
GEOGRAPHY 70AC
THE URBAN EXPERIENCE:
RACE, CLASS, GENDER & THE AMERICAN CITY
SPRING 2024

Lecture Information:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, **9:30am – 10:59am**

Room: 141 McCone Hall

Section Information:

GSI: Cecille de Laurentis (cdl@berkeley.edu)

Section 101 (Mondays 8-9am): 2 Evans Hall

Section 102 (Tuesdays 4-5pm): 120 Wheeler Hall

GSI: Kevin Quintero (kquintero1796@berkeley.edu)

Section 103 (Thursdays 4-5pm): 2032 Valley Life Sciences

Section 104 (Fridays 12-1p): 2 Evans Hall

Course Description

In this course we will observe and analyze how the American city has been built, experienced, imagined, and transformed. Using recent scholarship and primary sources, we will track the historical evolution of the city and assess change and continuity in major themes of urban life: race and difference, industry and labor, community and culture, and power and politics. These themes become increasingly intertwined throughout the course. We will focus on the particularities of place and the experiences of ordinary people but also seek to understand how broader political and economic processes shape the inequalities and opportunities that structure everyday life.

As this is an American Cultures course, we will study the overlapping and interacting African American, Asian American, European American, and Latin American communities that have created and recreated the American metropolis, while considering the instability and historical novelty of these categories themselves. In doing so, we will engage in an ongoing conversation about the historical contingencies and contemporary contexts that define meanings of race and difference. We will see how oppression and inequality are created and challenged through urban space in distinctive ways in the United States. The course is national in scope, but we will often focus on metropolitan New York and California cities because they epitomize key historical patterns and contemporary questions concerning racism and social justice, migration and citizenship, state power and community empowerment, economic development and industrial restructuring, and suburbanization and gentrification.

Class meetings will consist of lectures and periodic individual and group activities designed to help us synthesize course materials and understand how our own experience shapes our understanding of the city and its people, as well as of ourselves and each other. In doing so, we will pursue ways to think critically about the cities we inhabit and what they may become.

Course Objectives

- Be familiar with important trends and forces behind the reshaping of historical geographies of race, class, and gender in the city;
- Develop an eye for “looking at cities” and being able to ask questions about the processes that produce urban form;
- Understand historical and contemporary patterns of social inclusion and exclusion in cities and be able to identify their underlying causes and effects;
- Develop a theoretical understanding of race and ethnicity based on geographically- and historically-specific accounts of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx, and European Americans;
- In addition to geographical inquiry, identify and explore approaches and insights from a range of fields, including political economy and cultural studies.

Course Instructor information, Contact, and Office Hours

Course instructor: Brandi T. Summers

Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs): Cecille de Laurentis, Kevin Quintero

In this course, the instructor will interact with the whole class and administer all activities and grading, as well as be available to resolve issues as they arise. The GSIs will be your main point of contact. Your GSIs are responsible for assisting you directly with your questions about assignments and course requirements. The GSIs will also facilitate ongoing discussion and interaction with you on major topics in each module.

Office Hours

The course instructor and GSIs will offer office hours. These office hours allow for interaction with the instructor and GSIs and are a good opportunity to discuss your questions relevant to the course.

Office hours for Professor Summers:

- *Group drop-in office hours* for general questions about the course, lectures, readings, assignments: **Tuesdays 12:00pm – 1:30pm, 589 McCone Hall**
- *Individual office hours* for conversations that require privacy: **By appointment**

Correspondence

You may contact Professor Summers and/or your GSI via bCourses. Please check your inbox for messages from the instructor and GSIs.

Required Texts

I will post all assigned readings on our bCourses website.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Midterm exam (35% of total grade)

The exam will consist of short answer and essay questions. We will have an in-class midterm review on Thursday, February 22.

Final Exam (40% of total grade)

The final will consist of an essay exam that draws from classroom discussion, reading assignments and recitations. The final exam will consist of a series of short-answer and essay questions.

Participation (25% of total grade)

Participation consists of **in-class activities (think/write/pair/share), and two (2) reading responses**. Please craft a response to two of the assigned readings. **One of your reading responses is due before the midterm examination and one is due after the midterm examination**. The choice of readings is up to you — select the ones you find most interesting. Each reading response should be approximately 400 words.

Rather than a detailed summary, your reading response should include a distillation of the author’s main argument (one or two sentences), and at least one of the following three components:

- Comments on the most interesting aspects of the reading
- Thoughts about how the reading is related to issues and topics discussed in lecture
- A discussion of how the author’s key concepts relate to your own experiences

(Optional) Term Project – due Thursday, April 18

This optional assignment is intended to allow students to connect course themes to their own experiences in the city. Compose a photo essay of 8 images on a key theme of the course. Photos must be your own. The set should be informed by a critical understanding of their historical and geographical context, with an accompanying map (it need not be fancy) and no fewer than 250 words devoted to each. Before you do this project, please familiarize yourself with the National Press Photographers Association code of ethics: <https://nppa.org/code-ethics>.

Grading

Each of the three required parts of the class described above must be successfully completed for a passing grade. Your course grade is composed as follows:

Class participation	25% of final grade (250 pts)
Midterm exam	35% of final grade (350 pts)
Final exam	40% of final grade (400 pts)
Optional project	Up to 100 additional points

Course grades will be comprised by total points earned on all three components listed above (plus additional points if you choose to submit the optional project).

Grade scale

A 93-100%	B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D+ 67-69%	P > 70%
A- 90-92%	B 83-86%	C 73-76%	D 63-66%	NP < 70%
	B- 80-82%	C- 70-72%	D- 60-62%	

Readings.

Assigned readings should be completed before the corresponding lecture. We will also be watching several videos during class. These media should be treated as text, in that they are required and may appear on exams

Attendance.

Attendance is mandatory and vital to do well in this course. Because I am a big fan of active learning, I will often use discussion in lieu of lectures and ask students to come to class prepared with questions, reflections, and debates. You should also expect to keep up with the readings so you can best engage with course lectures and discussions. If you are unable to attend lecture, it is your responsibility to let me know, in advance. If you miss lecture, you must make up the work and decide whether you can continue in the course. No make-up examinations will be permitted except in the case of a documented emergency.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a joint endeavor among not only students but the entire academic community in all scholarly activity. In this course each of us is responsible for fostering an environment of openness, honesty, fairness, and respect.

UC Berkeley has strict policies concerning academic misconduct and dishonesty. The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct). This typically involves (1) plagiarism: copying text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference; and (2) cheating: fraud or dishonesty in an academic assignment, including examinations. Cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct will result in a failing grade on the assignment, paper, quiz, or exam in questions and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. For more information about intentional academic misconduct and attendant consequences see:

<http://advocate.berkeley.edu/conduct/>

Student Resources

Berkeley Student Learning Center: <http://slc.berkeley.edu>

Offers peer tutoring, writing support, and other academic resources.

Disabled Students' Program: <http://www.dsp.berkeley.edu>

Provides a wide range of resources to ensure equal access to educational opportunities, including advising, assessment, note-taking services, and academic accommodations.

Tang Center Services: <http://uhs.berkeley.edu/students/counseling/cps.shtml>

Offers immediate and long-term counseling services to assist students with a variety of concerns about academic success, life management, career planning, and personal development.

DSP Accommodation

DSP-related extensions **must be requested 24-hours before the assignment is due**. The extension will be provided for an additional 24-hours beyond the due date and time, unless stipulated by an alternative agreement.

Course Website

Our course has a web site at bCourses.berkeley.edu. It is crucial that you check the page regularly for course updates and other announcements, as well as lecture slides, handouts, and other course materials.

A note about our classroom environment...

I invite you to join me in committing to actively and respectfully participate in order to make this an interactive and dynamic space to learn. Students who bring creativity, thoughtfulness, and critical reflection to the course materials will do well in the class. I encourage discussions to take place within the context of critical thinking and in the spirit of understanding diverse perspectives.

It is vital that our classroom be a place where everyone feels safe to express opinions, beliefs, and explore their values. This course and I will challenge various opinions and beliefs in the spirit of critical thinking and scholarly engagement. In order to participate in and contribute to open discussion, students are asked to adhere to the following guidelines to help create a more comfortable learning environment:

1. Acknowledge that other people have experiences that we may not understand or relate to.
2. Consider that people – both the groups we discuss and members of our class – are doing the best they can with the current tools they have at their disposal.
3. Be aware that how we conduct ourselves in the classroom affects how others learn and engage (e.g., Am I talking more than my share? Am I unwilling to share my ideas?)
4. Be respectful in our dialogue with others.

About Electronic Correspondence

As you prepare emails, please consider that the college experience is meant to prepare you for the professional world. As such, I encourage you to begin practicing professional etiquette. That begins with learning how to address your interlocutor in an electronic message correctly. Thus, here are four choices of salutations you may use when you write and email to me: “Dear Dr. Summers,” “Dear Professor Summers,” “Hello/Hi Dr. Summers,” or “Hello/Hi Professor Summers.” Please note: any messages sent to me without a salutation or with an improper salutation (such as “hey,” “yo,” or “hi,” etc.) will be discarded without a reply.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introductions and Overview

We start with a broad survey of U.S. cities and review the syllabus. We will discuss several key concepts that will structure the course, paying close attention to the mutual constitution of culture, society, and space in our cities.

Tuesday, January 16

Introduction to Geography 70AC

Thursday, January 18

The Urban Experience: What is a city? This lecture reflects on the city as process and place. What is specifically urban about the human experiences that take place in cities? How do these experiences differ according to race, gender, or class? What is the role of urban space, both real and imagined, in creating meanings of race and everyday experiences of inclusion or exclusion?

- Simmel, George. 1903. "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Blackwell City Reader* (2010)
- Cadogan, Garnette. 2015. "Walking While Black," *Freeman's*

The Modern American City (1870s-1920s): Manufacturing the Metropolis

This section looks at the explosive growth of the Modern American Metropolis, focusing on interconnections between nature, industry, and property. We locate the city in physical geography and consider the complex and mutually constitutive relations between urban development and "nature." Dependence on nature for water, power, and industrial inputs shaped cities' economic expansion and specialized roles in regional and national economies. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Chicago, where industrialization— economic specialization, labor exploitation, and mass production, consumption, and distribution of commodities—defined and drove metropolitan expansion. Nature also provides the basis of urban development—both physically and economically— through the commodification of land, or speculative property development.

Tuesday, January 23

The Nature of Cities: What is "nature" How did cities depend upon, transform, and perceive the natural environment?

- Fisher, Colin. 2011. "Nature in the City: Urban Environmental History and Central Park," *OHA Magazine of History*.
- Smith, Heather. 2016. "Thirsts and Ghosts" in *Nonstop Metropolis*.

Thursday, January 25

Cities of Industry: How did dependence on "nature" structure manufacturing and regional specialization? How did industrial production engender metropolitan expansion, and fragmentation? What is an industrial suburb?

- Sinclair, Upton. 1906. *The Jungle* (selections)

Tuesday, January 30

The Growth Machine: How do cities grow? Why? Who benefits? What stakes do different groups have in shaping the direction growth takes? Who suffers if there is no growth at all?

Logan, J. & H. Molotch. 1987. *Urban Fortunes* (selections)

The Modern American City (1870s-1920s): Delimiting and Defying Difference
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An examination of the geographical and historical processes of race formation and the construction and contestation of social hierarchies is essential for understanding the Modern American Metropolis. Our look at immigration and ethnicity in New York shows how tensions between ethnic identity, labor solidarity, and American citizenship created the spatial bonds and barriers of community, while creating new, often contradictory identities. Our investigation of Chinatown in San Francisco shows how popular culture, the built environment, and legislation helped define difference in urban space. Studies of African American communities in Philadelphia and Chicago's "Black Belt" illustrate how everyday people created and claimed urban space despite forced segregation and disenfranchisement. We also examine how gender was defined and destabilized in public space in San Francisco. In all, we examine not only the experience of racialized and gendered oppression but also how everyday acts of survival, community formation, and political agency became meaningful feats of autonomy and resistance.

Thursday, February 1

Immigration & Ethnicity: How did immigration transform American cities? What is the difference between race and ethnicity? How were urban neighborhoods and communities organized within the greater coherence of the metropolis? How did everyday life create spaces of ethnic identity and exclusion?

Cadogan, Garnette. 2016. "Love Your Crooked Neighbor/With Your Crooked Heart," *Catapult*.

Tuesday, February 6

Racial Formations: What is race? Who defines it? How? How are cultural domination and economic exploitation necessarily intertwined?

Omi, M. & H. Winant. 2015. "The Theory of Racial Formation," in *Racial Formation in the United States*.

Domosh, Mona. 2002. "A 'Civilized' Commerce: Gender, 'Race,' and Empire at the 1893 Chicago Exposition," *cultural geographies*.

Thursday, February 8

Chinatowns: What are the links between race and space in the city? How did representations of urban places define, obscure, or aestheticize inequalities based on race and class? How were inscriptions of racial difference in urban space ensnared in broader economic and political processes?

Lloyd, Benjamin. 1876. "A Night Stroll Through Chinatown," in *Lights and Shades in San Francisco*.

Please note: this is a primary source written in 1876. The depiction of Chinese people in San Francisco's Chinatown is reprehensible. The piece offers an important piece of historical data that is crucial for understanding the places and processes we are interrogating and investigating

Tuesday, February 13

The Color Line: What are the origins of racial segregation and the so-called inner city? What are the gendered implications of segregation? How did residential segregation shape everyday life? How did cultural practices take and make place, and contest racialized injustices?

- Garb, Margaret. 2006. "Drawing the 'Color Line': Race and Real Estate in Early Twentieth Century Chicago," *Journal of Urban History*
- Shabazz, Rashad. 2015. "'Our Prison': Kitchenettes, Carceral Power, and Black Masculinity during the Interwar Years" in *Spatializing Blackness*.

Thursday, February 15

Gendering Spaces: What roles did the built landscape play in the social construction of gender? What role did gender play in the structure of the city? How does gender interact with other forms of difference?

- Solnit, Rebecca. 2016. "The Power of Names" in *Nonstop Metropolis*.

The Modern American City (1870s-1920s): Who Governs?

In this section, we continue our examination of the interrelatedness of public power and private profit in the city. We see how urban expansion shaped the organization and operation of political power in the city, while reshaping ethnic identities and outlooks. Next, we examine how reform movements refashioned urban institutions and the city itself, and we ask how reformers mirrored and molded ideas about ethnicity and what it means to be called "American."

Tuesday, February 20

The Gilded Age: Machine Politics + Reformers: Who governed the city? How was power obtained and institutionalized, and how did immigration impact the city? What was the role of ethnicity in urban politics? Who were the "reformers"? What were the ideological bases of political and social reform? What were the consequences of "Americanization" for ethnic communities?

- Teaford, Jon. 1984. *The Unheralded Triumph* (selections)
- Keire, Mara. 2010. "Segregating Vice," in *For Business & Pleasure*.

Thursday, February 22

No Reading Assigned – In-class midterm review

MIDTERM EXAM – TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

The Postwar Metropolis (1930s-1980s): Peaks and Precipices

This section considers the hopes and failures engendered by the city during the “golden age” of American industrial capitalism. With an eye towards New York, we assess what is arguably the height of American urbanism, while examining how the postwar city entrenched patterns of prosperity and poverty along ethnic and racial lines. We also see how different groups navigated the socially fractured industrial landscape of Detroit while claiming territory and propagating identity.

Thursday, February 29

The City at its Height?: How did the New Deal and World War II shape the postwar city? What are the distinctive characteristics of this city?

Jacobs, Jane. 1961. “The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety,” in *The City Reader* (2015).

Tuesday, March 5

The Fordist City: What are the links between industry and metropolitan form? How were the resources sired by unprecedented national economic expansion distributed along racial and ethnic lines?

Sugrue, Thomas. 1996. “Arsenal of Democracy,” in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

The Postwar Metropolis (1930s-1980s): Uneven Metropolitan Development

Suburbanization reconstituted the form, economy, and culture of the metropolis, and the country. Rather than reductive notions of “white flight” and “urban crisis,” we see how federal policies institutionalized discrimination and difference by allocating resources to mostly white homeowners in suburban municipalities while withdrawing funds from increasingly African-American central cities. These divisions crucially influenced how different social groups experienced the city and helped precipitate an array of political movements.

Thursday, March 7

Suburban Solutions: How did the federal government engender suburban development? Whom did it benefit? Who was left behind? How was racial segregation institutionalized and made a key determinant of property value?

Rothstein, Richard. 2017. *The Color of Law* (selections)

Walker, Richard. 2019. “The New Deal Didn’t Create Segregation,” *Jacobin*.

Tuesday, March 12

“Urban Renewal” = Negro Removal: What political processes concentrated poverty and lack of access to opportunity in central cities? How did federal policy and urban renewal projects reshape the city and amplify inequality?

Tarleton, Jonathan. 2016. “Ways and Means,” in *Nonstop Metropolis*.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2019. “Unfair Housing,” in *Race for Profit*.

Thursday, March 14

Black Power & Tax Revolts: How did uneven metropolitan development engender political movements among both suburban homeowners (Tax Revolts) and the African American communities (Black Power)? Why did suburban homeowners feel entitled to low taxes? What were the links between property values, taxes, and racism? How did Black Power politics address the failures of local and federal government policies?

Self, Robert. 2008. "American Babylon: Black Panthers and Proposition 13," *Race, Poverty & the Environment*.

Tuesday, March 19

From Suburbs to "Inner Cities": What are the successes and failures of postwar suburban integration?

Sides, Josh. 2004. "Straight into Compton: American Dreams, Urban Nightmares, and the Metamorphosis of a Black Suburb." *American Quarterly*.

The Contemporary City (1980s-2010s): The Nature of Cities

How do environmental hazards expose the deeply entrenched, racialized injustices that structure everyday life in U.S. cities?

Thursday, March 21

Environments of Racism and Justice: Who is exposed to the greatest social, ecological, and health hazards caused by pollution and other environmental hazards? Who is responsible? How does environmental racism create and perpetuate difference and disadvantage?

Dillon, Lindsay. 2014. "Race, Waste, and Space: Brownfield Redevelopment and Environmental Justice at the Hunters Point Shipyard." *Antipode*.

Herscher, Andrew. 2006. "American Urbicide." *Journal of Architectural Education*.

Bloch, Sam. 2019. "Shade." *Places Journal*. April 2019

**** SPRING BREAK ****
NO CLASS MARCH 26 & MARCH 28

The Contemporary City (1980s-present): Technopolis

Industrial clustering has refashioned metropolitan space, while technological innovation has transformed both the nature of work and the meaning of the city. This section considers the global ramifications and local contradictions created by our most celebrated industries. We study the so-called "creative class" and explore labor dynamics and racial and gendered disparities in Silicon Valley. We pay particular attention to Silicon Valley and the technological dynamism, worldwide connections, unparalleled prosperity, monolithic corporations, and nimble start-ups that benefit our lives and livelihoods in innumerable ways. But rather than celebrating heroic or iconoclastic entrepreneurs, we focus on industrial clustering, specialized venture capital, and labor exploitation as the basis of Silicon Valley's growth. Indeed, the glittering symbol of urban dynamism is tarnished by

wildly uneven growth, a widening wealth gap, shamefully unaffordable housing, dire homelessness, a plethora of low-wage work, and racial and gendered disparities across careers and sectors. Rather than unanticipated consequences or unfortunate outcomes, we see how these contradictions are embedded in the very logic of this preeminent success story of contemporary capitalism.

Tuesday, April 2

Silicon Valleys: What are the origins of Silicon Valley? Why is it a hotbed of innovation? What are the relationships between technological innovation and economic exploitation?

Walker, Richard. 2017. "Tech City," in *Pictures of a Gone City*.

Thursday, April 4

Race and Technology: In what ways have new technologies reflected and reproduced existing inequalities that are often celebrated and perceived as objective?

Benjamin, Ruha. 2019. "Engineered Inequity: Are Robots Racist" in *Race After Technology*

The Contemporary City (1980s-present): Resegregation

This section investigates shifting patterns of poverty and prosperity in the metropolis. We locate the contemporary city within the broad political economic transformations and focus on gentrification. We see how previous federal policies that engendered segregation have enabled the profitable redevelopment and repopulation of historically working-class communities of color. We chart the ways gentrification has shifted spatial patterns of inequality in terms of income, health, and education along racial lines. We also look at the role of municipal governments in redeveloping urban cores and perpetuating patterns of inequality. Along with the "revitalization" of our central cities, we explore emergent patterns of suburban poverty and the dispersal of the "urban crisis." In all, we examine who benefits from the revitalization of our central cities, why poverty is increasingly centered in the suburbs, and why the fight for housing justice necessarily involves more than just affordable housing. We also investigate the recent history of multiethnic suburbanization and novel relations between race and place in our suburbs. We end this section, and the course, on our present-day experiences in the midst of a global pandemic. We discuss the current crisis and its impact on the future of cities and city-life.

Tuesday, April 9

The Neoliberal City: What is neoliberalism? How has the rise of market-oriented strategies of urban government transformed the contemporary city?

Chronopoulos, Themis. 2019. "Race, Class, and Gentrification in Harlem Since 1980," in *Race Capital? Harlem as Setting and Symbol*.

Thursday, April 11

Out of Place: Why is gentrification so conspicuous in the San Francisco Bay Area? What is the role of the tech economy? Why is profitable property development predicated on the displacement of working-class communities of color? What are the links between gentrification and the criminalization of working-class people of color?

- Flores, Lori. 2016. "Seeing Through Murals: The Future of Latino San Francisco." *Boom*.
- Solnit, Rebecca. 2016. "Death by Gentrification: The Killing that Shamed San Francisco," *The Guardian* (March 21).

Optional Term Project Due – April 18

Tuesday, April 16

Suburbanization of Poverty: Why are poverty rates skyrocketing in the suburbs? What does the eruptive uprising in Ferguson after the killing of Michael Brown tell us about geographies of racialized disinvestment and the future of the American Metropolis?

- Mollenkopf, J. & T. Swanstrom. 2019. "Explaining Ferguson Through Place and Race," in *The Dream Revisited*

Thursday, April 18

Multi-Ethnic Suburbs: How do different groups make space their own? How have multi-ethnic suburbs reshaped relations between race and space in the American Metropolis? What accounts for the relatively harmonious coexistence for Asian Americans and Latinos in the West San Gabriel Valley? Can suburban cosmopolitanism emerge in other U.S. metropolitan regions?

- Cheng, Wendy. 2015. "East of East: The Global Cosmopolitans of Suburban LA," *Boom*.

Conclusions and Review

Tuesday, April 23

COVID, Crisis, and the Racialization of Space: What lessons have we learned, if any, from previous crises and "natural" disasters in order to understand our current conditions? What are the similarities and differences between now and then, and how has gentrification impacted the rapid spread and disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in specific communities?

- Summers, Brandi. 2020. "What Black American Knows About Quarantine," *New York Times*.
- Kornhaber, Spencer. 2020. "The Inequality of Summer Leisure," *The Atlantic*.

Thursday, April 25
In Class REVIEW

FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 11:30AM – 2:30PM
