

Building the British Empire, 1500-1800
DRAFT – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Instructor:

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Class Meetings:

Tuesday & Thursday, 12-1:30pm
Location: TBD



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, Britain constructed a global empire that extended across Asia, Africa, and the Americas and transformed built and natural environments around the world. This discussion-based seminar explores the diverse and varying architectures of the early modern British Empire to investigate how colonialism and imperialism have shaped the physical environments we experience today.

Rather than focusing on the global influence of “British” architecture, we will look at building types—including forts and harbors, houses and plantations, ships and schools—that emerged from the often-violent encounters between colonists, Indigenous peoples, and enslaved and formerly enslaved people. By creating loose groupings around building “types,” the course invites cross-geographical investigation; we will discuss trends across time and place as well as the specific cultural, environmental, and political contexts that produced divergences. Throughout, we will seek to answer the questions: How did architectural forms and practices both facilitate and resist Britain’s colonial expansion? How can we use the built environment to recover histories not recorded in colonial documents? In addition to primary sources at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, we will use the architectural fabric of Philadelphia to investigate these questions.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignment	Weight
Terminology quizzes	10%
Close Looking Paper	15%

Proposal, annotated bibliography, thesis statement & outline for Final Paper	20%
Final Research Paper	30%
Attendance & Participation	25%

- **Terminology & reading quizzes** (2 total): There will be 2 short-answer quizzes in which you will be asked to define certain terms (in 2-3 sentences) that we have discussed in class or encountered in the readings. I will circulate a list of terms to study for each quiz.
- **Close Looking Paper** (2-3 pages): Choose one of the provided images of a building or landscape, and write a paper in which you consider how the medium, composition, text, perspective, and content of the image construct a visual argument about the building or site depicted. What is the image's author saying about the building or site? How do these strategies inform our understanding of it? Pay particular attention to what is shown, erased, emphasized, deemphasized, distorted, etc.
- **Final Research Paper** (15-20 pages + proposal + thesis statement + outline): Choose a building, site, landscape, or piece of infrastructure that we have discussed or read about. It is important that you have access to at least 4 primary sources about the site (see below). For your paper, you will develop a historical research question and argument about the site. The following assignments are intended to help break down the research and writing process, not to create additional work.
 - **Proposal and Preliminary List of Sources:** First, submit your proposed topic and list of sources. This should include a short paragraph exploring how the topic links to the themes of the course, and a potential research question you are interested in answering. In addition, include a list of **at least** 4 *primary* sources and 4 *secondary* sources. Your primary sources should include at least 1 visual source, 1 archaeological source, and 1 documentary source. Don't worry, we will discuss these types of sources in class! Your secondary sources should include at least 2 items written within the past 20 years.
 - **Primary Source Analysis:** Choose 1 of the primary sources from your list of sources, and write 2 "free-write" paragraphs in which you analyze that source. Choose any aspect of the source that interests you. This analysis will depend on the type of source you choose; we will discuss this further in class.
 - **Annotated Bibliography + Historical Question:** Submit an annotated bibliography with at least 10 sources (including at least 4 primary sources). For each source, write a short paragraph (~5 sentences) that explains how this source will inform your paper. After you have completed this bibliography, return to your original research question, and revise it based on your research thus far.
 - **Thesis Statement + Outline** (3-4 pages): In the final day of class, we will break into small groups and discuss your arguments. Please bring to class a preliminary thesis statement as well as an outline of your paper that includes the evidence you anticipate using in each body paragraph.
 - **Paper** (15-20 pages): Responding to group feedback, write a 15-20 page paper driven by a thesis statement. In your paper, pay particular attention to the affordances and blind spots of different types of primary sources.

READINGS

Our course readings are all available online. The volume below is available at the Penn Bookstore. Please buy it if you can, as we will read several essays from it, and having a hard copy will lend itself to close reading. The text will be available online as well.

- Maudlin, Daniel, and Bernard L. Herman, eds. *Building the British Atlantic World: Spaces, Places, and Material Culture, 1600-1850*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

LOGISTICS, EXPECTATIONS, & OTHER IMPORTANT NOTES

- Care & respect** Our class strives to be an inclusive space for everyone; please do your part to ensure an environment of respect, openness, collaboration, and grace. I hope our class will generate debates and disagreements, but just as important as intellectual engagement is community and empathy. Please let me know if you see ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you or for other students.
- Accessibility** If you would like accommodations, please contact the Weingarten Center, who will ensure you have what you need to thrive in the course. If you feel comfortable doing so, please let me know what you need (even if you do not have an institutionally documented accommodation request). I aim to provide a supportive learning environment that works best for all. If you need something to change mid-semester, let me know; there is no deadline for accommodation requests.
- Course content** This is an interdisciplinary class that ranges widely in both time and space. Our syllabus is flexible; I want it to reflect your interests. Please come by office hours, email me, or let me know in class if you feel a topic is missing from the syllabus, or if you'd like to explore a topic not currently covered.
- Office hours** You are strongly encouraged to attend office hours to talk about the course material, broader themes, or other related or unrelated topics on your mind.
- Attendance** People get sick; family and personal emergencies arise. If you are unable to come to class for either of these reasons, please email me **in advance of class** to arrange a time to meet individually and discuss the week's content (except in extenuating circumstances). If I do not hear from you and you are absent, your participation will be deducted by one letter grade (A to A-, etc.).
- Participation** Please come to class with more questions than answers. Do the readings before class; let me know if any readings present particular difficulties. Be generous towards your peers, and to the writers and thinkers we will encounter on the page. I expect each of you to be active discussants; if you would like to speak about alternative types of engagement, please be in touch as soon as possible.
- Technology** You will do better thinking, discussing, and learning without a screen. Therefore, I want this to be a laptop-free space. Please take notes by hand. If you use a

tablet, it must be lying flat, not propped up. I will distribute any material for close reading/discussing in class, so no need to print the readings, unless that will help you. Phones away at all times, please.

Integrity

Do not plagiarize; cite your sources; read and discuss collaboratively but write individually; use AI assistance only when prompted in class. Citations can be in any form, but please be consistent. If you received assistance (including from AI sources like ChatGPT), you must acknowledge it. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, collaboration, or help, please consult the Center for Community Standards and Accountability or come speak to me during office hours. If you need help with writing, research, study skills, or time management, please be in touch with me or with the Marks Family Writing Center.

Late policy

Each of you has 1 no-explanation-necessary “grace day” for a late assignment. I do, however, ask that you email me on the due date to let me know you will be using this day. Otherwise, late papers are deducted one letter grade (A to A-, etc.) for each additional day they are late. There are many stresses and competing pulls on our time and attention, but one of the important skills to learn here is how to plan ahead for crunch periods. I am very generous with extensions, but you must email me in advance (except in extenuating circumstances).

SCHEDULE

Part I: The British Empire and the Built Environment

<i>Week 1</i>	<p>Introduction: The British Empire + its Architecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No readings <p>How Do We Study Architectures of Empire?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achille Mbembe, “The Power of the Archive and Its Limits,” in Carolyn Hamilton (ed.), <i>Refiguring the Archive</i> (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishers, 2002), pp. 19-36. • Huda Tayob, “Subaltern Architectures: Can Drawing ‘Tell’ a Different Story?” <i>Architecture and Culture</i> 6:1 (2018): 203-222.
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Part II: Early Colonialism in Ireland and America

<i>Week 2</i> Colonial Precedents	<p>Ireland: Colony or Kingdom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at:</i> Maps and plans of Ireland, 1607 by Richard Bartlett, available at the National Library of Ireland Online • <i>Primary:</i> Selections from Edmund Spenser, <i>The Present View of Ireland</i> (1633 [1598]); Fynes Moryson, <i>An Itinerary: Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell</i> (1908 [1617]) • Selections from Eric Klingelhofer, “Archaeology and Elizabeth’s Empire,” in <i>Castles and Colonists: An Archaeology of Elizabethan Ireland</i> (Manchester University Press, 2010), 34-60.
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	<p>The Ship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at: Engraving, drawing, and model of HMS <i>Sovereign of the Seas</i> (built 1637) • Richard Unger, “Ships and shipping technology,” in <i>The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds, 1400-1800</i>, ed. Claire Jowitt et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 221-241.
<p>Week 3 Imagining an Empire</p>	<p>Visualizing the Built Environment Class in Kislak Center</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at: Theodore de Bry, <i>America</i> (1590-1602); selected plates from Abraham Ortelius, <i>Theatrum Orbis Terrarum</i> (1570); selected plates from Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg, <i>Civitates Orbis Terrarum</i> (1588-1618) • Primary: Selections from Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> (1516); Thomas Hariot, “A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia” (1590); Francis Bacon, “Of Plantations” (1601). • Fernando Luiz Lara, “Abstraction is a Privilege,” <i>Platform</i> (June 7, 2022), https://www.platformspace.net/home/abstraction-is-a-privilege <p>The Company and the Early Plantation (Quiz 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Charters of Virginia (1606), New England (1620), and Carolina (1663), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/17th.asp • Emily Mann, “Building,” in William Pettigrew and David Vevers (eds.), <i>The Corporation as a Protagonist in Global History, c. 1550-1750</i> (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 211-231. • Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “A Genuine Settlement,” in <i>Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony</i>, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007 [1984]), 105-118.

Part II: Infrastructure, Urbanism, & Environment

<p>Week 4 Docks & Harbors</p>	<p>Temporary Architectures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alison Bashford, “Terracqueous Histories,” <i>The Historical Journal</i> 60:2 (2017), 253-272. • Selections from Peter Pope, “The Early Fishery,” in <i>Fish into Wine: the Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century</i> (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 11-26, 39-44. <p>“Infrastructure” and Empire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brian Larkin, “The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure,” <i>The Annual Review of Anthropology</i> 42 (2013), 327-343. • Linda Colley, “Tangier,” in <i>Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850</i> (London: Pantheon Books, 2002), 23-42.
<p>Week 5 The City</p>	<p>Urbanism I: The Early City</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at: Plans for London, Londonderry, Kingston, Charleston & Philadelphia (distributed in class)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from John W. Reps, “European City Planning on the Eve of American Colonization” and “New Towns in a New England,” in <i>The Making of Urban America</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 4-20, 115-119, 140-146. • Partha Mitter, “The Early British Port Cities of India: Their Planning and Architecture Circa 1640-1757,” <i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i> 45:2 (1986): 95-114. <p>Urbanism II: The 18th-Century City Walking Tour of Philadelphia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael J. Lewis, “William Penn’s Modest Utopia,” in <i>Philadelphia Builds: Essays on Architecture</i> (Paul Dry Books, 2021). • CLOSE LOOKING PAPER DUE
<p>Week 6 Fortifications</p>	<p>Forts as Infrastructure and Symbol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Primary</i>: Browse the fortification drawing in the British Library’s King’s Topographical Collection, https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/albums/72157716220271206 • Emily Mann, “To Build and Fortify: Defensive Architecture in the Early Atlantic Colonies,” in <i>Building the British Atlantic World</i>, 31-52. • I. Bruce Watson, “Fortifications and the ‘Idea’ of Force in Early English East India Company Relations with India,” <i>Past & Present</i> 88 (1980): 70–87. <p>Case Study: Cape Coast Castle Virtual tour with Phillip Emanuel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at</i>: William Smith, <i>Thirty Different Drafts of Guinea</i> ([not before 1727], https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/orbis:3561361) • <i>Look at</i>: Image and commentary on “Description of a Slave Ship, 1789” by Eric White • Christopher DeCorse, “Tools of Empire: Trade, Slaves, and the British Forts of West Africa,” in <i>Building the British Atlantic World</i>, 165-182.
<p>Week 7 Land & Environment</p>	<p>Property & Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at</i>: Survey maps distributed in class. • William Cronon, “Bounding the Land,” in <i>Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England</i> (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 54-81. • Brenna Bhandar, “Property, Law, and Race in the Colony,” in <i>Colonial Lives of Property: Land, Law, and Racial Regimes of Ownership</i> (Raleigh: Duke University Press, 2018), 1–32. <p>Climate & Environment (Quiz 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Primary</i>: Robert Boyle, “General heads for the natural history of a country great or small, imparted by Robert Boyle,” <i>Philosophical Transactions</i> (April 12, 1666), 186-89.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “The Puzzle of the American Climate in the Early Colonial Period,” <i>American Historical Review</i> 87:5 (1982): 1262-1289.
Week 8 Climate & Architecture	<p>“Improvement” & Projectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at: A Map of the Improved Part of the Province of Pennsylvania in America, 1687.</i> • Tim Riding, “‘Making Bombay Island’: land reclamation and geographical conceptions of Bombay, 1661–1728,” <i>Journal of Historical Geography</i> 59 (2018): 27–39. • Selections from Kate Mulry, “Bodies of Water: The Administration of Nature and the Nature of Administration in the Proprietary Colony of New York,” in <i>An Empire Transformed</i> (New York: NYU Press), 116-141. <p>Adaptive Architecture?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis Nelson, “Heat and Hurricanes,” in <i>Architecture and Empire in Jamaica</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 65-96. • Daniel Maudlin, “Politics and Placemaking on the Edge of Empire: Loyalists, Highlanders, and the early Farmhouses of British Canada,” in <i>Building the British Atlantic World</i>, 290-312. • FINAL PAPER TOPIC & LIST OF SOURCES DUE

Part III: Trade, Slavery, & Architecture

Week 9 Spaces of Trade & The Atlantic Slave Trade	<p>The Merchant House</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Hancock, “Managing from a ‘Merchant’s Public Counting-House,’” in <i>Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 86-105. <p>The Gentleman’s House</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Primary:</i> Selections from Sally-Anne Huxtable, et al., <i>Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust</i> (National Trust, 2020). • John Bonehill, “The View from the Gentleman’s Seat,” in <i>Court, Country, City: British Art and Architecture, 1660-1735</i>, ed. Mark Hallett, Nigel Llewellyn, and Martin Myrone (New Haven: The Yale Center for British Art, by Yale University Press, 2016), 383-405. • PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE
Week 10 Plantations & Slavery	<p>Plantations in Jamaica and Virginia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from Louis Nelson, “Plantations and Power,” in <i>Architecture and Empire in Jamaica</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 97-131. • Dell Upton, “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” in <i>Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North</i>

	<p><i>American Slavery</i>, ed. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 121-139.</p> <p>Spaces of Resistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis Nelson, “Architectures of Freedom,” in <i>Architecture and Empire in Jamaica</i>, 218-234. • Rebecca Ginsburg, “Escaping through a Black Landscape,” in Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (eds.), <i>Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 156-177.
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Part IV: Architectures of Institutions & Authority

<p>Week 11 Institutions</p>	<p>Governing through Architecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carl Lounsbury, “Seats of Government: The Public Buildings of British America,” in <i>Building the British Atlantic World</i>, 53-75. • ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE <p>Religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from G. A. Bremner and Louis Nelson, “Propagating Ideas and Institutions: Religious and Educational Architecture,” in G. A. Bremner (ed.), <i>Architecture and Urbanism in the British Empire</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 159-172. • Alison Stanley, “The Praying Indian Towns: Encounter and Conversion through Imposed Urban Space,” in <i>Building the British Atlantic World</i>, 142-158.
<p>Week 12 Classicism & Empire</p>	<p>Classicism in America and India Mount Pleasant/Lemon Hill Visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at:</i> Thomas and William Daniell, <i>Views of Calcutta, 1786-1788</i>, https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/orbis:3296953 • Lee Morrissey, “Palladianism and the Villa Ideal in South Carolina: The Transatlantic Perils of Classical Purity,” in <i>Building the British Atlantic World</i>, 269-287. • Thomas R. Metcalfe, “Introduction: Classical Architecture and the Representation of Empire, 1780-1850,” in <i>An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain’s Raj</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1-16. <p>Reflections & Peer Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No readings • THESIS STATEMENT & OUTLINE DUE