HIST640 – The Urban Environment
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Syllabus
DRAFT SYLLABUS – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

HISTORY 640 – THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT
RESEARCH SEMINAR

Course Description
This is a research seminar intended to give graduate students a foundation in the questions and methods related to the interdisciplinary study of American cities and suburbs with a focus on the postwar United States. Through the reading of secondary sources, students will critically engage with sources, methods, and interventions to understand how to research and write about American spaces.

That work will inform and aid students in researching, writing, and revising their own primary source historical research projects of significant length, 20-25 pages. As part of that process, we will work collaboratively to help each other complete a research paper including practice giving and receiving constructive feedback.

Ideally, each student will complete a project related to their field of study and stage in their degree program and/or career such as a thesis or dissertation chapter, preparation for a qualification/comprehensive field exam, preparation for teaching in a particular subject area, etc.

Course Goals
- Familiarity, understanding, and critical assessment of the approaches to studying space and place in postwar America
- Practice finding, analyzing, and placing in historical context archival primary source material
- Practice organizing, writing, and revising a large research project
- Practice giving and receiving constructive feedback

Organization and Structure
This is a research seminar whose main objective is the production of a historical research essay. Thus, much of your effort will be spent working on that project in collaboration with your classmates and me. Nonetheless, we will also be continuously engaging in the literature of the urban experience in postwar America. This is intended to provide an introduction to and familiarity with postwar US urban life and examples of how to approach the critical study of place, people, and culture in that period.

Requirements and Assignments
The foremost requirement is a commitment to making a good faith effort to complete the work of the course. At times it may be difficult, annoying, or even overwhelming, but, graduate courses work best when everyone is working and participating. This is particular important in a research seminar where you will be working closely with classmates on their research and writing. So,
come with an open mind, commitment to yourself, your classmates, and me, and a willingness to be challenged, be lost, be scared, be invigorated, and, ultimately, to learn.

Reading Assignments

- Though you do not have to hand in responses to the following, for each reading or set of readings you should be prepared to discuss the following:
  - What is the argument?
  - What is the field of study and the intervention in that field of study?
  - What primary source evidence is used to make that argument?

- Discussion Questions
  - Further, you will choose at least one week’s readings when you will write a set of 2-4 questions for the class to consider during discussion. These will be sent to me and posted to blackboard at least 24 hours prior to class. I have provided links to review articles for most readings to help in the preparation of these questions.

Research Project Assignments – Each of these assignments will have a separate assignment sheet available via Blackboard

- Reverse Engineering
  - This assignment asks you to “reverse engineer” a scholarly monograph to understand how a research project is conceptualized and executed.

- Secondary Source Assessment
  - This assignment asks you to assess the selection and use of secondary sources in a finished scholarly monograph.

- Proposal
  - Research Question (Draft and Final)
  - Primary source identification and description
  - Annotated bibliography

- Drafting, Revision, Final Draft
  - Periodic submission of writing demonstrating understanding and response to constructive criticism

- Feedback and Writing Groups
  - You will be required to give written feedback on the work of the members of your writing group.

Required Texts

Monographs

- Kate Brown, Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters
- Matthew Desmond, Evicted: Power and Profit in Urban America
- Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, eds., The New Suburban History
- Benjamin Looker, Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy in Postwar America
- Andrew Needham, Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest
- Beryl Satter, Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America
• Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1 – Introductions/Thinking about Space and Place/Conceptualizing Your Project**

Readings
  - [https://monoskop.org/images/7/75/Lefebvre_Henri_The_Production_of_Space.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/7/75/Lefebvre_Henri_The_Production_of_Space.pdf)
- Timothy Creswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, tbd

Discussion – Topic Areas and Course Goals

**Week 2 – Social History**

Readings
- Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America*

For Discussion Questions

Due: Reverse Engineering Assignment – What would a research proposal for this book look like?
- Research Question
- Primary Sources
- Secondary Sources
- Scope

Discussion – Writing Groups

**Week 3 – American Studies**

Readings
- Benjamin Looker, *A Nation of Neighborhoods:*

For Reading Discussion Questions
- Patricia Mooney-Melvin, “Review *A Nation of Neighborhoods,*” *American Historical Review*

Due: Draft Research Question and Primary Source List/Archive Identification/Prospective Title

Assignment Assistance: *The Craft of Research* – pp. 27-49

**Week 4 - Visit Dana Library/Primary Sources**
We will have a one-hour presentation concerning the library’s resources, both those that are physically located in the library stacks as well as those online, that will help you conduct your research. (If you have seen this presentation, you may meet us at 630 in our meeting room. Please use this time to work on your projects.)

Due: Feedback on Draft Research Question and Primary Source List/Archive Identification

Discussion – Analyzing Primary Sources/Creating an Archive

Assignment Assistance: *The Craft of Research* – pp. 65-104

**Week 5 – Public History and Memory**

Reading
   - Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*

For Reading Discussion Questions

Due – Secondary Source assessment

**Week 6 – Sociology**

Reading
   - Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Power and Profit in Urban America*

Due: Prospective Bibliography

Assignment Assistance: *The Craft of Research* – pp. 85-104

**Week 7 – Comparative History**

Reading
   - Kate Brown, *Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*

For Reading Discussion Questions

**Week 8 – New Suburban History**

Readings
   - Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History*
     - Kruse and Sugrue, “Introduction”
Due: Annotated Bibliography
Feedback on Writing Group’s Annotated Bibs

Week 9 – Outline Workshop
Due – Prospective Outline
Writing Group Feedback

Week 10 – Environmental
Reading
Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest*

Due – Outline of *Power Lines*

Week 11 – From Outline to Draft
Due – Revised Outline
Writing Group Feedback

Assignment Assistance: *The Craft of Research* – pp. 173-200

Week 12 – Drafting Workshop/Giving Feedback
Due – Thesis Statement/Intervention
Writing Group Feedback

Week 13 – Drafting Workshop II
Due – Revised Thesis Statement/Draft Essay
Writing Group Feedback

Week 14 – Big Takeaways/Final Revisions and Feedback Session
Reading