History 594
The American Metropolis (and Beyond)

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Spring 2008
Gilbert Hall 220
Monday 6:30-9:15

Office Hours: MW 9:00-11:00 or by appointment

This course is a graduate seminar in twentieth-century U.S. history emphasizing the evolution of American urban, suburban and rural spaces since World War II. The class treats city and countryside as components of spatially integrated regions and will engage with such themes as racial inequality, pollution and the environment, the varied effects of technological change, the applicability of a Sunbelt/Rust Belt divide, and the rise of suburban politics and culture. The goal of the course is to move beyond the easy declining city/ascendant suburbia dichotomy to a more nuanced understanding of a contemporary landscape that also includes failing suburbs, gentrified city centers, and a de/industrialized countryside. The course will grapple with the dominant themes and legacies of the postwar metropolitan development pattern through a focus on political and social history; race, class and gender analysis; popular culture; technology and the environment; and the evolution of urban planning policy. Important questions to consider include: Did the same policies that built the sprawling suburbs also produce a rural/urban crisis? How does a metropolitan approach to postwar America recast historiographical debates on topics from racial identity and class consciousness to the rise and fall of the New Deal Order?

Required Books
Seminar members are responsible for securing your own copies of the assigned books. One copy of each book also is on course reserve at the Lehman Library.

Mike Davis, Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big City (New York: Verso, 2000).


**Virtual Coursepack**

Additional reading assignments marked as “WD” will be available through the Web Documents section of Blackboard. You are required to bring to class all assignments listed on the syllabus.

**Grading**

Class Participation and Discussion Forum 60%

Research Paper 40%

**Assignments**

**Discussion**

The central obligation of this course involves thorough preparation for each weekly meeting and active participation in class discussion. Seminar participants will each serve as the discussion generator during two weeks of the semester. We will use the Discussion Forum to stimulate thought and begin conversation about the weekly readings before the actual class meeting. Discussion Forum postings should be about one single-spaced page in length. The discussion generator should plan to launch the conversation with a posting on the Discussion Forum no later than early Saturday afternoon. The goal of this initial response is not to summarize the book comprehensively but instead to pose a series of questions designed to place provocative ideas into the spotlight and/or draw connections among various weeks. The other students in the seminar should post their own weekly responses to the readings, which may include responses to the comments by the discussion generator and other course members, by Sunday at 8 p.m. Everyone in the class should read over the entire Discussion Forum dialogue before class on Monday.

**Research Paper**

The second major focus of the course will be conceptualizing, researching and writing a 16-20 page primary research-driven paper. In completing this assignment, I expect you to conduct significant research including but not limited to visiting archives, producing your own oral history interviews, and accessing online databases. Your analysis will also need to incorporate secondary sources such as those we will be discussing each week in class. This is a semester long project that I have divided into a series of steps as listed on the syllabus. The requirements for each step are explained in the document “How to Write a Research Paper.”

**Note on Attendance**

Class attendance is (of course) mandatory. Missing more than two classes (except in extreme circumstances) will automatically result in the failure of the course.
**Students with Disabilities and Assignment Extensions**
If you need additional assistance with any aspect of the class, please see me as soon as possible. I will be more than happy to accommodate any reasonable request made well in advance of assignment due dates.

Jan. 14  **Introduction – Issues in a Region of Contrasts**  
WD Joel Rogers, “Cities: The Vital Core,” *The Nation* (June 20, 2005)  
WD Paul Edwards, “How to Read a Book.”

Jan. 23*  **Interpreting Main Street U.S.A.**  
Isenberg, *Downtown America*  

Jan. 28  **City and Countryside in the Progressive Age**  
Grossman, *Land of Hope*  

Research Proposal Due

Feb. 4  **Suburban Migration and the "American Dream"**  
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*  

Feb. 11  **Rise of the “Sunbelt”**  
Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*

Feb. 18  **Citizenship in a Consumer Nation**  
Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*

Feb. 25  **A Framework for Metropolitan History**  
Self, *American Babylon*

Mar. 3  **The "Long Civil Rights Movement"**  
Countryman, *Up South*

* Due to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, class will meet on Wednesday, January 23 from 6:30-8:30.
Literature Review Due

Mar. 17  The Sunbelt and the New Conservatism
McGirr, Suburban Warriors
WD Matthew Lassiter, “‘Socioeconomic Integration’ in the Suburbs: From Reactionary Populism to Class Fairness in Metropolitan Charlotte” in Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History*.

Mar. 24  Environmental History of the Metropolis
Rome, Bulldozer in the Countryside

Mar. 31  Reconfiguring Rurality
Abbott, et al., Planning a New West

Apr. 7  Capital, Labor, and "Creative Destruction"
Cowie, Capital Moves

Apr. 16*  Rewriting Suburban History
Wiese, Places of their Own

Apr. 21  Urban Renewal in the “Rust Belt”
Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams

Peer Review Due

Apr. 28  The Future of the Metropolis
Florida, Cities and the Creative Class
Davis, Magical Urbanism

Research Paper Due Friday, May 2 by 5:00 p.m.

* Due to the Spring Mini-Break, class will meet on Wednesday, April 16 from 6:30-9:15.
American cities today are simultaneously the same and different from Wilson’s classic portrayal in The Truly Disadvantaged ([1987] 2012), first published over 30 years ago. Concentrated poverty and