

COURSE SYLLABUS
UAP 5624 Urban Design Seminar:
Congressional Club Urban Design and Planning Studio

Course Information

Time: Wednesdays, 4:15-6:45 PM
Place: Room 304 (library room)

Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Elizabeth Morton
Office: Room 219, 1021 Prince Street
Email: ElizabethMorton@vt.edu
Phone: (703) 706-8129

Course Overview

This project-based course will qualify as one of your two required studio courses for UAP. Using The Congressional Club Club House as a case study, this course will explore a variety of planning and design issues revolving around the past, present and possible future uses of this unique historic building in Washington, DC.

The Congressional Club was chartered by Congress in 1908 to serve as a nonpartisan social club for the wives (now spouses) of members of Congress, Supreme Court Justices and Cabinet members. A major focus of the course will be conducting research on the social and architectural history of the Club to support the nomination of its Club House as a National Historic Landmark.

In addition, we will cover a set of important relevant issues such as the federal preservation policy context in the US; methods for assessing architectural and historic significance; common practical challenges in historic rehabilitation; and financing techniques for preservation. Finally, in conjunction with the Board of the Congressional Club, student teams will have the opportunity to select an additional aspect of the building to explore for a final report and presentation. Likely topics could include: analyzing the development potential of a historic building; assessing the feasibility of using preservation incentives; historic site management; and marketing of historic properties.

A complementary architecture studio will also examine the building from a design perspective and we will conduct some joint sessions and site visits with them.



The Congressional Club

2001 New Hampshire Avenue, NW (intersection of New Hampshire, U and 16th Sts.)
Designed by George Oakley Totten, completed in 1914

Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Washington, DC

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the National Historic Landmark nomination process and its place within overall US preservation policy.
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct historical research on buildings and/or neighborhoods and place your results within important themes in American history, such as: women's history; the evolution of voluntary organizations as a contributor to democratic society; the study of the wives and families of the political elite; and the evolution of social life and development in Washington, DC.
- Demonstrate an understanding of fundamental issues of architectural character and the preservation of historic integrity.
- Demonstrate the ability to work as a team member to design and conduct an applied study addressing the interests of a client.
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate your results effectively through high-quality oral and visual presentations.

Course Format

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures; discussion; informal individual presentations and group presentations. As a studio, the course will require site visits; team-based work; the careful application of course lectures and readings to the specifics of the case study; attention to the needs of our client; and high-quality final products. Some class time will be provided for collaborative work, but teams may also have to meet or communicate outside of class hours. Due to the highly collaborative and participatory nature of the course, I will not be able to admit auditors.

The nature of a studio requires some flexibility in scheduling and substance. I will do my best to notify you of any changes well ahead of time, but coordination with the architecture studio and site visits will inevitably require some shifting of the schedule. Once students have selected their choice for Assignment #2, I will finalize the topics and reading assignments for the second half of the semester.

Course Requirements

A full description of all assignments will be distributed and discussed in class on August 29, when final registration is more certain.

Assignment #1 will be a group exercise directly supporting the National Historic Landmark nomination. Teams will conduct research on how the Congressional Club fits into important themes in American history, such as: women's history; voluntary organizations; the social life and development of Washington, DC; and the relation of this building to others in the District, including those by the same architect. The final product will be a report of at least 35 pp., consisting of historical analysis; an annotated bibliography; and suggestions for additional primary source research.

Assignment #2 will be based on your selection of an Applied Topic, such as development scenario feasibility; application of preservation incentives; historic site management; best practices of uses for similar buildings; or marketing of historic sites. Topics will be guided by the interests of the Congressional Club Board. The final product will consist of a team presentation and a professional quality final product such as a report, website or poster.

The final assignment is an informal class presentation responding to the architectural and preservation issues raised by visits to the Club House and another historic building undergoing rehabilitation.

Preparation and participation are important components of the course. Please come to class prepared and on time. Your preparation and participation grade will be based on: regular class attendance; demonstrated understanding of the readings through active participation in class discussion and application to your research problems; and productive contributions to your team work. Please contact me ahead of time if you think you may miss a class.

Grading

Assignment #1 supporting NHL nomination (team grade)	35%
Assignment #2 on your choice of Applied Topics (team grade)	30%
Informal response in class to building site visits (individual grade)	10%
Preparation and class participation (individual grade)	25%

Assignments are due at 4:15 pm on the due date. One letter grade per day will be deducted for late assignments.

Course Materials

Some course materials, including all general reading assignments will be available on Blackboard. Some readings required for particular assignments will be on reserve and/or may circulate through the permission of the professor. You should expect that the foundation of your research assignments will be books, journals and possibly primary source material, as opposed to material from the internet.

The course will not be a general introduction to historic preservation planning and practice, but I will be happy to provide additional optional background material for students if anyone is interested.

If there is sufficient student demand, I can schedule a library session with Kelly Jeon on research strategies.

Graduate Honor Code

The tenets of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code will be strictly enforced in this course, and all assignments shall be subject to the stipulations of the Graduate Honor Code as outlined in the 2006-2007 Graduate Catalog. For more information on the Graduate Honor Code, please refer to the GHS Constitution, located online at <http://fbox.vt.edu/studentinfo/gradhonor>. Please contact the instructor immediately if you have questions.

Special Accommodations

Students with special needs or circumstances are encouraged to meet with the instructor after the first class or a.s.a.p. Please do not wait until later in the semester. In all cases, please feel free to contact the instructor should you have any questions.