

Weekend Courses 2024-25

Architecture and Ideology in Victorian Britain

Start date: 16 May 2025 **End date:** 18 May 2025

Venue: Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor: Dr Ralph St Clair Wade **Course Code:** 2425NRX047

Tutor biography

Ralph is a historian of 19th-century architecture and society. A social historian by training, he views art as evidence for historical life – both individual and communal. His doctoral project, a monograph on David Bryce (1803–76), was thematically interested in the relationship between architecture and national identity. His thesis (2022) was praised by one examiner as ‘an outstanding piece of work and a genuine contribution to knowledge ... a tour de force’.

Ralph holds a PhD (2022) from St John’s College, Cambridge, where he was both a Foundation and Graduate Scholar. He was concurrently an award holder at the Paul Mellon Centre, an adjunct of Yale University. He holds an MPhil degree (2018), with Distinction, from Cambridge University. For this degree he received the highest mark in the University and was awarded a College Prize. Ralph also holds a BA degree in History, with ‘double’ first-class honours. He is a past winner of the Harvard Book Prize (2013).

In the public sphere, Ralph has worked at the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, and lectured at the National Gallery, the Wallace Collection, and at the Royal Institute of British Architects. He has given papers at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Columbia University, New York; and for the Society of Antiquaries, Edinburgh.

Ralph is an elected fellow of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, in recognition of his contributions to Scottish history. He has advised on the recent revision of *The Buildings of Scotland* (‘Pevsner’) and is published by the field’s leading journal, *Architectural History*. He has written and recorded content for Bloomberg Connects and is a sporadic contributor to *Private Eye* magazine.

Summary of content

The comfortable solidity of Victorian building belies a politically unstable continent and a divided intellectual landscape. The outbreak of the Napoleonic wars had prevented European travel and forced cultural attention inward. National styles came powerfully to the fore: the English looked to the stability of the Elizabethan age, whilst Scotland found a cultural voice in Baronial architecture. The publication of Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) and Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) presented a starkly mechanistic world, and one at odds with the romance of the Gothic revival. Did the Victorians leave us an architecture of escapism, or a coherent aesthetic project?

The course is of two halves.

Part One is structured by typology (building type) and aims to provide a survey of the key developments in Victorian ecclesiastical, domestic and civic architecture. Each of these types is introduced through a theoretical lens.

Session 1 (Ecclesiastical Architecture) will introduce you to the theories, and biographies, of the key Gothic revivalists.

Session 2 (Civic Architecture) leads us into the midst of *The Battle of the Styles*, a mid-Victorian war of words between Gothicists and Classicists.

Session 3 (Domestic Architecture) introduces the gilded world of the Victorian Country House, but with one eye on the social norms written into their design.

In Part 2, we aim to position Victorian architectural history in its broader geopolitical context. Recent scholarship has covered the influence of colonialism on British architectural style and patronage.

In Session 4 (International Architecture) we consider the global export of British architects and styles, with a particular focus on British India. Paradoxically, we'll see that the globalisation of the British Empire actually refocused interest on the historical styles of England and Scotland.

Session 5 (National Architecture) examines the revival of early-modern architecture in England and Scotland, centred on the romantic revival of the Scottish Baronial style.

Aims:

This course aims to:

- provide general coverage of the main developments in domestic, civic and ecclesiastical architecture (1837–1901)
- provide a survey of the period's principle architectural styles, and an insight into their underlying ideologies
- introduce some of the period's leading architects and theorists, and to understand their contributions in context

Course sessions

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Introduction to Victorian Britain
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Session 1. <i>True Principles</i>: Ecclesiastical Architecture
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 2. <i>The Ordinary Italian</i>: Civic Architecture
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 3. <i>The Gentleman's House</i>: Domestic Architecture
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 4. <i>Old Scotch</i>: National Architecture
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Session 5. <i>Imperial Gothic</i>: International Architecture
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Concluding Remarks and Discussion
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Presentation of the course

The course is taught in seven ninety-minute sessions, the first of which is purely introductory. Delivery is in an informal, illustrated lecture format, with questions and interjections encouraged. Each session is divided into three parts: Short Lecture [30m], Guided Discussion [30m], and Short Lecture [30m].

Learning outcomes

As a result of the course, you will gain a greater understanding of the subject and you should be able to:

- identify the main architectural styles present in Victorian Britain, and recognise the main examples and exponents of each
- reflect more deeply on the theoretical and social forces acting on Victorian architecture
- interpret the architectural achievements of Victorian Britain in a global context

Reading and resources list

There are no compulsory readings for this course. However, you may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

Bremner, G A, *Building Greater Britain* (London: Paul Mellon Centre 2022)

Brindle, Steven, *Architecture in Britain and Ireland, 1530–1830* (London: Paul Mellon Centre 2023)

Franklin, Jill, *The Gentleman's Country House and Its Plan, 1835-1914* (London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1981)

Girouard, Mark, *The Victorian Country House* (Connecticut, London: New Haven Yale University 1979)

Glendinning, Miles, and Aonghus MacKechnie, *Scotch Baronial* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing 2019)

Hall, Michael, *George Frederick Bodley and the Later Gothic Revival in Britain and America* (Connecticut, London: New Haven Yale University Press 2014)

Hill, Rosemary, *God's Architect* (Connecticut, London: New Haven Yale University Press 2008)

Hunt, Tristram, *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt And Co 2005)

Mordaunt Crook, J, *The Architect's Secret: Victorian Critics and the Image of Gravity* (London: John Murray 2003)

Mordaunt Crook, J, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: Frances Lincoln 2013)

Scott, G Gilbert, *Remarks on Secular & Domestic Architecture, Present & Future* (London: J Murray 1857)

Stamp, Gavin, *Gothic for the Steam Age: An Illustrated Biography of George Gilbert Scott* (London: Aurum Press 2015)

Stamp, Gavin, *Lost Victorian Britain* (London: Aurum 2013)

Summerson, John, *Victorian Architecture in England; Four Studies in Evaluation* (New York: W W Norton 1971)

Online resources:

Kerr, Robert, *The Gentleman's House* (London: John Murray 1865)
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/gentlemans-house/357D6D403F3AA6A693DEBA0B63F344B2>

Welby, Augustus, (*An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (London: John Weale 1843)

https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/An_Apology_for_the_Revival_of_Christian/a17kam1OGiQC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=pugin+apology&printsec=frontcover

Whyte, William, *Unlocking the Church* (Oxford University Press 2017)

www.gilbertscott.org

www.gilbertscott.org 2024

<https://www.gilbertscott.org/category/buildings>

www.victoriansociety.org.uk "Victorian Society." Accessed February 8, 2025

<https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk>

www.victorianweb.org "The Victorian Web: Linking Scholarship, Teaching and Learning since 1994." Accessed February 8, 2025

<https://www.victorianweb.org>

Note: Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

(Information correct as of April 2024)