

American Urban History

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

UEP / History 205 Fall 2021

JOHNSON 203 Tu 7:30 - 10:25 PM

Occidental College

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OFFICE HOURS: SWAN 307 THURSDAYS 3 - 4:30 PM (and by appointment)

SYLLABUS VERSION 1

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 battle between privatism and common good, the neglect of public transport infrastructures, and resurgent 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 6-7 page argumentative essays as well as a more substantial 12-15 page final paper. In addition to these essays, you will submit brief analyses of a pertinent quotation from each reading ahead of each class.

All essays must all be submitted **via Moodle** on 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	25%
Reading Analyses(due by 3pm before each class session).....	25%
Two Shorter Essays (due during weeks 4 & 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 our class sessions will be mandatory**. More than two class absences will result in a lowering of your participation grade, as will failure to come to class adequately prepared.

As a four unit course, you should expect to spend at least twelve hours a week (including in-class time) on this course. Be aware as well that this course contains a strong Historical component in its methodology, so be prepared for a substantial amount of primary/secondary source reading. It would be greatly to your advantage to develop strategies to help you read and process these texts efficiently. If you need advice on this, or anything else arising from the course requirements and assignments, please talk with me — I will be happy to help.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

- ① Come to each class having read and marked up all assigned texts. Be ready to discuss these readings within the context of the course.
- ② Writing assignments will be distributed during the semester, but all papers should reflect careful thought, revision, and proofreading and must conform to ethical standards in citation, quotation, and other use of all sources.
- ③ Be prepared to synthesize a range of scholarly texts within a variety of different humanistic academic disciplines and with a careful attention to change over time.
- ④ During this exceptional period, all participants in our class must abide by the College's health and safety directives pertaining to vaccination, physical distancing, and masking throughout the semester.

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 differing forms of city structure that emerge during the twentieth century, particularly in the context of ideologies of race, class, and gender.
- 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.

A NOTE ON THE STUDY OF THE PAST

As with many courses that meet the **United States Diversity Core Requirement**, this course focuses on periods of time rife with systemic racism — often extremely overt and pervasively expressed. **Many of the texts, images, and recorded materials we will encounter this semester will be disturbing**, depicting a historical period filled with violence, suffering, and naked prejudice, as well as the defiant struggle to make our society a more tolerant and humane place. Some of the language deployed in source materials we will examine was intended quite explicitly to intimidate as well as communicate and that rhetoric still carries oppressive force. Indeed, 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.

In this class, 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 **10 September 2021** and the last day to drop is **8 October 2021**.

Students with **documented disabilities and learning differences** who are registered with Disability Services are required to present their accommodation letter to the instructor at the beginning of each semester or as soon as possible thereafter. Any student who has, or thinks they may have, a physical, learning, or psychological disability may contact Disability Services at accessibility@oxy.edu to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>.

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.

The Writing Center (located on the Ground Floor of the Academic Commons) offers opportunities to work on all forms of writing for any class or other writing tasks such as personal statements, proposals, senior comprehensives, etc. We offer peer-to-peer consultations with knowledgeable Writing Advisers and sessions with Faculty Writing Specialists. For Fall 2021, most of our appointments will be synchronous in-person sessions, with some availability for Zoom virtual meetings and asynchronous feedback. See the Writing Center website for more information about our hours and how to sign up for appointments: <https://www.oxy.edu/writing-center>. Please contact the Writing Center Director, Prof. Prebel (jprebel@oxy.edu; x1307) for more information on how the Writing Center can work with you.

Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience: Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL website: <https://www.oxy.edu/office-religious-spiritual-life>.

Title IX: It is important for you to know that all faculty members are mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct. That means that I cannot keep information about sexual misconduct confidential if you share that information with me. In the event that you choose to write or speak about having experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment, as a designated Responsible Employee, I must notify the Title IX Office. They will contact you to let you know about accommodations and support services at Oxy and reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options. If you do not want the Title IX Office notified, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with the following people on campus: Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu); Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657); Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu). The sexual misconduct policy, along with additional resources, can be found at: <http://www.oxy.edu/sexual-respect-title-ix/policies-procedures>. If you would like to contact the Title IX Office directly, you can email Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at afulcher@oxy.edu or call 323-259-1338.

REQUIRED BOOKS

The books listed below are required for this course. (Digital/online books are available for several of these texts.)

- DeL Upton, *Another City* (Yale, 2008).
Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (Oxford, 1985).
William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (Norton, 1992).
Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements* (Temple University, 1986).
Sudhir Venkatesh, *American Project* (Harvard, 2000).
D.J. Waldie, *Holy Land* (Norton, 2005).

REQUIRED READING PACKET

The readings listed below are all in PDF format and will be available on Moodle. Please bring a well-read copy with you to class each day.

- 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).
- MUNDIGO/CROUCH 1977A:** Axel I. Mundigo & Dora P. Crouch. "The City Planning Ordinances of the Laws of the Indies Revisited. Part I: Their Philosophy and Implications." 247-268 in *The Town Planning Review* 48:3 (July 1977).
- MUNDIGO/CROUCH 1977B:** Axel I. Mundigo & Dora P. Crouch. "The City Planning Ordinances of the Laws of the Indies Revisited. Part II: Three American Cities." 397-418 in *The Town Planning Review* 48:4 (October 1977).
- BLACKMAR 1989:** Elizabeth Blackmar. "The Formation of Urban Tenancy." 44-71 in *Manhattan for Rent* (Cornell University, 1989).
- WARNER 1968:** Sam Bass Warner, Jr. "The Environment of Private Opportunity." 3-21 in *The Private City* (University of PA, 1968).
- 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).
- ANBINDER 2001:** Tyler Anbinder. "How They Lived." 67-105 [Chapter 3] in *Five Points* (Plume/Penguin, 2001).
- HARRIS 2003:** Leslie Harris. "'Rulers of the Five Points': Blacks, Irish Immigrants, and Amalgamation." 247-262 [Chapter 8] in *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (University of Chicago, 2003).
- Foucault 1967: Michel Foucault. "Of Other Spaces." 22-27 in *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986) [original: 1967].
- AXELROD 2006A [THE CARNIVALESQUE]:** Jeremiah B.C. Axelrod & Rise B. Axelrod. "The Carnavalesque." Draft from *A Theory Toolkit* (Norton, forthcoming).
- STANSELL 1982:** Christine Stansell. "Women in the Neighborhoods" & "Women and Men." 41-62 & 76-102 in *City of Women* (University of IL, 1982).
- LEFEBVRE 1967:** Henri Lefebvre. Selections from *Le droit à la ville* [*The Right to the City*] (written in 1967). 100-103, 109-110, 126-132, 156-159, 168-174, & 177-181 in *Writings on Cities* (Blackwell, 1996).
- 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).
- JACKSON 1985:** Kenneth T. Jackson. "The Transportation Revolution and the Erosion of the Walking City." 20-44 in *Crabgrass Frontier* (Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 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).
- GILBERT 1991:** James Gilbert. "Second City: Our Town." 131-168 in *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (University of Chicago, 1991).
- RYAN 1990:** Mary P. Ryan. "Everyday Space: Gender and the Geography of the Public." 59-94 in *Women in Public* (Johns Hopkins University, 1990).
- LYNCH 1960:** Kevin Lynch. "The City Image and Its Elements." 46-90 [Chapter Three] in *The Image of the City* (MIT, 1960).
- JACOBS 1961:** Jane Jacobs. 65-96 in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (The Modern Library, 1993 [1961]).
- AXELROD 2006B [PANOPTICISM]:** Jeremiah B.C. Axelrod & Rise B. Axelrod. "Panopticism." Draft from *A Theory Toolkit* (Norton, forthcoming).
- AXELROD 2007:** Jeremiah B.C. Axelrod. "'Keep the 'L' Out of Los Angeles': Race, Discourse, and Urban Modernity in 1920s Southern California." 3-37 in *Journal of Urban History* 34:1 (November 2007).
- McCLENAHAN 1929:** Bessie Averno 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* (PhD Thesis, 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* (University of Chicago Press, 1989). Edited by Lary May.
- FOWLER 1956:** Dan Fowler. "Los Angeles: The World's Worst Growing Pains." 21-25 in *Look* 20:5 (6 March 1956).
- PYNCHON 1966:** Thomas Pynchon. "A Journey into the Mind of Watts." From *The New York Times Magazine* (12 June 1966).
- 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).

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE OF CLASSES & ASSIGNMENTS

All reading should be completed in time for the class meeting indicated (all are required unless indicated otherwise) — our discussion will depend upon comprehension of the reading material. Similarly, all written assignments are due at the beginning of the class indicated. Please also note that specific topics shown here are provisional and may change as the class develops.

Week 1		THE BIG PICTURE	Looking at Urban America's Past, Present, and Future	
TU		INTRODUCTION Images of the City in American History		
31 AUG		TURNER 1893 "THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FRONTIER..."	40	
		MUNDIGO/CROUCH 1977 A&B "THE CITY PLANNING ORDINANCES..."	45	

Week 2		NEW YORK	The Messy Emergence of the Democratic City	
TU		The Changing Social Order of the New Republic		
		BLACKMAR 1889 "THE FORMATION OF URBAN TENANCY"	25	
		WARNER 1968 "THE ENVIRONMENT OF PRIVATE OPPORTUNITY"	20	
7 SEP		WILENTZ 1994 "BY HAMMER AND HAND"	35	
		ANBINDER 2001 "HOW THEY LIVED"	40	
		HARRIS 2003 "RULERS OF THE FIVE POINTS"	15	
		FOUCAULT 1967 "OF OTHER SPACES"	5	

Week 3		NEW YORK	The Development of an Urban Sensibility	
TU		The City of the Senses: Neighborhood and Order in the Developing Metropolis		
		STANSELL 1986 "WOMEN IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS" & "WOMEN AND MEN"	45	
14 SEP		UPTON 2008 <i>ANOTHER CITY</i> (CHAPTERS 1-5) BOOK TO BUY	95	
		LEFEBVRE 1967 SELECTIONS FROM <i>THE RIGHT TO THE CITY</i>	30	
		AXELROD 2006A <i>THEORY TOOLKIT: THE CARNIVALESQUE</i>	25	

Week 4		THE BIG PICTURE	High and Low: The Rise of the Middle Class	
TU		FIRST ESSAY DUE ON SUNDAY SEP 26		
		The City of Planned Reform: Middle Class Manners and Morés		
		BLUMIN 1989 "THINGS ARE IN THE SADDLE..."	55	
21 SEP		KASSON 1990 "VENTURING FORTH..."	30	
		UPTON 2008 <i>ANOTHER CITY</i> (CHAPTER 6) BOOK TO BUY	30	
		JACKSON 1985 <i>CRABGRASS FRONTIER</i> (CHAPTERS 2-5) BOOK TO BUY	85	

Week 5		CHICAGO	Core & Hinterland: Transportation, Empire, and the Great West	
TU		Metropole and Metropolis: Microcosms of Order		
28 SEP		CRONON 1991 <i>NATURE'S METROPOLIS (CHAPTERS 1-3)</i> BOOK TO BUY	120	
		ABELSON 1989 "URBAN WOMEN AND THE EMERGENCE OF SHOPPING"	50	
		GILBERT 1991 "SECOND CITY: OUR TOWN"	35	
		RECOMMENDED READING CRONON 1991 <i>NATURE'S METROPOLIS (CHAPTER 5 & 8)</i>	80	

Week 6		THE BIG PICTURE	Playtime in the Modern Metropolis: Divergent Amusements	
TU		Tripping the Light Fantastic: Playtime for the Millions		
5 OCT		RYAN 1990 "EVERYDAY SPACE..."	35	
		PEISS 1986 <i>CHEAP AMUSEMENTS (CHAPTERS 1-5)</i> BOOK TO BUY	130	

Week 7		ROAD TRIP	Fall Break	
TU		FALL BREAK		
		NO CLASS MEETING TODAY		
		NO OFFICE HOURS THIS WEEK		
12 OCT				

Week 8		THE BIG PICTURE	Legibility and Neighborhood	
TU		How Do People Use Cities?		
19 OCT		LYNCH 1960 FROM <i>THE IMAGE OF THE CITY</i>	45	
		JACOBS 1961 FROM <i>THE DEATH AND LIFE...</i>	30	
		AXELROD 2006B <i>THEORY TOOLKIT: PANOPTICISM</i>	25	

Week 9		THE BIG PICTURE	Reading the Twentieth Century Metropolis	
TU		SECOND ESSAY DUE ON SUNDAY 🗓️ OCT 30 🌟		
		Twentieth Century Urban Planning in a Nutshell: Community, Neighborhood, and Systemic Racism		
26 OCT		VENKATESH 2000 <i>AMERICAN PROJECT</i> BOOK TO BUY	275	

<i>Week 10</i>		LOS ANGELES	Making Sense of Modern Urbanism	
TU	Urban, Suburban, Postsuburban: Reconceptualizing the City in the 20th Century			
2 Nov	AXELROD 2007	"KEEP THE 'L' OUT OF LOS ANGELES"		35
	MCCLENAHAN 1929	"THE CHANGING URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD"		40

<i>Week 11</i>		LOS ANGELES	Making Sense of Modern Urbanism	
TU	"White Flight": The Design of Post-Urban America		PAMLA CONFERENCE (IN LAS VEGAS WED-SUN) NO OFFICE HOURS THIS WEEK	
9 Nov	JACKSON 1985	CRABGRASS FRONTIER (CHAPTERS 11 & 13)	BOOK TO BUY	45
	CLARK 1989	"RANCH-HOUSE SUBURBIA"		20

<i>Week 12</i>		LOS ANGELES	Finding Meaning amidst the Sprawl	
TU	The Architecture of Privacy and Community: Responses to the Sprawling Urban Frontier			
16 Nov	FOWLER 1956	"LOS ANGELES"		5
	WALDIE 1996	HOLY LAND	BOOK TO BUY	180

<i>Week 13</i>		LOS ANGELES	The Centrifugal Society Flies Apart	
TU	HAPPY 🍷 THANKSGIVING 🌐 ON THURSDAY			
	From Watts to Postindustrial Urbanism: The Return of the Repressed			
23 Nov	PYNCHON 1966	"A JOURNEY INTO THE MIND OF WATTS"		10
	SIDES 2004	"STRAIGHT INTO COMPTON"		20
	DAVIS 1989	"FORTRESS LA"		45

<i>Week 14</i>		THE BIG PICTURE	The Lived Legacies of American Urban History	
TU	CONCLUSIONS From Housing Bubble to Gentrification to Pandemic: American Urbanism Today and Tomorrow			
30 Nov				

<i>Final Exam</i>		MOVING FORWARD	Wrapping Up	
SU	FINAL ESSAY DUE			
12 DEC				