

**Field Study of Buildings and Cities:
A New Exploration of the Bay Region**

Geography 182
Course Syllabus
Summer 2019

Instructor:
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Ranging across the vast, arguably centerless San Francisco Bay Region, this course considers how direct observation of the ordinary built environments that surround us can equip informed research and speculation on the historical geography of the American city. It teaches ways of seeing, otherwise sensing, and skeptically asking questions of building types, street forms, land-use patterns, and other artifacts of material culture, no matter how humble or anonymous. Its path wends through landscapes we might label urban, suburban, exurban, and everything in between; through scenes of work, residence, leisure, consumption, and other daily rounds; between official and vernacular space, always attentive to their conflicts; between global nodes and local redoubts; and between sites of investment and disinvestment, in- and out-migration, wealth and poverty, consensus and dissensus. At every juncture, it explores the two-way relationship between built form and everyday life. It treats the Bay Region, the only region to which we have firsthand access this summer, in terms of both its spatial idiosyncrasies and its absolute typicality vis-à-vis other North American cities. And it makes the case for *walking* as a way of knowing — for “botanizing on the asphalt.”

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The course comprises a series of six day-long field trips. Except for an hour at the start of the first meeting, there is no classroom instruction. Each Friday from May 31 to July 5, we will meet in a different location (typically at or near a BART stop) and set out on foot from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. As we walk, we will discuss the past, present, and future of the landscapes we encounter, and of others like them. Certain sites will call forth brief lectures.

You will receive an e-mail each week with information on our meeting place (and other germane instructions) no later than Thursday. There are no section meetings. There are modest weekly reading assignments, and you will write a short response paper following every trip but the last, when a slightly longer essay comes due. It may make sense, in fact, to do each week’s reading just *after* we tour, not before. Our discussions will concern visible and invisible aspects of the landscapes around us, not the form or content of the readings. But those readings are indeed required, and they will be posted as PDFs to the bCourses site. You should feel free to buy any of the books excerpted, or to consult Peter Ekman for recommendations on further reading.

Eight hours is a long time, and we will make multiple stops for food, drink, shade, and repose. Each trip builds in a lunch (half-)hour within striking distance of cheap eateries. You may, of course, bring your own food. You should absolutely bring water to drink, and you should wear shoes that do not impede long walks.

Week 1: Berkeley Up and Down

(May 31)

Grady Clay, "Crossing the American Grain with Vesalius, Geddes, and Jackson: The Cross Section as a Learning Tool," in *Everyday America*, eds. Chris Wilson and Paul Groth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 109–129.

Donald Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Donald Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 33–48.

Rebecca Solnit, "Tracing a Headland" and "The Solitary Stroller and the City," in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 1–13, 171–195.

Optional:

Kenneth H. Cardwell, *Bernard Maybeck: Artisan, Architect, Artist* (Santa Monica: Hennessy + Ingalls, 1977).

Waverly B. Lowell, *Living Modern: A Biography of Greenwood Common* (Richmond, Calif.: William Stout Publishers, 2009).

Sally Woodbridge, ed., *Bay Area Houses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

Week 2: Oakland's Working Centers and Edges

(June 7)

Paul Groth, "Workers'-Cottage and Minimal-Bungalow Districts in Oakland and Berkeley, California, 1870–1945," *Urban Morphology* 8 (2004): 13–25.

Robert O. Self, "Industrial Garden," in *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 23–60.

Mitchell Schwarzer, "Oakland City Center: The Plan to Reposition Downtown within the Bay Region," *Journal of Planning History* 14 (2015): 88–111.

Optional:

Suzanne Stewart and Mary Praetzellis, eds., *Sights and Sounds: Essays in Celebration of West Oakland* (Sacramento: California Department of Transportation, 1997).

Marilynn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

Week 3: "Old" San Francisco and Its "Renewal"

(June 14)

M. G. Upton, "The Plan of San Francisco," *Overland Monthly* 2 (February 1869), 131–136.

Mansel G. Blackford, "San Francisco Rejects the Burnham Plan," in *The Lost Dream: Businessmen and City Planning on the Pacific Coast, 1890–1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 31–62.

Optional:

Daniel H. Burnham, *Report on a Plan for San Francisco* (San Francisco: Sunset Press, 1905).

Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

M. Justin Herman, *San Francisco Redevelopment 1971–1973* (San Francisco: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, 1973).

Alison Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco: Art, Land, and Urban Renewal in the City by the Bay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

Week 4: San Francisco's Zones of Emergence (June 21)

Anne Bloomfield, "The Real Estate Associates: A Land and Housing Developer of the 1870s in San Francisco," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 37 (March 1978): 13–33.

Peter Booth Wiley, *National Trust Guide San Francisco: America's Guide for Architecture and History Travelers* (New York: Wiley, 2000), 1–121. This text is optional but recommended. It might be worth buying.

Optional:

Ocean Howell, *Making the Mission: Planning and Ethnicity in San Francisco* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Brian Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition: The Making of San Francisco's Ethnic and Nonconformist Communities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Christopher Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown: An Architectural and Urban History" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1985).

Week 5: The Carquinez Strait; or, The Machine in the Garden (June 28)

Richard A. Walker, "Industry Builds the City: The Suburbanization of Manufacturing in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850–1940," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27 (2001): 36–57.

Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, "The Geography of North American Cities and Suburbs, 1900–1950: A New Synthesis," *Journal of Urban History* 27 (March 2001): 262–292.

Michael Leccese and Kathleen McCormick, eds., *Charter of the New Urbanism* (New York: McGraw–Hill, 2000).

Optional:

Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, "Constructing a Fault(y) Zone: Misrepresentations of American Cities and Suburbs, 1900–1950," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88 (December 1998): 622–639.

Dell Upton, "New Urbanism," in *Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World*, eds. Karen Christensen and David Levinson (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2003), vol. 3: 992–997.

Ernest A. Wiltsee, "The City of New York of the Pacific," *Quarterly of the California Historical Society* 12 (March 1933): 25–34.

Around the Bay: Man-Made Sites of Interest in the San Francisco Bay Region (Culver City, Calif.: Center for Land Use Interpretation, 2013).

Week 6: "We Have Seen the Future, and It Is in Pleasanton" (July 5)

Louise Mazingo, "Campus, Estate, and Park: Lawn Culture Comes to the Corporation," in *Everyday America*, eds. Chris Wilson and Paul Groth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 255–274.

James E. Vance, Jr., "The City of Automobiles," "The New City," "The Urban Realms of the Bay Area," and "Conclusions," in *Geography and Urban Evolution in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies, 1964), 60–89.

Optional:

Bill Owens, *Suburbia* [1973] (New York: Fotofolio, 1999).

Barry Bergdoll and Reinhold Martin, eds., *Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012).

Office Hours

Peter Ekman is available by appointment to discuss any aspect of the course, the urban landscape, or the geographical tradition (as well as just about any other topic). There are no recurring, drop-in office hours.

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Writing Assignments

Each week, drawing on field notes, the readings, and your own ingenuity, you will craft a two-page, double-spaced essay in response to the landscapes we have just explored. Minimally, you might summarize where we went, what we saw, how it has changed over time, and why we care. The best papers, however, will focus on one or two specific aspects of the trip — sites, building types, themes, processes, surprises, puzzles, etc. — and interpret these in depth, forgoing the rudiments of summary.

Then, during the sixth week, you will write a slightly longer and more synthetic paper of five pages, drawing together site-specific material from multiple weeks. In this paper, you will make a more general argument about the dynamics of landscape change. No response paper is required for Week 6 (Pleasanton). Indeed, you can write the final paper before going on that trip. Or you can wait until we have done so before you write — either way. It will come due on July 7. Details on the what and the how of the final paper will emerge later in the term. It is not, however, a formal term paper that would require original research and the collection of sources.

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Grading

Attendance and participation on all six tours: 50%

Five weekly responses: 35%

Final paper: 15%