

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.

Carl Abbott, Sy Adler, Margery Post Abbott, *Planning a New West: The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1997).

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999).

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

Richard L. Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, 2nd Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001)

Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).
Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).
Bryant Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams: Atlantic City and the Fate of Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)
Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 2004)

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 Robert Fishman, “The American Metropolis at Century’s End: Past and Future Influences,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11(1): 199–213
WD Joel Rogers, “Cities: The Vital Core,” *The Nation* (June 20, 2005)
WD David Brooks, “Patio Man and the Sprawl People,” *The Weekly Standard* (Aug. 12 & 19, 2002)
WD Ann B.W. Effland, “When Rural does not Equal Agricultural,” *Agricultural History* 74 (Spring 2000), 489-501.
WD Paul Edwards, “How to Read a Book.”
- Jan. 23* **Interpreting Main Street U.S.A.**
Isenberg, *Downtown America*
WD *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (review), LaDale Winling, *Journal of Social History* 39 (Winter 2005), 566-568.
WD James Borchert, “Book Reviews - *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* by Alison Isenberg,” *Journal of American History* 92, no. 2 (2005): 659.
- Jan. 28 **City and Countryside in the Progressive Age**
Grossman, *Land of Hope*
WD Susan Rimby, Chapter 2 in “More for Forests: The Life and Work of Myra Lloyd Dock” (unpublished manuscript, 2007).
- Research Proposal Due
- Feb. 4 **Suburban Migration and the "American Dream"**
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*
WD Becky Niccolaides, “How Hell Moved from the City to the Suburbs” in Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History*.
- 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*
WD Chad Montrie, "From Dairy Farms to Housing Tracts: Environment and Race in the Making of a Memphis Suburb," *Journal of Urban History* 31, no. 2 (January 2005), 219-240.
- Mar. 31 **Reconfiguring Rurality**
Abbott, et al., *Planning a New West*
WD David Walbert, "The Landscape of Progress" in *Garden Spot: Lancaster County, the Old Order Amish, and the Selling of Rural America* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2002).
WD Allen Dieterich-Ward and Todd Andrew Needham, "Beyond the Metropolis: Metropolitan Growth and Regional Transformation in Postwar America," *Journal of Urban History* (Forthcoming).
- Apr. 7 **Capital, Labor, and "Creative Destruction"**
Cowie, *Capital Moves*
WD Howard Gilette, "The Wages of Disinvestment: How Money and Politics Aided the Decline of Camden, New Jersey" in Joseph Heathcott and Jefferson Cowie, *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*
- 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*
WD David McGranahan and Timothy Wojan, "The Creative Class: A Key to Rural Growth," *Amber Waves* (April 2007).

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.

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URL: http://www.h-net.org/~urban/teach/syllabi/dieterich-ward2008syl_1.pdf

Beyond the modern metropolis, researchers try to make sense of these large urban areas using a variety of concepts such as the "postmetropolis", "global cities", and "global city-regions". They review debates and present social science models of cities and metropolis to analyse and compare contemporary developments. They make sense of this urban world when cities are not independent units but have to be understood both in terms of territories, rootedness, and at the same time in terms of relations to take into account flux, mobility, circulations. They gain knowledge of the relevance of social science