



FOR FACULTY & ADMIN
Offer Olmsted Classes

Sample Syllabi

- Harvard Graduate School of Design
Cotton Kingdom, Now
Course examines Frederick Law Olmsted's reportorial trip through the South for the New York Daily Times
The course description is available [here](#)
- Vassar
Architecture and Historic Preservation: the Vassar Campus and the Twentieth Century
The course description is available [here](#)
- Wentworth Institute of Technology
Class about Back Bay Fens and Olmsted's legacy in the Emerald Necklace
Cynthia Williams, Associate Professor of Humanities, williamsc6@wit.edu/
- University of Chicago
Researching Chicago's Historic Parks and Neighborhoods
Julia Bachrach, julia@jbachrach.com

Course description: Often considered "The City of Neighborhoods" Chicago has a fascinating network of community areas that were shaped by historical events and developments. Many of the city's neighborhoods include parks that have significant architectural, landscape and social histories. The class will introduce students to some of Chicago's most interesting historic neighborhoods and parks; expose them to key regional digital and on-site archives; and instruct them in appropriate methodologies for conducting deep research on sites and landscapes, with a special focus on Chicago's historic park system. Students will utilize an array of resources including Sanborn maps, US Census records, historic plans, photographs, and archival newspapers to provide in-depth studies of *unpreserved* sites. The course will also expose students to historic preservation policies, methodologies, and guidelines to provide practical strategies for

preserving lesser-known places and sites. As a Chicago Studies class, its pedagogy will also include excursions into the city, engagement with local guest speakers, and research in relevant Chicago-area archives/special collections.

- Trinity College
Olmsted's Brain: Discovering Health in Urban Places and Wild Spaces
Susan Masino
All events in the series were open to the public and hosted over Zoom. Watch the recordings [here](#).

Course description: An awareness of the health benefits of nature is experiencing a major global revival. While health is just one "ecosystem service" of the natural world, brain health is arguably the most valuable. As we approach the 200th birthday of Frederick Law Olmsted, founder of landscape architecture, this course will consider new science and diverse perspectives on the role that urban places and wild spaces play in our physical and mental wellbeing. An approximately biweekly series of expert presentations will link history, emerging science, and public policy in the context of Olmsted's appreciation for the immersive and restorative properties of nature. A range of assigned readings, discussions, and written analyses and reflection papers will complement semester-long translational projects.

- Trinity College
January Term: Olmsted's Evolving Legacy

Course Description: We will define the characteristics of a future parks system. The legacy of Hartford native, Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed the Trinity College campus, US Capitol grounds, and NYC's Central Park, will offer insights into the cultural benefits of nature in cities. We will study Olmsted's "Emerald Necklace" as students prepare proposals to strengthen the parks system and community resilience in Hartford along historic traces and currently visible Park River tributaries. This course will combine seminar readings of Olmsted's letters and design proposals with the development of unique student projects. Interdisciplinary research and project proposals will be encouraged. Individual analysis of distinct park systems features, such as recreational trail networks, educational programs, picturesque pathways, historic narratives, conservation finance, or ecosystem vitality, will layer a collective vision. <https://internet3.trincoll.edu/pTools/CourseInfo.aspx?subj=URST&catnbr=308&instrid=1480152>

- Columbia University, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
Cotton Kingdom, Now

Course description: In 1852, the *New York Daily Times* commissioned a 31-year-old Frederick Law Olmsted to conduct an immersive research journey through the Southern slave states. The country was headed toward civil war, and the paper dispatched young Olmsted for his ability to reveal the cultural and environmental qualities of landscape in

a narrative voice. Today, landscape architecture, urban design and planning – disciplines Olmsted helped to shape – continue to grapple with the economic, political and ecological conditions rooted in systems he documented so vividly 165 years ago. This seminar will investigate the relationship between major contemporary issues in urban discourses with the documented conditions of cities in Olmsted's 1861 book, *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom*. The seminar positions Olmsted's journey not only as a source material but also as a methodological proposition, in reflection on the significance and methods of research and representation in design practice.