SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Fall 2011
Discipline: Architectural History/Religion
ARH 4500: Sacred Spaces
REL G 2559-504: Sacred Spaces
Upper Division
Faculty Name: Mr. Nelson

Pre-requisites:

COURSE DESCRIPTION
What is sacred space? This course answers this question in three phases. The first will begin with a
discussion of the various theoretical formulations for understanding sacred spaces. Thus, the first
third of the class will be discussion-based. The second will begin an examination of those spaces
commonly understood as sacred: places of worship. Lectures during this portion will examine
ritual spaces among major world religions, investigating specifically the ways architecture shapes
religious belief and practice in the past and the present. The final third of the class will explore
more peripheral assertions of sanctity on space, including the home, places of memory and
commemoration, natural landscapes, capital cities, even the shopping mall. This class will include
both lecture and discussions of critical readings. Students will be expected to engage class readings
critically and come to class prepared to discuss and debate the various methods put forth in the
scholarship. Particular attention will be paid to those sacred spaces from countries we will be
visiting on our voyage.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

UNIT 1: Theorizing Sacred Space
This unit is very reading intensive and class time will be spent entirely in discussion of the
two articles assigned for that day. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the general
argument of each article AND to defend the strength of one scholar over the other.

Day 1: Introductions

Day 2: Hierophanies
Readings:
Simon and Schuster), vol. 11, 526-535.
Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Chapter 1, “Sacred Space and Making the World
Sacred” (1957)
Gerardus van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, Chapter 1, “Sacred Space.”
(1933)
Day 3: The Sacred and Ritual
Readings:
Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, (1909) chapter 2: “The Territorial Passage”

Day 4: Instability of the Sacred
Readings:

Day 5: Perceiving the Sacred
Readings:

Day 6: Politics of the Sacred
Readings:
Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America”

Day 7: Sacred in the Everyday?
Readings:

UNIT 2: World Religions in Place
   This unit will be filled almost entirely with classroom lectures. While students will be expected to complete the reading, they will not be responsible for assessing the strength of the scholarly argument. These readings are intended solely as informational support to the lectures.

Day 8: Hinduism
Readings:

Day 9: Ancient Buddhism
Readings:
G. Roth, “The Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa” in *The Stupa: Its Religious, Historical and
Day 10: Shinto
Readings:

Day 11: Judaism
Readings:
Harold W. Turner, *From Temple to Meetinghouse: the theology and phenomenology of places of worship* (1979), 278-301

Day 12: Byzantine Christianity
Readings:

Day 13: Islam
Readings:

Day 14: Medieval Christianity
Readings:

Day 15: Zen Buddhism
Readings: “Koto-in Zen Temple” from Thomas Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place*, 180-213

UNIT 3: Broader Views on the Sacred

In this unit of the semester, classes will be a mixture of lectures and discussions based on the assigned readings.

Day 16: Sacred Memory
Readings:
Edward Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields*, “Introduction”
Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, chapter 6, “Religious Collective Memory”

Day 17: Nature as Sacred Space
Readings:
Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt, “Approaching awe, a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion”
Day 18: The Sacred City
Readings:
Arthur Wright, “The Cosmology of the Chinese City,” in *The City in Late Imperial China* (1977), ed. G. W. Skinner

Day 19: Death, Life and Heaven
Readings:

Day 20: The Home as Sacred Space
Readings:

Day 21: Museums as Sacred Spaces
Readings:

Day 22: Shopping Malls as Sacred Space
Readings:

Day 23: Public Religion
Readings:
Matthew Glass, “‘Alexanders All’: Symbols of Conquest and Resistance at Mount Rushmore” in Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS (*At least twenty percent of the contact hours for each course.*)

FDPs: Students are expected to attend two FDPs as part of this class. These are required but not
graded. Options Include:

Morocco: visiting a mosque in either Casablanca or Fez

Japan: Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto, Horyuji Temple in Nara, or Ise Shrines in Ise

Field Work Presentation: Each student will be required to complete some form of a field work project, exploring some dimension of sacred spaces documented during the field study days on the voyage. These will likely be topics that find the student as the student is exploring during one of the country stops, or, more conventionally, students might select a topic before reaching a particular port. Either way, the student should be continuously looking for manifestations of the sacred in place during their in-country trips and exercises. Students will be required to make a 10 minute powerpoint presentation on their topic beginning in class on Day 16.

Field Work Paper: This 5 page paper [12 point font, standard margins] is the student’s opportunity to bring the scholarship reviewed in class to bear on some site visited independently by the student, NOT as part of a Louis Nelson-led FDP. These papers are expected to introduce the site and then review the site by considering the site in light of at least THREE scholars we have read in class.

Paper grading:

Factual Content 33%
Critical Analysis 33%
Quality of the Prose 33%

Participation Policy:
This class presumes that students attend all classes. Each unexcused absence will result in a lost point on your final letter grade. Students are also expected to attend two class-associated FDPs.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

The student’s final grade will be derived from the following:

Unit 1 Paper: 25%
Unit 2 Exam: 25%
Unit 3 Paper: 25%
Field Work Paper: 25%

Unit 1 Paper: This paper is a 5 page paper [12 point font, standard margins] standard margins dedicated to analyzing the theoretical literature of unit 1. Best papers will defend the strength of one or two theoretical frame(s) over others.

Unit 2 Exam: This exam is geared to testing student knowledge about the various religious
traditions and sites reviewed in the lectures and readings of unit 2. In addition to identifying key characteristics of various traditions, I will require definitions for some of the key terms used in class lectures. You will also be asked to write brief essays on themes and issues and to discuss buildings in relationship to one another based on the material presented in class and in the readings. You will find that to do well on the exams you MUST attend lectures.

Unit 3 Paper: This 10 page paper [12 point font, standard margins] is the student’s opportunity to critique the scholarship reviewed in unit 3 of the class. This scholarship is far more experimental than that reviewed in earlier sections and in that way can be more (or less) compelling. Student papers are to be a critique of some collection (but not all) of the literature of this unit, again by demonstrating the strength of some scholars over the work of others.

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (1957)
Harold W. Turner, From Temple to Meetinghouse: the theology and phenomenology of places of worship (1979)
George Mitchell, The Hindu Temple: an introduction to its meanings and forms (1977)
Oleg Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art (Yale, 1973)

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

(All Materials will be available electronically)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

None