WOODEN SYNAGOGUE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT:
MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE, SANOK, POLAND

Design Program: The staff of the Museum of Folk Architecture, Sanok, Poland, has asked our studio for proposals to assist in the reconstruction of a full-scale replica of the destroyed wooden synagogue on the museum grounds. The original synagogue from Polaniec, Poland was destroyed along with its Jewish community by the Nazis during WWII. The reconstructed synagogue is to be located adjacent to a recently reconstructed town square near the museum’s entrance. Students will also propose designs for a new visitor’s orientation center including a lecture hall and improved entrance facilities.

A major problem in this reconstructing project will be to locate the synagogue in such a way as to replicate or recall the building’s original Jewish district while simultaneously adjusting the design to conform with a site adjacent to the museum’s town square. (Wooden synagogues were traditionally located in close proximity to the town square of pre-1800, small Polish towns.) The overall intent of this synagogue and Jewish district restoration project is to enhance the understanding of the typical physical and cultural context of a small, late 19th century Polish town or “shtetl” by including the buildings of its Jewish community.

The Architecture of Reconciliation
This studio project will explore the difficult issues of multi-culturalism, national memory, and memorial architecture in an Eastern European setting. Your design project will introduce you to a challenging multi-cultural program where three major (and many minor) national/ethnic/religious cultures have previously coexisted—in this case, Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians. Your project explores the issue of multi-cultural memory in the southeastern regions of Poland because today this region contains a largely homogeneous Polish culture. Previously, however, before WWII, this region contained large Jewish and Ukrainian communities (as well as other minority communities). The destruction of the Jewish community and the expulsion of
the Ukrainian community provides the larger context for exploring an architecture of reconciliation.

Program Objectives: The design and historic preservation program has three major components:
1) Locate the Polaniec Synagogue next to the museum’s town square and create a Jewish community physical context and explanatory narrative for interpreting the Jewish communities of small Polish towns.
2) Proposed designs for improving the museum’s visitor’s orientation center, including: a new or remodeled orientation building/lecture hall, a remodeled outdoor concert area, an improved parking area, and an improved entry sequence to the town square and Jewish district.
3) Produce interpretive drawings of the Polaniec Synagogue detailing the construction and wall-painting of the synagogue to aid in the full-scale historic replication project.

Project History
This is not a hypothetical project but is a program that has been created with the director and staff of the Sanok Museum. There is considerable interest in this project based on the on-going efforts to reconstruct another destroyed wooden synagogue from the town of Gwozdziec as a major exhibit at the now under construction, Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. (Please see: http://www.handhouse.org/makinghistory.html. The reconstructed Gwozdziec Synagogue was constructed and assembled last summer on the grounds of the Sanok Museum. The positive reception for this reconstruction project has generated further interest in rebuilding a more contextually situated synagogue on the grounds of the Sanok Museum. Because of the museum’s recently completed town square interpretive area, a small-town synagogue is viewed as a highly appropriate addition to the museum’s new “small Polish town” focus.

Following the final studio review in June, the class has been invited to come to Poland to present their designs to the museum’s director and staff. It is hoped that as many students as possible might make this trip. (There is a possibility that some outside funding might be made available to support student travel). This trip would also include travel to related historic sites in Poland and participation in on-going summer workshops to restore the wooden synagogue of Gwozdziec for the Warsaw museum. (I have been a participant and consultant for this historic preservation reconstruction project which has received considerable international interest and exposure. Howard Davis will be a regular discussant and studio critic for this studio. Howard has accompanied me and previous UO design students from my 2008 studio to Ukraine to review student work and to participate in activities associated with this on-going reconstruction project. Howard may again accompany the class to Poland.
SITE/CONTEXT

Polaniec Synagogue

The Polaniec Synagogue was selected for restoration because it was the closest well-documented wooden synagogue to the Sanok and thus reflective of the regional building characteristics of the surrounding area. The Museum of Folk Architecture is located on the outskirts of Sanok, Poland; a medieval town and regional center in southeast Poland about fifty miles from the Ukrainian border. The site of the wooden synagogue/Jewish quarter reconstruction project is on the western side of a newly reconstructed town square. The building site is flat, approximately 300’ square lowland with a small stream running through one corner of the site.

The Sanok Museum of Folk Architecture, like many similar “Skansens” throughout northern Europe, was originally organized to preserve and interpret vanishing examples of indigenous folk or vernacular regional architecture. Typically, such museums move and preserve examples of their regional agrarian architecture from the surrounding countryside, including farmstead buildings such as farm houses, barns, mills, and various agricultural buildings. At Sanok, the reconstruction of a typical town square was a departure from standard Skansen practices and the reconstruction of a wooden synagogue closely associated with the life of the small Polish town continues this ground-breaking expansion of the Skansen Museum.

DESIGN GOALS/PROCESS:

The book, *Resplendent Synagogue*, written by the instructor, will be the *required reading* text for the studio and is intended to serve as an introduction to Jewish culture as well as Polish and Ukrainian cultures. Slide lecture discussions will following the chapter organization from *Resplendent Synagogue* and will analyze the art, architecture, and culture of the Polish Jewish community. Discussions will also be given about Polish wooden and monumental architecture and the small Jewish towns (or shtetls) of Poland. Students will be encouraged to identify a particular area of research for individual detailed study. A final review in Eugene is planned with invited international experts and scholars including members of Oregon’s Jewish and Polish communities, as well as a review in Sanok, Poland during the summer.
PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Polaniec Synagogue Restoration
In addition to the full-scale reconstructed Polaniec Synagogue, the design proposal may (or may not) recommend the reconstruction of additional historically related buildings of the Jewish district or other types of interpretive buildings and landscape features to aid in the interpretation of the historic Jewish community context.

Museum Visitor’s Orientation Center
Lobby--tickets, information, temporary exhibits 2,000 sq ft
Museum store, bookstore 500
Orientation/lecture hall 2,000
Snack bar, lunch room 1,000
Public toilets, staff room, mech. equip. rm. 800
Exterior porch and reception area 6,300 sq ft

Museum Headquarters and Staff Offices
Staff offices, staff lounge. 2,000 sp ft
Research and interpretation area 1,000
Restroom, mech. equip. and circulation 500
Live-in staff/security apartment 1,000
3,500 sq ft

Additional Areas of Design Development
Entry area with outdoor concert/demonstration area.
Visitor’s drop-off and existing parking and site entry improvements
Entry sequence from visitor’s orientation building to town square and Jewish quarter, and existing agricultural buildings.
THE ARCHITECTURE OF RECONCILIATION:  
Poles, Jews, and other minorities in pre-modern, multi-cultural Poland

This studio will explore the difficult issues of multi-culturalism, national memory, and memorial architecture in an Eastern European setting. Multi-culturalism is commonly understood as the coexistence of different cultures within a region or country. America has a global reputation as a country where people from different cultures, religions and races have come together and coexisted, although for some Americans, such as African-and Native-Americans, this concept has been less successfully realized.

Yet multi-culturalism is not a new or an American phenomenon. In other parts of the world, such as India and the Middle East, multiple cultures have coexisted for much longer periods, although we may debate the equality or cohesiveness of these relationships between different cultural groups. Today, in the modern world of more or less homogeneous societies created and reinforced within the boundaries of nation-states, multiple cultures remain largely hidden unless they dissolve or explode into ethnic or religious conflicts as have recently occurred in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan, and Darfur. The phenomenon of multi-culturalism is a transnational issue of tremendous subtlety and potential difficulty that architects working in international contexts should certainly attempt to understand.

Your design studio will engage the issue of multi-cultural historical memory in the particular context of Eastern Europe. Your design project will introduce you to a challenging multi-cultural program where two major (and many minor) national/ethnicreligious cultures have previously coexisted—in this case Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. Rather than a current setting of conflicting cultures, your project explores the issue of multi-cultural memory in the southeastern regions of Poland because today this region contains a largely homogeneous Polish culture. Previously, however, before WWII, this region larger Polish and Ukrainian communities (as well as other minority communities). It is the memory of these previous communities—particularly the Jewish community—that your project is intended to honor and recall. If this sounds complex, it is probably because you have not studied the complex history of this region, which we will explore together. For a historic parallel, you might imagine being asked to design a Native American
museum or cultural center for Portland—how would you create a design to recall Native American culture within American culture today?

As you learn about the complexities of Polish and Jewish cultural Jewish life and you will find that there is no basic symmetry, no easy balance between the histories of these peoples. Catholic Poles once ruled Orthodox (Christian) Ukrainians and Jews in late-medieval towns like Sanok and Polaniec. Jews were primarily a merchant-trading class of the towns and Ukrainians and Polish and Ukrainian were primarily the agricultural serfs (or peasants) of the villages who combined to create the basic economy of the pre-modern, late medieval Polish town. All three cultures were slaughtered by the Nazis but it is the Jewish population that that was almost completely destroyed and the Ukrainian population deported. It is into this caldron of still active cultural complexity that will be developing your design.

The museum clients for this project are fully committed to the idea that the material act of wooden building restoration can foster an education and learning environment where Polish historic traditions of multi-cultural existence can be actively explored and displayed through the art of historic wooden building restoration. The reconstruction of destroyed religious monuments like wooden synagogues and churches are thus considered appropriate for this task of cultural reconciliation because they were once located at the spatial and cultural centers of their small town communities.

**Course Policies:**

**Course Conduct:**
A variety of opinions and ideas are encouraged and appreciated: therefore, the dignity and essential worth of all participants is to be respected. The privacy, property, and freedom of participants will be respected. Bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidation will not be tolerated. Personal and academic integrity is expected.

**Academic Honesty:**
Plagiarism is a serious offence. The consequences for using the words of another without quotation marks or citation, or of using the ideas and conclusions of another without citation, are severe. In this course, such academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course. For further information regarding academic honesty, see: [http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/](http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/)

**Accommodations:**
If you have documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make an appointment with me during the first wee of the term. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability. The current counselor is Steve Pickett.