

GE/ID 335: Sociocultural Aspects of Design

Inst.: Richard Bordner  
Off. Hrs: M, F 9-12, TR 11-1 or by app't. (E122)  
Phone: 739-4644(wk), 942-3563(home)

Texts: Cieraad, Irene (ed.) 1999. At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space. Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press.  
Rensel, Jan & Margaret Rodman (eds.) 1997. Home in the Islands. Honolulu: UH Press.  
Jenkins, Virginia 1994. The Lawn: A History of an American OBSESSION. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press.  
Knapp, Ronald. 1999. China's Living Houses. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press.

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 emphasis from which examples will be taken from are the Americas (pre-contact), 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) To sensitize people to the need to accommodate to cultural logic in design decisions;
- 3) To develop a more comprehensive understanding of some geomantic systems and feng-shui principles and their application in design decisions;
- 4) To enhance the ability to "read" the use of symbols and icon in space and the cultural meaning of objects in home and office settings.

Grading:

- 1) Reaction Papers: There will be a series of 3 reaction papers required in response to issues raised in the readings and class discussions. Each paper will be from 4-6 pages and will count for 15% of the course grade (totaling 60% of the 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 a realistic design setting. The submittal will be a final paper of 6-12 pages in length and a short in-class presentation (10 minutes). The paper will count for 30% of the course grade.
- 3) Attendance/Participation: Attendance is mandatory (university policy). Your participation is critical to the entire group getting any utility out of this class. Summary discussions are handled in class lectures—the books are readings rather than textbooks, so you must read in advance and participate in discussions. Attendance and participation will count for 10% of the course grade.

Course Grades: Reaction Papers.....	60%(3)	A= 90-100	D= 60-69
Term Project.....	30%	B= 80-89	F= -60
Attend/Part.....	10%	C= 70-79	

- Jan. 18: Introduction  
Ass: Read Cieraad ch. 1-3
- 20: Perception, reality and theory of explanation in the behavioral sciences and geog.  
Ass: Read Rensel prologue-ch. 1, 5
- 25: The power and subliminals of culture, material culture, symbolism and icons  
Ass: Read Jenkins ch. 1-3, Cieraad ch. 8-9
- 27: Concepts from cultural and landscape geography
- Feb. 1: Concepts: anthropology, communications (proxemics) and geography  
Ass: Read Rensel ch. 10, Cieraad ch. 4, 7, 10
- 3: Development of semiotic and architectonic analysis
- 8: Architectonics and ritual space, Marxist and post-modern analysis  
Ass: Read Jenkins ch. 4-7
- 10: Euroamerican cultural landscapes 1800-1999
- 15: Hawaiian cultural landscapes 1000-1900
- 17: Artificial cultural landscapes-Waikiki, Disney and Las Vegas  
Ass: Read Knapp ch. 1-4
- 22: Spatial concepts in Asian societies—Chinese urban planning and feng shui
- 24: Feng shui implications in Chinese planning  
Ass: Read Knapp ch. 5-9
- 29: Spatial concepts in Asian societies—Japanese vernacular planning  
Ass: Read Rensel ch. 2, 4, 6-8
- March 2: Spatial concepts in Oceanic societies—New Caledonia
- 7: Community planning and geomancy in Oceania  
Ass: Read Waialeale, Haleole xeroxes
- 9: Community planning and geomancy in pre-contact Hawai'i
- 14: Planning and Development—history and trends
- 16: Community planning issues—values in space
- 21: Community planning issues—values in space
- 23: Moving to real old interiors—spatial concepts in the past cultures
- 27-31: Spring Break
- April 4: Interior space from a proxemic perspective
- 6: Interior space from a symbolic/iconographic perspective
- 11: Cultural, religious and moral logic in interior space
- 13: Interiors as stages for ritual and control  
Ass: Read Cieraad ch. 5-6, 11-12
- 18: Consumerism in communication
- 20: Furniture as icon—the lounge as throne, the dinner table as ritual stage
- 25: Practical application of theory—feng shui and clients
- 27: Practical application of theory—dangerous colors
- May 2: Group work—case studies
- 4: Group work, the future of cultural landscape studies
- 8: **Project paper due**