun, 'The Landscape of Urban Architecture', 1984

Session 5
Monday 1 October
Mid-term practice for visual image recognition and significance test (not graded).

Lecture - Romanticism and the Victorian imagination
Visit to Enlightenment Gallery, British Museum.


Hand-in for first essay

Session 6
Friday 5 October
(Make-up class)
1930s Modernism in Hampstead

*Alan Powers, Modern: the Modern Movement in Britain, 2005

Meet at 1.30 p.m. at Hampstead Underground Station (Northern Line)

Session 7
Monday 8 October
Style Revivals and Religious Revivals – visit to St Mary Magdalene, Munster Square, All Saints Margaret Street, All Souls Langham Place, and visit to Tate Britain.

*B. F. L. Clarke, Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century, 1938, chapters 5 and 7

Meet at 1.30 p.m. at Great Portland Street Station. Return of first essay

Session 8
Monday 15 October
Railway Stations – lecture and visit to St Pancras and King’s Cross

Session 9
Monday 22 October
Albertopolis: visit to Victoria and Albert Museum, Natural History Museum and Leighton House


Meet at 1.30 p.m. at South Kensington Station (in Thurloe Street, outside Underground entrance)
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Session 10
Monday 29 October

London architecture and the coming of Modernity – lecture and visit to South Bank

*Alan Powers, Britain, Modern Architectures in History, 2007 [chapters 1 & 2]
Jerry White, London in the Twentieth Century – a city and its people, 2008 [Part One, chapters 1 & 2]

Session 11
Monday 12 November

Post-war reconstruction: visit to Spa Green, Golden Lane and Barbican

John Allan, Berthold Lubetkin: architecture and the tradition of Progress, Artifice, 2012
Elain Harwood, Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, RIBA, 2012
David Heathcote, Barbican, Penthouse over the city, Wiley 2004/2014

Meet at 1.30 p.m. at Angel Underground street entrance

Session 12
Monday 19 November

City Architecture since the 1970s


Meet at 1.30 p.m. at Liverpool Street Station, as for week 3

Session 13
Monday 26 November

Essay seminar – student presentations and discussion

Session 14
Monday 3 December

Preparation briefing for test/exam; Lecture, London – the last 70 years and the future

Submission of second essay

Session 15
Monday 10 December

Examination: visual image recognition and significance test

Classroom Etiquette

Toilet breaks should be taken before or after class or during class breaks.
Food & drink, including gum, are not to be consumed in class.
Mobile phones should be set on silent and should not be used in class except for emergencies.
Laptops are only to be used with the express permission of the teacher and must be entirely SILENT.
Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.

Required Co-curricula Activities

Buildings and institutions which students should visit and explore during the semester outside the course visits include such major monuments as the Banqueting House in Whitehall, the British Museum, the Houses of Parliament (New Palace of Westminster), Sir John Soane’s Museum, the Royal Festival Hall, the National Theatre etc.

Estimated Travel Costs

Many of the starting points for visits can be reached easily on foot from 6 Bedford Square and nearby halls of residence. Six of the visits begin from a station in Zone 1 (£2.20 one way), one of which involves an onward journey to zone 2 (£2.20) and return (£2.20), and one starts and finishes in zone 3 (£2.80). This makes a maximum spend of approximately £36.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Early evening lectures are organized weekly by the Victorian Society, the Twentieth Century Society and other conservation charities on relevant subjects. See their websites for more information. There is a
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programme of events about contemporary architecture (lectures, exhibitions etc.) free and open to the public at the Architectural Association, 34-36 Bedford Square. There are free lectures and midday seminars at the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 16 Bedford Square. See also the lecture and events programme the Building Centre run by New London Architecture

Your Instructor  
Dr. Alan Powers studied History of Art at the University of Cambridge and has worked as an author, teacher and exhibition curator. He was Professor of Architecture and Cultural History at the University of Greenwich until 2012, when he left to have more time for writing and researching as an independent scholar. His publications cover a range of individual English architects, artists and designers of the twentieth century and include surveys of architecture in this field. Alan Powers also teaches on the Masters Course ‘Historical and Sustainable Architecture’ at NYU London.

NYU GLOBAL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Policies and procedures for Global Academic Centres, including policies on academic integrity and the Study Away Standard, can be found here: NYU Student Affairs

Absences:  Key information on NYU London’s absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found here: NYU Attendance Policy

NYU London work submission policies can be found here: NYU Academic Policy