

Course Overview for External Evaluators

“Frank Lloyd Wright” (48-441)

Taught: S99, S00, S01, S03, S05

Architectural History Project Course & Lecture Course

9 units, Prerequisites: 48-205

Course Website: <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/course/48-441/>

This course began in 1999 as a “project course” whose goal was to teach about F.L. Wright, and at the same time create an exhibit on the “Taliesin Apprentices” in conjunction with students from the F.L. Wright School of Architecture in Wisconsin (see end of this section). I subsequently revised the course into a straightforward lecture course on the life, career, and historical context of F.L. Wright’s architecture. In the Spring of 2005, this course was again retooled as a “project-course”, with a slightly different title. “Frank Lloyd Wright: Precedent, Analysis & Transformation” was an architectural history course that sought to understand and learn from the design principles of F.L. Wright through a case study method. After a survey introduction to the career and bibliography of F.L. Wright and investigations of several significant houses across his career, the class investigated Wright’s Hagan House (a.k.a. Kentuck Knob) not far from Pittsburgh in detail for the rest of the semester. The main purpose was to engage in real archival research about the house, to compare it to other houses, and then to begin to “reverse engineer” some of the formal design principles of F.L. Wright’s. The focus was on the interior cypress woodwork, and the resolution of formal and structural “systems” that act like a “kit of parts,” each system nested within a larger one. A short second phase of the course asked students to generate or “grow” new designs from these discovered principles through iterative transformations.

The course led to a \$23,000 grant project funded by the Enkeboll Foundation for Art & Architecture to expand the research, formalize the results, and share with several other research institutions. The grant paid to have a team of students working over the summer in a more directed manner in three phases. Phase I: “Re-Presentation” documented the house based on the original archival material, as well as in comparison to other Wright houses. Phase II involved the detailed formal analysis of the wood work, especially the hexagonal planning unit, as well as the spatial qualities produced by the built-in wood furniture and paneling. Phase III involved the trans later developed their own digital design projects based on the principles they discovered. generated new designs for a “seating opportunity” on the Kentuck Knob estate . The designs were based on the “principles” discovered in the Phase II analysis, but used digital modeling techniques to bring Wright’s ideas into the 21st century. Students realized close connection to their previous studies of “systems” in studio, to the precedent work of the 2nd year studios, and to the “computational construction kits and craft” being researched by colleagues such as Prof. Mark Gross. The project was coordinated with research teams using different case studies from the Higher Institute for Architecture, Antwerp, Belgium; and North Carolina State University.

The research created a large, 2-volume report that was presented to the other institutions in Antwerp, Belgium in the summer of 2005, and is available through my website. For other materials, including examples of student work, and class handouts, and the complete research project documentation books, please refer both the course website listed above, as well as my professional website:

<http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/gutschow/flw48441.html>

