



ARCHITECTURE OF THE SYNAGOGUE

ART 1650H

Yeshiva College

Fall 2019

We shall examine the forms, materials, and structures of synagogues, the centers of Jewish communal life and worship, from their beginnings in the ancient world to the twentieth century. Using the comparative method, we shall explore regional influences in addition to links between liturgy and architectural form. To understand how the choices made in the construction of synagogues reveal the realities and aspirations of Jewish communities at different times and in different places, we shall discuss when and why structural and stylistic forms were adopted, why certain innovations were introduced, and why certain symbolic elements were expressed. Whenever possible, we shall compare synagogues in appropriate respects to buildings of other faiths as well as to secular buildings. Site visits to synagogues in New York will allow us to examine materials and forms first-hand.

Outline of topics

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ▪ The origins of the synagogue | ▪ The Classical period |
| ▪ Medieval Europe | ▪ The Renaissance in Italy |
| ▪ The Renaissance in Eastern Europe | ▪ Western taste |
| ▪ The oriental influence | ▪ The search for a style |
| ▪ The modern era | |

Meeting time and place

Glueck Center 417

Tuesday, 6:45-9:30 p. m.

Instructor

Paul Glassman

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Office hours: by appointment

General course requirements

- Two unexcused absences are allowed; three absences result in a lower final grade by 1/3 (e. g., A- to B+); four absences result in a reduction of one full letter grade (e. g., A- to B-); five absences will result in a failing grade.
- Punctuality: more than two tardy arrivals result in reduction of final grade by 1/3 (e. g., A- to B+).
- No food is allowed in class.
- Cellular telephones will be turned off and remain out of sight for the entire duration of class.
- Examinations cannot be rescheduled; written and oral work cannot be accepted after the due date.
- Mid-term presentation: oral presentation of comparative analysis

- Mid-term examination
- Final project: building analysis
- Final examination
- The course looks at key examples of the development of building cultures, types, and styles. Therefore we examine images of some church buildings that had influence over the design of synagogue buildings—always from an architectural perspective and toward the course objective of understanding the built environment. While the instructor will always remain sensitive to students' religious obligations, students will, nonetheless, be responsible for knowing all class content.
- Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, akelsen@yu.edu or 646.592.4280 during the first week of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, contact me to ensure the successful implementation of those accommodations.

Grading

Abstracts and summaries, 10%
 Mid-term examination, 25%
 Presentation, 20%
 Final project (paper), 20%
 Final examination, 25%

Research support

Get all the support you need with research for your courses. The Yeshiva University Libraries (library.yu.edu) offer individualized consultations that will help you locate and cite journal articles, books, and other credible sources for solid papers, presentations, and reports. Skilled information-seekers succeed academically and in the workplace. Prepare for the future by making an appointment [here](#).

Free Help with Your Writing!

The Wilf Campus Writing Center, in Furst Hall, offers individualized tutoring that can support your writing for this course. All writers need feedback, even strong ones. Find out more and make an appointment at www.yu.edu/wilf/writingcenter.

Academic support

The Office of Academic Support provides services and resources designed to help students develop more efficient and effective study skills and strategies. Individual support is available in areas such as time management and organization, active reading, note-taking, exam preparation and test-taking skills. The office is located in Furst Hall, suite 412. To schedule an appointment, call 646.592.4285 or email academicsupport.wilf@yu.edu.

Texts

Krinsky, Carol Herselle. *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 1996.
 Pevsner, Nicholas and John Sambrook. *Pevsner's Architectural Glossary*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 2010. Also available as an app for iPhone. Optional.
 Sutton, Ian. *Western Architecture: From Ancient Greece to the Present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1999.

References

- De Breffney, Brian. *The Synagogue*. New York: Macmillan, 1978.
- Dunlap, David W. *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Folberg, Neil. *And I Shall Dwell among Them: Historic Synagogues of the World*. Bnei Brak, Israel: Steimatsky, 1995.
- Gruber, Samuel D. *American Synagogues: A Century of Architecture and Jewish Community*. New York: Rizzoli, 2003.
- . *Synagogues*. New York: MetroBooks, 1999.
- Jarassé, Dominique. *Synagogues: Architecture & Identity*. Paris: Vilo, 2001.
- Krinsky, Carol Herselle. *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning*. Mineola, New York: Dover, 1996.
- Levine, Lee I. *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Meek, H. A. *The Synagogue*. London: Phaidon, 1995.
- Piechotka, Maria & Kazimierz. *Wooden Synagogues*. Warsaw: Arkady, 1959.
- Wigoder, Geoffrey. *The Story of the Synagogue*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Wischnitzer, Rachel. *The Architecture of the European Synagogue*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964.
- . *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History & Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955.

Schedule & reading assignments (subject to revision)

August	27	Introduction Spatial exercise
September	3	The ancient world On site: Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation Reading due: Krinsky, pp. 5-38; Sutton, pp. 10-23. DUE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—NOBEL, PHILIP. "WHAT DESIGN FOR A SYNAGOGUE SPELLS JEWISH?" <i>NEW YORK TIMES</i> , 2 DEC. 2001, P. AR34.
	10	Gothic, medieval & Islamic On site: Zysman Hall Reading due: Krinsky, pp. 44-47, 141-145, 163-176, 200-217, 236-238, 331-340; Sutton, pp. 24-125. DUE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—RAVID, BENJAMIN. VENICE: THE MEDIEVAL COMMUNITY. <i>ENCYCLOPEDIA JUDAICA</i> . 2ND ED. 2006.
	17	Renaissance & Baroque in Western Europe On site: Young Israel of the West Side Reading due: Krinsky, pp. 238-243, 353-354, 362-364, 378-394, 412-419; Sutton, pp. 126-223.
	24	Renaissance in Eastern Europe Reading due: Krinsky, pp. 200-235 Video recording: <i>The Lost Wooden Synagogues of Eastern Europe</i>
October	29	Guest lecture — <i>The Design Process for the Keshet Synagogue in Englewood</i> , Esther Sperber, AIA DUE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—ROSENAU, HELEN. "GOTTFRIED SEMPER AND GERMAN SYNAGOGUE ARCHITECTURE. <i>THE LEO BAECK INSTITUTE YEAR BOOK</i> , VOL. 22, NO. 1, 1977, PP. 237-244.
November	5	Review
	12	Mid-term examination

	19	Presentations
	26	Oriental influence On site: Park East Synagogue Reading due: Krinsky, pp. 157-163, 191-194, 265-270, 374-378; Sutton, pp. 268-303 Final project proposal due: synagogue building analysis
December	3	Enlightenment & historicism On site: Congregation Shearith Israel Reading due: Krinsky, pp. 155-156, 186-191, 244-250, 285-288, 364-368, 374-377; Sutton, pp. 224-267 Outline of final project (synagogue building analysis) due
	8	SUNDAY —on site: Eldridge Street Synagogue & Temple Emanu-El
	10	The new world Reading due: Gruber, <i>Synagogues</i> , chapter 9 Guest lecture — <i>Great Synagogue Architecture of the 1950s: Why the past is not perfect</i> , Susan Solomon Review
	17	Modern era On site: Congregation Or Zarua Reading due: Breffny, <i>The Synagogue</i> , chapter 9 Krinsky, pp. 250-252, 289-290, 302-309; Sutton, pp. 304-353 Due: Executive summary--STEINBERG, HARRIS. "ROOTS OF THE MODERN AMERICAN SYNAGOGUE," JOURNAL OF THE INTERFAITH FORUM ON RELIGION, ART & ARCHITECTURE, NO. 3, 1999, PP. 14-15.
	24	Final project (synagogue building analysis) due
January 2020	3	FRIDAY —Final examination, 9:30-11:45 a.m.