

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ART HISTORY  
SUMMER 2009**

**ARHS 540: *Vernacular Architecture and Popular Design in America***

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**May 27 – July 29, 10 sessions**

**Wednesdays 5:30 – 9 pm**

Vernacular architecture comprises the majority of the built environment in its ordinary buildings and landscapes designed without an architect. The architecture of popular culture may feature a well-known designer but it has a message directed to everyone, for example, what does a yellow arch mean to you? These are the types of buildings often left out of high-style focused canons of art and architectural history. To analyze these works we will utilize scholarship from the fields of American studies, archaeology, anthropology, history, gender studies, cultural geography, landscape architecture and history, folklore, and material culture. Using these tools, we can construct criteria that enable us to understand the significance these environments have had for their makers and users.

Topics in the course will include (among others): vernacular housing; religious spaces; cultural identity as seen in the immigrant architecture of Minnesota and the upper Midwest; structures inspired by the automobile including diners, motels, and roadside attractions; amusement parks like Disneyland; agricultural landscapes; designers who work with major corporations to bring taste to the masses (like Michael Graves and Philippe Stark for Target); franchise architecture (e.g. McDonalds); and cities such as Las Vegas and Jackson Meadow, MN. The classroom work will be supplemented by numerous field trips throughout the metro area.

Suggested Reading: Look through a history American architecture prior to the start of the course. Authors include: Roth, Handlin, Gelertner, and Upton.

*This course fulfills the Modern/American/Architecture core requirement*