ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE SYNAGOGUE
M/W 5:15-6:35
Shaffer Art Building 221D
instructor: Samuel Gruber,
email sdgruber@syr.edu
office hours: TBA

Description

For almost two thousand years the synagogue has been the focal point of Jewish life and identity. Architecturally, it has been the most prominent of Jewish buildings, for Jews and non-Jews. As the ceremonial center of Jewish life in the Diaspora, it has also been the locus for Jewish ritual art - the primary artistic expressions of Jewish patrons and artists throughout the centuries.

By following the development of the architecture and art of the synagogue throughout the ages and across continents, this course will examine several themes, including what defines Jewish art, what role art and architecture have played in Jewish history and life, and to what degree has interaction with Christian and Muslim cultures determined the production and appearance of Jewish art.

We will consider the institution and the building of the synagogue in its historical, religious, and cultural context, and will consider its development from the points of view function, symbolism, design, aesthetic, liturgy, gender, politics, geography and more.

Requirements

All students are required to:

attend class (5% of grade)
  attendance is taken at each class
participate in class discussions and class presentations (5% of grade)
write short written assignments (30% of grade)
take a mid-term exam (10% of grade)
take a final exam (20% of grade)
submit one descriptive/analytic paper (10-15) pages on a topics approved by the instructor. (30% of grade)

The order and content of lectures is subject to change, and includes the possibility of guest speakers and class trips or class meetings off-campus. Listed readings may be changed or supplemented.
Readings:

There is no one text for this course, but students may want to purchase the following books:


Weekly reading assignments will be posted under “assignments” on Blackboard.

Readings specific to the theme of each lecture will be assigned and placed on Blackboard or on library reserve.

Glossary:

Students will be required to keep a notebook to record and define art, architectural, religious and historical terms, names and places. Some vocabulary will be reviewed in every class.

Schedule of Lectures (all assignments will be posted on Blackboard) [Subject to Change]

**Mon., Aug 29**
Class 1: Defining the Synagogue

  Interview at least three people  
  note gender, age, religious identification and place of birth

  Read: Krinsky, Carol Herselle, *Synagogues of Europe.* Chapter 1, 5-19.

**Wednesday, Aug 31**
Class 2: Describing the Synagogue

  Synagogue360  
  Written assignment #1: Take one synagogue from website and describe


**Mon., Sept 5**
LABOR DAY: NO CLASS

**Wed, Sept 7**
Class 3: Class visit to Temple Society of Concord, 910 Madison Street

  Assignment for visit to Temple Concord

**Mon., Sept 12**
Class 4: The Tabernacle and Temple in Scripture, Archaeology and Myth

Written assignment #2 (Temple Concord) due


**Wed., Sept 14**
Class 5: Ancient Synagogues I

Assignment Temple & Synagogue


**Mon., Sept 19**
Class 6: Ancient Synagogues II


**Wed., Sept 21**
Class 7: The Middle Ages I (Ashkenaz)


Mann, Vivian, “Towards an Iconography of Medieval Diaspora Synagogues,” in ....341-351.

Recommended Reading:


Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, 59-86
Mon., Sept 26
Class 8: The Middle Ages II (New Finds in Archeology)


Further Reading:


Wed., Sept 28
Class 9: The Middle Ages III (Spain)


Further Reading:


Mon., Oct. 3
Class 10: The Middle Ages IV (Italy)


Further Reading:


Wed., Oct. 5
Class 11: Renaissance and Baroque Italy

Read: Krinsky, Carol. “Venice,” in *Synagogues of Europe*, pp. 378-386;

Read: Krinsky, Carol. “Livorno (Renaissance Synagogue),” in *Synagogues of Europe*, pp. 352-354
Recommended Reading:


**Mon., Oct 10**
Class 12: The Sephardic Diaspora: Holland and England

Read: Krinsky, Carol. “Amsterdam: Seventeenth-Century Synagogues,” in *Synagogues of Europe*, pp. 387-394


Further Reading:

*Silenced Sacred Places: Synagogues of Syria* (handout)


**Wed, Oct 12**
Class 13: Central Europe

Read the following sections from Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe*, and Chapter 1 of Hubka, *Resplendent Synagogue*:

Eastern Europe and Former USSR, pp. 200-211

Berlin-Heidereutergasse and Ansbach, pp. 261-265

Vienna, pp. 186-190

Further Reading:


**Mon., Oct 17**
Class 14: Poland I
Watch films on Wooden Synagogues


Krinsky, Carol. *Synagogues of Europe*, 200-216, 225-30 (Volpa)

**Recommended Reading:**


**Wed., Oct. 19**

Class 15: Poland I

Read: Hubka, *Resplendent Synagogue*, chapter 1, "Synagogue and Community," pp 77-121

**Further Reading:**


**Mon., Oct. 24**

Class 16: 19th Century Transformations

Read: Krinsky, Carol. *Synagogues of Europe*:

- 313-318 (Kassel, Seesen)
- 296-301 (Hamburg, London)
- 191-194 (Vienna-Tempelgasse)
- 80-183 (Szeged)

**Further Reading:**


**Wed., Oct. 26**

Class 17: MIDTERM
Mon., Oct. 31
Class 18: Early American Synagogues I


Final paper/project topic due (approval by professor required)

Wed., Nov. 2
Class 19: America: 19th Century


Mon., Nov. 7
Class 20: America: Early 20th Century


Wed., Nov. 9
Class 21: European Modernism

Read: Krinsky, Carol.  *Synagogues of Europe:*
- 149-14 (Bratislava)
- 195-199 (Vienna)
- 302-309 (Zilina)
- 395-402 (Amsterdam)
- 419-421 (London)

Mon., Nov. 14
Class 22: Legacy of the Holocaust in Europe

Read: Gruber, Ruth E.,  *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, 75-22

Further Reading:


Gruber, Samuel (2002)"European Preservation Projects of the World Monuments Fund’s Jewish Heritage Program: The Tempel Synagogue in Cracow (Poland) and the Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Hania (Crete),”

Wed., Nov 16
Class 23: America: Baby Boom and Building Boom

Outline and annotated bibliography of final paper / project due

Further Reading:


Mon., Nov. 28
Class 24: Israel

Read: To be announced

Mon., Nov., 30
Class 26: Europe Since the Holocaust

Final paper / project due

Read: To be announced

Further Reading:


Mon., Dec. 5
Class 25: Synagogue Architecture Today

Read: Jarrasse, D. *Synagogues* (2001), 228-232

Gruber, Samuel. *American Synagogues* (2003), 191-225

Wed., Dec 7
Class 26: Synagogue Architecture Today II

Read: To be announced

Wed., Dec. 12, FINAL EXAM