Arch 410/510
POLISH WOODEN SYNAGOGUES:
The Art, Architecture, and Culture of the Shtetl

This one-credit course will be taught as the lecture/seminar component to the architecture design studio “Jewish Historical Museum” (arch 484/584) which will also investigate the Polish wooden synagogues. The course is intended for humanities students and non-architecture design majors interested in the synagogues and material culture of Eastern European Jewry.

The book, *Resplendent Synagogue: Architecture and Worship in an Eighteenth Century Polish Community*, written by the instructor, will be the primary text for the course. Lectures will follow the chapter organization of the book and are designed to analyze the art and architecture of Polish synagogues from a cultural and theoretical perspective. Because the Polish wooden synagogues were almost completely destroyed in the Nazi Holocaust, these magnificent monuments of early-modern Polish/Jewish art and architecture are not widely known. Historians have often incorrectly assumed that the wooden synagogues were the impoverished products of the small Polish town, the mythic shtetl. This course, however, will emphasize that the Polish wooden synagogues should be ranked as some of the finest products of Jewish art and architecture ever produced. In particular, the synagogues’ colorful, late-medieval wall-paintings will be shown to be the product of skillful Jewish artists creating a distinctly Jewish liturgical art for their communities.

**Course Assignments:** Five lectures will be given on successive Mondays, beginning on March 31. The lectures will start at 1:00 pm during the first, one-hour segment of the architecture design studio (1:00—1:50). Following the five lectures and following discussions with the instructor, students will write a short paper about the wooden synagogues. Students will also be expected to attend one of the design reviews of the “Jewish Historical Museum” studio and submit a summary evaluation of the students’ design proposals.

**Thomas C. Hubka** is the distinguished visiting professor for the spring quarter. He is a professor at the Department of Architecture, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee but he returns to the U of O where he received his M Arch degree and later taught for fifteen years. His book *Resplendent Synagogue* has won several awards. He has published widely on topics of vernacular architecture including: American working-class housing, religious architecture, and New England farm architecture.