In the English Landscape

HIST 450 / HORT 450 / LA 450

Faculty:

Paul C. Siciliano, Jr., Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture
Michael N. Dana, Professor of Horticulture
John L. Larson, Professor of History

Description: This intensive, four-week study-abroad course is designed to familiarize students with the ways that human culture and natural environments intersect to create landscapes. As far back as the historical record reaches, human beings have tried to alter and control their environments to make them more "beautiful," more "orderly," more impressive of the power of the gardeners, or more reflective of the glory of their creator-gods. Environmental factors, such as climate, topography, and available flora and fauna, have always guided the labors of landscape designers and horticulturists; at the same time human aspirations of power, class, and ambition usually drove their employers. Natural science and human culture came together in history, as people in particular times and places strove to display their prowess, "improve" their surroundings, or express their appreciation for the universe of living things. These are the intersections we hope to explore in this course.

Objectives: This course is expressly interdisciplinary and intended to be equally accessible to students in agricultural sciences, humanities, and the design disciplines. Consequently, individual objectives will vary considerably from student to student. The specific course objectives identified by the faculty include:

* Experiencing life in England
* Understanding how English history and culture have influenced the shaping of English gardens, parks, and landscapes;
* Gaining an appreciation for a society that places very high value on the cultivation of ornamental plants and the design of beautiful landscapes as an aspect of the "everyday" environment in which people work and play;
* Seeing how landscapes and gardens address the human concerns of individuals and whole communities;
* Promoting awareness of a wide range of plant species and cultivars not well known in North America
* Cultivating respect for technical expertise and wisdom of traditional English gardeners and garden workers.

Curriculum: Readings, lectures, and field trips are arranged to introduce students to the three program disciplines (history, horticulture, landscape architecture) and the foundation concepts they contribute to the course. We intend to focus on a theme of intersections between nature, human culture, and the gardener's art. Four categories of analysis will be suggested to help organize study:

* Natural conditions and the ecological dimension
* Social structures and the imprint of human organization
* Technology and the dynamic impact of economic life
* Aesthetics and cultural sensibility
Assignments and field exercises will help students explore answers to the following questions, around which our discussions will be organized:

1. How do changing social and economic conditions, cultural sensitivities, scientific understanding, the life cycles of plants, new technologies, and changing popular tastes influence the effective lifespan of a designed landscape? How can designers address these issues?

2. What constitutes a "successful" design? What kinds of cost-benefit analysis seems appropriate to the creation of designed landscapes? Who gets to decide?

3. What does the practical gardener know and contribute to the landscape? How much influence should these technical experts have over garden or landscape design? To what extent should "what works" for plants and gardeners be allowed to determine "what works" for designers?

4. How is landscape design informed by traditions or precedence? By sheer creativity or a desire for novelty? By new technology and changing possibilities? By cultural and artistic trends and fashions?

Readings: (tentative)

Hoskins, W. G., *The Making of the English Landscape*
Hobhouse, P., *Plants in Garden History*
Hibbert, Christopher, *The Story of England*

Assignments:

* The first three days (here at Purdue) involve intensive lectures, discussion, and video presentations on English history and the foundation concepts of the course. You MUST be present for these opening sessions; without them nothing that follows will make as much sense.
* For site visits, you will receive lab worksheets on which to record your observations and respond to questions. You will be expected to complete them fully, and they will, at the conclusion of the course, constitute your journal of the course. At several times during the course we have scheduled instruction time to discuss these worksheets and your questions. Your participation in this aspect of the course will constitute a significant part of your graded work.
* We will work together to develop a "time line" correlating historical events with horticultural developments, artistic and cultural trends, and changing social and economic conditions. This timeline will be kept in our seminar room at the Methuen Arms and updated as we collect new information and experiences.
* There will be a final exam administered at Corsham at the end of the trip. Essay in format, this exam will require you to review course material and integrate your own observations with the instructional materials provided by the faculty.
* Student participation in discussions may be graded at any time and quizzes may be given as needed to stimulate engagement and attention. Please don't expect this to be a pleasure trip only.
Daily Calendar - Tentative

WEEK 1
M - May 15  Lectures (at Purdue)
T - May 16  Lectures (at Purdue)
W - May 17  Lectures (at Purdue)
Th - May 18  Arrive London: walking tour through Old City, Tower, etc.
F - May 19  Free day
Sa - May 20  Instructional tours: 1) London landscape, 2) National Gallery, 3) royal parks
Su - May 21  Hampton Court Palace

WEEK 2
M - May 22  Sissinghurst Castle Garden
T - May 23  Stowe, Manchester
W - May 24  Manchester-Quarry Bank Mill, industrial sites
Th - May 25  Manchester-canal walk, Phillips Park, Biddulph Grange, Little Moreton Hall, Corsham
F - May 26  RHS Chelsea Flower Show, London
Sa - May 27  Instruction; Lacock Abbey
Su - May 28  Free Time; Corsham Court

WEEK 3
M - May 29  Stonehenge, Salisbury Cathedral, Stourhead
T - May 30  Instruction, laundry time
W - May 31  Rousham, Oxford University
Th - June 01  Hadspen Nursery, East Lambrock, Tintinhull, Montacute
F - June 02  Free Day
Sa - June 03  Westbury Court, Hidcote Manor Garden
Su - June 04  Instruction, Tyntesfield

WEEK 4
M - June 05  Instruction, laundry time
T - June 06  Sutton Place, Royal Horticulture Society Garden at Wisley
W - June 07  Hestercombe
Th - June 08  Instruction; Final Exam
F - June 09  Free day
Sa - June 10  Depart for home or further travel