

## GE/ID 335: Sociocultural Aspects of Design

Inst.: Richard Bordner

Off.Hrs: Henry Hall 2, M-F 9-3

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**Texts:** Ames, Kenneth 1992. Death in the Dining Room. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Groth, Paul and Todd Bressi (eds). 1997. Understanding Ordinary Landscapes. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rensel, Jan and Margaret Rodman (eds). 1997. Home in the Islands. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Rosbach, Sarah. 1987. Interior Design with Feng Shui. New York: Dutton.

**Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to provide students with a background in cross-cultural aspects of both exterior and interior design. The main emphasis will be on the use of space as a form of ritual communication within a cultural context, often without conscious awareness of the inhabitants. Areas of discussion will be: patterns of residential layout; concepts of the home in different societies; geomantic/feng shui logic in exterior and interior layout in different cultures (specifically Hawai'i, Japan and China); and cultural aspects to interior design both in layout and furnishings. The major areas of regional examination from which examples will be taken are East Asia and the Pacific.

**Course Objectives:** 1) to increase awareness of how pervasive cultural aspects of design are in most societies (including the United States);

2) accomodation of cultural logic in design decisions (dealing with client demands);

3) more comprehensive understanding of geomantic/feng shui principles in design decisions;

4) ability to "read" the use of symbol and icon in space and objects within the home and office setting cross-culturally.

**Grading:** 1) Reaction papers: A series of 3 reaction papers will be required in response to issues raised in the readings and class discussions. Each paper will be from 3-5 pages (text) and count for 15% of the course grade (total 60% of course grade).

2) Term project: The term project will consist of either a real-world or abstract design problem in which a number of cultural factors can be applied. The paper will discuss both the cultural factors in question and the appropriate solutions in an realistic design setting. The submittal will be a final paper of 6-12 pages in length and a short in-class presentation (10 minute) which will count for 30% of the course grade.

3) Attendance/participation: As in all classes your participation is critical to the entire group getting any utility out of the class. Attendance is mandatory as synthetic and summary discussions will be handled in class lectures--the readings are case examples and discussions rather than a textbook. Attendance/participation will count for 10% of the course grade.

**Grading:** Reaction Papers = 60%    Class Project = 30%    Attend/Part. = 10%

A = 90-100    B = 80-89    C = 70-79    D = 60-69    F = -60

- Jan. 12: Introduction  
 Ass: Read Groth ch. 1-2
- 14: Perception and reality in the behavioral sciences  
 Ass: Read Rensel prologue-ch. 1
- 16: Perception and reality in contemporary theory
- 19: Holiday  
 Ass: Read Groth ch. 6, 9, Rensel ch. 5
- 21: Early views of material culture
- 23: Concepts from cultural/landscape geography
- 26: Concepts from anthropology/communications: proxemics  
 Ass: Read Groth ch. 4, 15, 17, Rensel ch. 10
- 28: Development of Semiotic analysis--communication with objects  
 Ass: Read Ames intro-ch. 1, ch. 5-concl.
- 30: Semiotics in the house
- Feb. 2: Semiotic analysis
- 4: The \$300 word: Architectonic analysis  
 Ass: Read Groth ch. 11
- 6: Architectonics and ritual space
- 9: Marxist analysis
- 11: Postmodernism and trends
- 13: Cultural landscapes 1885-98  
 Ass: Read Ames ch. 2, 4
- 16: Holiday
- 18: American cultural landscapes
- 20: Artificial cultural landscapes--tourism and Disney
- 23: Spatial concepts in Asian societies--Chinese urban planning and Feng Shui  
 Ass: Read Rossbach ch. 1-5
- 25: Spatial concepts in Asian societies--Japanese vernacular planning  
 Ass: Read xeroxes (Waialeale/Haleole), Rensel ch. 2, 4, 6-8
- 27: Spatial concepts in Pacific/Oceanic societies
- March 2: Community planning in Oceania
- 4: Community planning
- 6: Community planning
- 9: Moving to old interiors-application of spatial concepts to interior space-archaeology
- 11: Interior space from a proxemic perspective
- 13: Interior space from a symbolic/iconographic perspective  
 Ass: Read Rossbach ch. 6-8
- 16: Cultural logic in interior space
- 18: Religion and space
- 20: Furniture as icon
- 23-27: Spring Break
- 30: Furniture as icon
- April 1: Consumerism as communication
- 3: Consumerism as communication
- 6: Practical application of theory
- 8: Practical application of theory
- 10: Holiday
- 13: Reports on student projects
- 15: Reports on student projects
- 17: Reports on student projects
- 20: Group work on cases
- 22: Group work on cases
- 24: Group work on cases
- 27: Group work on cases
- 29: Future of cultural landscape studies
- May 1: Summary and discussion / Project Paper Due