

## **Clcs/Art 120 Itinerary: Spaces of Spirituality**

In this class meeting, we will consider spaces for religious observance, as well as those conceived for contemplation and reflection, from the original chapel in Main Building, to the present. We will look at how these spaces on campus have reflected changing ideas about the role of religion and spirituality here and on American college campuses more generally. We will think about the functions these spaces have served; and the architectural styles, decorations, and soundscapes that have developed.

### **Please visit the Chapel, now open to the campus community weekday mornings only.**

Walk all the way around the building, and consider its groundplan – that is, the shape made by the building's outline, where its outer walls meet the ground. (Also visible in aerial views.)

Then look at the façade; if you were new to this campus, would you be able to tell what the building is? If so, how? (Photos of key details welcome.)

Note the stone of the building: Cape Ann granite and Ohio sandstone, combined in a pattern of yellow and brown colors. This must have been a model for later buildings on campus, such as Taylor, Kendrick, and Blodgett – note the stone and the patterns on each next time you pass them.

Study the tower; how many stories does it seem to have? What is its function?

Next, go inside the Chapel. If you have never done so before, note its decorations: the elaborate truss ceiling, with angel-headed hammerbeams, and of course the stained glass windows—those on the east wall, designed by Tiffany, get morning light, whereas those on the west wall, by La Farge, are lighted in afternoon. All represent women, and were donated by alumnae, c. 1905-09. Take a look at the elaborate rose window [i.e. round window] in the façade, over the balcony, also made by Tiffany Studios. And walk up to the front of the Chapel, and climb the stairs to the stage-like space, to see the carved surround for the organ, and the stained glass windows flanking it by Robert Leftwitch Dodge.

Consider how you feel in this space. How do physical qualities – the height of the ceiling, the shape of the space, the style of the building, its decorations, lighting, or smells – contribute to your experience?

Next time you hear the campus chime play (typically ~12:00 or 5:30pm), note the music; do you recognize it? Where is it coming from?

Take a look at the map of religious and spiritual life spaces at Vassar, prepared recently by Tobias Armbrorst and students in an Urbs class; how many of them have you visited? Or have you associated with religious and spiritual life?