

# American Urban History

## Democracy, Community, and Visions of Order in the City

UEP/History 205 Spring 2018

JOHNSON 303 TH 7<sup>15</sup> - 10<sup>10</sup> PM

Occidental College

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OFFICE HOURS: SWAN 305 TUESDAYS 3<sup>30</sup> - 4<sup>30</sup> PM (and by appointment)

According to Thomas Jefferson, America was to be an “agrarian Republic” — a pastoral farmland, a different world from the dirty and decaying cities of monarchical Europe. Yet, by Jefferson’s day, it was already too late. North America had been dotted with great metropolises and minor towns for thousands of years, and new waves of European and African settlers founded hundreds of new ones as well. Indeed, for many early migrants, America was itself a “city on the hill” — an urban image for a new society.

In this course, we will survey American urban history from those early days to the present, focusing in the second half specifically on Los Angeles, where new forms of decentralized urbanism took form in the twentieth century. We will explore not only suburbia and freeways, Disneyland and other quasi-urban outposts, but also the changing character of the inner city in the mid-twentieth century, as well as radical efforts to reform existing American cities. In the process, we encounter the American city of today — multicentered, privately planned, decentralized, and multiethnic. We will conclude by asking whether contemporary developments in urbanism — the changing character of public space, the turn to privatism, and the neglect of public transport infrastructures, challenges to democracy and equality — are ultimately compatible with the American dream of the “city on the hill” for the twenty-first century.

### REQUIREMENTS

This course combines extensive discussion, some lecture, and a substantial amount of reading and writing. You will be required to write two 4-5 page argumentative essays as well as a more substantial 8-10 page final paper. In addition to these essays, you will submit brief discussion questions / comments ahead of each class. Similarly, short reports on the Tuesday evening ISLA Speaker Series talks will be required throughout their run. Finally, we will be developing a collaborative project this semester with Highland Park Heritage Trust, an important community-based grassroots organization dedicated to the preservation of the rich architectural history of this region.

All essays must all be submitted **via Moodle** on or before their due date. Note that papers turned in late without explicit permission will be penalized as much as 10% per day, so please talk to me in advance if an emergency begins to arise that might jeopardize your ability to complete any assignment on time.

Attendance & Participation .....	20%
Speaker Series & Conference Reports .....	(due six days after each event).... 10%
Reading Questions / Observations .....	(due by 4pm before each class session).... 10%
HPHT Project .....	(due date to be determined).... 10%
Two Short Essays .....	(due during weeks 5 & 9 ).... 25%
Final Longer Essay .....	(due during Finals ).... 25%

In order to develop an environment where constructive thinking and collegial interaction can develop, attendance and participation in class will be mandatory. This course will also almost certainly require at least one weekend field trip; more than a single class absence will result in a lowering of your participation grade, as will failure to come to class adequately prepared.

## CLASS EXPECTATIONS

- ① Come to each class having read and marked up all assigned texts, having thoughtfully submitted reading questions/comments in advance. Be ready to discuss these readings within the context of the themes of the course.
- ② Writing assignments will be distributed during the semester; all papers should reflect careful thought, revision, and proofreading.
- ③ Be ready to attend speaker series and conference events (and be prepared to participate in question and answer sessions).
- ④ Participate in off-campus collaborative activities with Highland Park Heritage Trust and help design and complete joint research/archival project relating to their local historical preservation mission.

## COURSE GOALS & OUTCOMES

- ❶ Students will gain a detailed awareness of the major topics, debates, and historiography of American urban history and, through thoughtful writing, contribute their own informed analysis to this discourse.
- ❷ Students will become familiar with social transformations in nineteenth and twentieth century American cities — including the reconfiguration of systems of prejudice, segregation, and displacement (along lines of race, class, gender, etc.) — which informed, shaped, and gave meaning to the built environment in major cities (and, to a lesser extent, smaller towns).
- ❸ Students will learn about the relationships between the built environment and social contexts, the effects manifested in changes in the urban landscape, and the specific contexts of demographic change, gentrification, and historical preservation efforts in Northeast Los Angeles in the late twentieth century.
- ❹ Students will hone their skills at synthesizing academic interdisciplinary secondary source scholarship with techniques of cultural analysis gleaned from contemporary Critical Theory to produce their own original argumentative interpretations of American urban history.
- ❺ Students will gain experience in forging collaborative relationships with grassroots civic organizations (Highland Park Heritage Trust) and, in the process, gain an appreciation for the importance of reciprocity in community based learning contexts. In turn, students will explore modes of community and spatial analysis beyond those reflected in the academic historiography and contribute to the community's own historical understanding and awareness.

## A NOTE ON THE STUDY OF THE PAST

Some of the texts, images, and recorded materials we will encounter this semester will be disturbing, depicting a historical period rife with violence, suffering, and often overt prejudice, as well as the defiant struggle to make our society a more tolerant and humane place. Some students may well find that events and expressions of the past resonate with them today in powerful ways. No one in this class bears any individual responsibility for the choices other people made long ago, yet we all inherit the consequences of that history and an obligation to open our own eyes to the prejudices, ideas, and struggles that continue to shape us.

As with all classes at Occidental College, each of us will be expected to express respect, support, and explicit kindness toward our peers at all times, especially when disagreeing on a point of fact or interpretation, and to be particularly sensitive to our peers' intellectual and emotional reactions as they encounter and grapple with the effects of our shared historical legacy. If you have an idea how to improve the way we treat the powerful and charged historical material in this course, or perceive a way to make our shared discussions and investigations more inclusive and compassionate, please share those insights and concerns with me right away.

## IMPORTANT ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

The last day to add this course is 2 February 2018 and the last day to drop is 2 March 2018.

This class is structured to be compatible with most students' capabilities; if you have specific, documented physical or learning disabilities and require additional accommodations, please let me know at the very beginning of the semester so that we can work with Oxy's office of Disability Services (<http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>) to tailor reasonable modifications.

Academic dishonesty will result in the most severe repercussions. Using someone else's words — or even ideas — without attribution is plagiarism. For Oxy students, plagiarism constitutes a violation of the Occidental College codes of academic integrity (see <http://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics/academic-ethics>), which will result in disciplinary proceedings and almost certainly failure of the course. Fortunately, **plagiarism is easily avoided merely by clearly citing all your sources**. Use quotation marks and footnotes or in-text references to fully identify any ideas, sentences, or even phrases that are not your own invention. If you are ever unsure about the ethical use of sources or ideas, simply ask me — I am here to help.

## REQUIRED BOOKS

The books listed below are required for this course.

- Tyler **Anbinder**, *Five Points* (Plume/Penguin, 2001).  
Del **Upton**, *Another City* (Yale, 2008).  
William **Cronon**, *Nature's Metropolis* (Norton, 1992).  
Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (Oxford, 1985).  
Kathy **Peiss**, *Cheap Amusements* (Temple University, 1986).  
Jeremiah B.C. **Axelrod**, *Inventing Autopia* (University of CA, 2009).  
D.J. **Waldie**, *Holy Land* (Norton, 2005).

## REQUIRED READING PACKET

The readings listed below are all in PDF format and will be available on the class **Moodle** site. Please bring a well-read copy with you to class each day — either a marked up print out or an annotated electronic copy.

- TURNER 1893**: Frederick Jackson Turner. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." 199-227 in *Report of the American Historical Association for 1893* (AHA, 1893).
- KINSBRUNER 2005**: Jay Kinsbruner. Chapters 2-3 in *The Colonial Spanish-American City* (University of TX, 2005).
- WILENTZ 1994**: Sean Wilentz. "'By Hammer and Hand': Artisans in the Mercantile City." 23-60 in *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (Oxford University, 1984).
- BLACKMAR 1989**: Elizabeth Blackmar. "The Formation of Urban Tenancy." 44-71 in *Manhattan for Rent* (Cornell University, 1989).
- AXELROD 2006A [THE CARNIVALESQUE]**: Jeremiah B.C. Axelrod & Rise B. Axelrod. "The Carnavalesque." Draft from *A Theory Toolkit* (Norton, forthcoming).
- STANSSELL 1982**: Christine Stansell. "Women in the Neighborhoods" & "Women and Men." 41-62 & 76-102 in *City of Women* (University of IL, 1982).
- BLUMIN 1989**: Stuart M. Blumin. "'Things are in the Saddle': Consumption, Urban Space, and the Middle-Class Home." 138-191 in *The Emergence of the Middle Class* (Cambridge University, 1989).
- KASSON 1990**: John F. Kasson. "Venturing Forth: Bodily Management in Public." 112-146 in *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (Hill & Wang, 1990).
- LINGEMAN 1980**: Richard Lingeman. "'Each Town Has Its Day'... Pioneer Towns, 1815-1840." 104-173 in *Small Town America: A Narrative History* (Houghton Mifflin, 1980).
- RYAN 1990**: Mary P. Ryan. "Everyday Space: Gender and the Geography of the Public." 59-94 in *Women in Public* (Johns Hopkins University, 1990).
- ABELSON 1989**: Elaine S. Abelson. "Urban Women and the Emergence of Shopping" & "The World of the Store." 13-62 in *When Ladies Go A-Thieving* (Oxford University, 1989).
- WARNER 1972**: Sam Bass Warner, Jr. "The Segregated City: Chicago, 1870-1920." 85-112 in *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City* (University of CA, 1972).
- GILBERT 1991**: James Gilbert. "Second City: Our Town." 131-168 in *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (University of Chicago, 1991).
- LYNCH 1960**: Kevin Lynch. "The City Image and Its Elements." 46-90 [Chapter Three] in *The Image of the City* (MIT Press, 1960).
- WHITNALL 1924**: G. Gordon Whitnall. "City and Regional Planning in Los Angeles." 105-110 in National Conference on City Planning. *Planning Problems of Town, City, and Region: Papers at the Sixteenth National Conference on City Planning* [Los Angeles: 7-10 April 1924] (William F. Fell Company, 1924).
- JACOBS 1961**: Jane Jacobs. 65-96 in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (The Modern Library, 1993 [1961]).
- SIMMEL 1903**: Georg Simmel. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Translated by Edward Shils. 11-19 in *The Blackwell City Reader*. Edited by Gary Bridge & Sophie Watson. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002).
- LEWIS 1920**: Sinclair Lewis. Excerpts from *Main Street* (originally published 1920).
- MCCLENAHAN 1929**: Bessie Averde McClenahan. "Residence in Relation to Social Values" & "Social Changes." 32-53 & 97-115 in *The Changing Urban Neighborhood: From Neighbor to Nigh-Dweller: A Sociological Study* (University of Southern California, 1929).
- CLARK 1989**: Clifford E. Clark, Jr. "Ranch-House Suburbia: Ideals and Realities." 171-191 in *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War* (Edited by Lary May, University of Chicago, 1989).
- FOWLER 1956**: Dan Fowler. "Los Angeles: The World's Worst Growing Pains." 21-25 in *Look* 20:5 (6 March 1956).
- COHEN 1996**: Lizabeth Cohen. "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America." 1050-1081 in *The American Historical Review* 101:4 (October 1996).
- AVILA 2004**: Eric Avila. "'A Rage for Order': Disneyland and the Suburban Ideal." 106-144 in *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* (University of CA, 2004).
- PYNCHON 1966**: Thomas Pynchon. "A Journey into the Mind of Watts." From *The New York Times Magazine* (12 June 1966).
- VILLA 2000**: Raúl Villa. "From Military-Industrial Complex to Urban-Industrial Complex." 66-110 in *Bario-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (University of TX, 2000).
- SIDES 2004**: Josh Sides. "Straight into Compton: American Dreams, Urban Nightmares, and the Metamorphosis of a Black Suburb." 583-605 in *American Quarterly* 56:3 (Sept. 2004).
- DAVIS 1990**: Mike Davis. "Fortress L.A." 221-264 in *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (Verso, 1990).
- AXELROD 2006B [PANOPTICISM]**: Jeremiah B.C. Axelrod & Rise B. Axelrod. "Panopticism." Draft from *A Theory Toolkit* (Norton, forthcoming).
- LIN 2018**: Jan Lin. "The Stages of Neighborhood Transition." Chapter 2 in *Taking Back the Boulevard: Art, Activism and Gentrification in Northeast Los Angeles* (forthcoming from NYU Press, 2018).

**PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE OF CLASSES & ASSIGNMENTS**

*All reading should be completed in time for the class meeting indicated — our discussion will depend upon comprehension of the reading material. Plan your time accordingly. These dates and subjects are only provisional and may change over the course of the semester as the class develops.*

Week 1		THE BIG PICTURE	Looking at Urban America’s Past, Present, and Future
TH	The City and Country in American History		<b>TURNER 1893</b> [“THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FRONTIER...”] 40 <b>KINSBRUNER 2005</b> [CHAPTERS 2-3 FROM <i>THE COLONIAL SPANISH-AMERICAN CITY</i> ] 20
25 JAN			

Week 2		NEW YORK	The Messy Emergence of the Democratic City
TH	The Changing American Social Order of the New Republic		<b>WILENTZ 1994</b> [“‘BY HAMMER AND HAND’”] 35 <b>BLACKMAR 1989</b> [“THE FORMATION OF URBAN TENANCY”] 25 <b>ANBINDER 2001</b> <i>FIVE POINTS</i> [CHAPTERS 3-4] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 75
1 FEB	CLASS WILL MEET IN CHOI AUDITORIUM AT 7PM FOR SPECIAL “WHOSE HOUSE? OUR HOUSE!” EVENT		

Week 3		NEW YORK	The Development of an Urban Sensibility
TH	The Working Class Social Environment: The Urban Neighborhood & the City of the Senses		<b>STANSELL 1986</b> [“WOMEN IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS” & “WOMEN AND MEN”] 45 <b>AXELROD 2006A</b> [ <i>THEORY TOOLKIT: THE CARNIVALESQUE</i> ] 25 <b>UPTON 2008</b> <i>ANOTHER CITY</i> [CHAPTERS 1-5] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 95
8 FEB			

Week 4		THE BIG PICTURE	High and Low: The Rise of the Middle Class
TH	Middle Class Manners and Morés in the City of Planned Reform		<b>FIRST ESSAY DUE ON MONDAY FEB 19</b>  <b>BLUMIN 1989</b> [“‘THINGS ARE IN THE SADDLE’...”] 55 <b>KASSON 1990</b> [“VENTURING FORTH...”] 30 <b>UPTON 2008</b> <i>ANOTHER CITY</i> [CHAPTER 6] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 30 <b>JACKSON 1985</b> <i>CRABGRASS FRONTIER</i> [CHAPTERS 2-5] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 85
15 FEB			

Week 5		CHICAGO	Core & Hinterland: Transportation, Empire, and the Great West
TH	Metropole and Metropolis		<b>LINGEMAN 1980</b> [“‘EACH TOWN HAS ITS DAY’”] 70 <b>CRONON 1991</b> <i>NATURE’S METROPOLIS</i> [CHAPTERS 1-2 & 3 OR 5] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 120
22 FEB			

Week 6		CHICAGO	Cities of the Imagination: Microcosm or Utopia?
TH	The World's Fair (or Increasingly Unfair?): Middle Class Visions of the City		<p>WARNER 1972 ["THE SEGREGATED CITY"] 30</p> <p>GILBERT 1991 ["SECOND CITY: OUR TOWN"] 35</p> <p>CRONON 1991 <i>NATURE'S METROPOLIS</i> [CHAPTER 8] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 30</p>
1 MAR			

Week 7		THE BIG PICTURE	Playtime in the Modern Metropolis: Divergent Amusements
TH	The Department Store and the Amusement Park: Consumerist Escapes for the Middle and Working Classes		<p>RYAN 1990 ["EVERYDAY SPACE..."] 35</p> <p>ABELSON 1989 ["URBAN WOMEN AND THE EMERGENCE OF SHOPPING"] 50</p> <p>PEISS 1986 <i>CHEAP AMUSEMENTS</i> [CHAPTERS 1-5] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 130</p>
8 MAR			

Week 8		ROAD TRIP	Spring Break
TH	<b>SPRING BREAK</b> NO CLASS MEETING TODAY		<b>SECOND ESSAY DUE ON MONDAY MAR 19</b>
15 MAR			

Week 9		THE BIG PICTURE	Reading Urban Space
TH	Dreams of a Legible Urban Landscape		<p>LYNCH 1960 [FROM <i>THE IMAGE OF THE CITY</i>] 45</p> <p>WHITNALL 1924 ["CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING IN LOS ANGELES"] 5</p> <p>AXELROD 2009 <i>INVENTING AUTOPIA</i> [INTRO, PROLOGUE, &amp; CHAPTERS 1-2] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 100</p>
22 MAR	THE ISLA SPRING CONFERENCE WILL (PROBABLY) TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 24		

Week 10		LOS ANGELES	Making Sense of Modern Urbanism
TH	The Vertical Metropolis and the Centrifugal City		<p>JACOBS 1961 [FROM <i>THE DEATH AND LIFE...</i>] 30</p> <p>SIMMEL 1903 ["THE METROPOLIS AND MENTAL LIFE"] 10</p> <p>LEWIS 1920 [FROM <i>MAIN STREET</i>] 25</p> <p>McCLENAHAN 1929 ["THE CHANGING URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD"] 40</p> <p>AXELROD 2009 <i>INVENTING AUTOPIA</i> [CHAPTER 3-4] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 95</p>
29 MAR			

Week 11		LOS ANGELES	Reassembling the Postsuburban Metropolis
TH	The Emergence of the Postsuburban Metropolis: City in the Shape of a Suburb		<p>AXELROD 2009 <i>INVENTING AUTOPIA</i> [CHAPTERS 5–6, EPILOGUE, &amp; CONCL.] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 115</p> <p>CLARK 1989 [“RANCH–HOUSE SUBURBIA”] 20</p> <p>JACKSON 1985 <i>CRABGRASS FRONTIER</i> [CHAPTERS 11 &amp; 13] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 45</p> <p>FOWLER 1956 [“LOS ANGELES”] 5</p>
5			
APR			

Week 12		LOS ANGELES	Finding Meaning amidst the Sprawl
TH	The Architecture of Privacy and Community: Variations on Suburban Culture		<p>WALDIE 2005 <i>HOLY LAND</i> [ALL] <a href="#">BOOK TO BUY</a> 175</p> <p>COHEN 1996 [“FROM TOWN CENTER TO SHOPPING CENTER”] 30</p> <p>AVILA 2004 [“A RAGE FOR ORDER”] 40</p>
12			
APR			
			<b>RECOMMENDED TEXT:</b> ELAINE TYLER MAY, <i>HOMeward BOUND</i> (BASIC BOOKS, 1989)

Week 13		LOS ANGELES	The Centrifugal Society Flies Apart
TH	From Watts to Postindustrial Urbanism: Panopticons and Global Villages		<p>PYNCHON 1966 [“A JOURNEY INTO THE MIND OF WATTS”] 10</p> <p>VILLA 2000 [“FROM MILITARY–INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX...”] 45</p> <p>SIDES 2004 [“STRAIGHT INTO COMPTON”] 20</p> <p>DAVIS 1989 [“FORTRESS LA”] 45</p> <p>AXELROD 2006B [<i>THEORY TOOLKIT: PANOPTICISM</i>] 25</p>
19			
APR			
			<b>RECOMMENDED TEXT:</b> RICHARD ELMAN, <i>ILL–AT–EASE IN COMPTON</i> (PANTHEON, 1967)

Week 14		THE BIG PICTURE	Left Behind: Metropolises and their Hinterlands in a Postindustrial Era
TH	Conclusions: ‘Thanks for Keeping It Warm for Us...’ : The Middle Class Return to the Urban Core		<p>LIN 2018 [“THE STAGES OF NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSITION.”] 20</p>
26			
APR			
			<b>RECOMMENDED TEXT:</b> SUDHIR ALLADI VENKATESH, <i>AMERICAN PROJECT</i> (HARVARD, 2002)

Final Exam		CONCLUSIONS	Wrapping Up
W	<b>FINAL ESSAY DUE</b>		
9			
MAY			