48-440 American Regions & Regionalism: An Architectural History of People, Place, and Period

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Despite the homogenizing forces of mass culture and globalization, distinctive regional mosaics of landscape and architecture are still evident across the U.S. Say "New England" and the vestiges of Puritan village greens with white framed churches, or brick industrial mill towns may come to mind. "The Southwest" may conjure Native American adobe pueblos, arid ranches, and anything turquoise – be it jewelry or the painted trim of a house. "California" may invoke scenes of Spanish missions, rustic redwood bungalows, or white-walled Hollywood Moderne. The built environment of the Midwest, the Mississippi Delta, and many places in between reflect particular regional identities that have been both unconsciously and consciously created over time. This is an architectural history course, but this American story is driven by the peoples who shaped it, including indigenous Americans, European and Asian immigrants, and enslaved and free Africans. In this course, we will examine the ways in which the interactions of people, place, and period have created distinctive regional patterns. We will primarily focus on the periods before the 20th century, when the forces of vernacular traditions were strongest, but we will also make forays into more recent trends of regionalism as an aesthetic choice, a theoretical stance, and an intentional place-making device. The pre-requisite for the course is 48-240 or permission of the instructor, and non-majors are welcome.