

American Cultural Landscapes, 1900 to the Present

GEO CI 60B • CCN 32763 | AS CI 12B • CCN AS 32764 | Spring 2017 | 4 units

» **Syllabus subject to change.** For the latest copy, see alexcraghead.com/students/

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“Over and over again I have said that the commonplace aspects of the contemporary landscape, the streets and houses and fields and places of work, could teach us a great deal not only about American history and American society but about ourselves and how we relate to the world. It is a matter of learning how to see.”

—John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *environmental philosopher*, 1984

“Landscape is thus best understood as a kind of produced, lived, and represented space constructed out of the struggles, compromises, and temporarily settled relations of competing and cooperating social actors; it is both a thing (or a suite of things) ...and a social process, at once solidly material and ever changing.”

—Don Mitchell, *geographer*, 1991

“Believing, with Max Weber, that humans are animals suspended in webs of significance they themselves have spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be . . . an interpretive science in search of meaning.”

—Clifford Geertz, *anthropologist*, 1973

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Although delving for cultural meaning is as much an interpretive *art* as it is a science, this course takes up Geertz's theme. Together we will examine the key physical webs of American cultures: how Americans have built and changed their environments, and how those environments express and create webs of significance which still surround us. The aim, in general, is to improve the connections between our eyes and our brains as we consider our everyday surroundings.

This course introduces ways of seeing and interpreting American histories and cultures, as revealed in everyday built surroundings—homes, highways, farms, factories, stores, recreation areas, small towns, city districts, and regions. The course encourages students to read landscapes as records of past and present social relations, and to speculate for themselves about cultural meanings.

Registration for a section is probably required by Cal Central—but NOTE!—if necessary we may adjust section assignments informally after the term begins. This course deals with culture, and America, but it does not deal equally with three different cultures. Thus, with our apologies, it does NOT satisfy the University's American Cultures requirement.

» **Prerequisites:** None. You may take this “B” course even if you have not had the “A” course. People from all majors are enthusiastically welcomed.

» **For more information:** The reader has a long, detailed syllabus at the front and all the assignment guides at the back, in addition to review notes for every lecture (based on last year’s course).

READINGS AND RESOURCES

The cultural environment itself is the basic course text, which you will read with the aid of the following required books (prices are approximate):

Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt*, (New York: Random House Bantam Classics edition, 1998. Originally published in 1922), \$5.95 [Note: any edition is OK]

D. J. Waldie, *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, revised paperback edition, 2005), \$9.94

Course Reader, approx. \$55.00

The reader is available at Copy Central, 2576 Bancroft Way. If you buy the paper reader, for an additional fee you can buy a downloadable dReader. The other texts are available at the Cal Student Store at 2495 Bancroft Way as well as the E. Follett Student Store at 2480 Bancroft Way. All books will be on reserve, eventually, in the Earth Sciences and Map Library, in the basement of McCone Hall.

As noted above, the required course texts (including the course reader) will be on reserve in the Earth Sciences and Map Library, in the basement of McCone Hall.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, and GRADES

1. Midterm exam, with slide interpretation 15%
2. Discussion section participation 25%
3. A research essay of eight to ten pages 25%
4. Final exam, with slide interpretation 35%

» **Note:** Discussion sections include several short exercises, which might include an occasional short quiz. Discussion section grades—worth one-fourth of the course grade—are based on section attendance, participation, timely completion of exercises, and the general quality of section work.

WARNING: To pass this course, students must not only complete the midterm, the final exam, and the paper but also attend lectures and sections regularly. You should not take this course if you think you can routinely skip lectures and sections, and still pass the exams. That may be possible in other courses, but not in this one.

Students with disabilities (physical, medical, learning, etc.) may receive assistance and accommodation of various sorts to enable full participation in the course. To establish appropriate accommodations, contact the DSP office to see what you need, and then alert me. *The earlier you tell me, the better!* See: dsp.berkeley.edu

WRITING FORMAT AND SUBMISSIONS

All papers and weekly writing assignment must be typed, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman (or comparable) font; with 1-inch margins on all sides and page numbers at the bottom of each page. Please pay attention to the format in which you will submit assignments: for drafts and other assignments that you will discuss in class, you must submit a paper copy of your work.

About late work. We cheerfully accept late papers, but work is graded and returned in the order received. On the Tuesday of the twelfth week, the term paper is due at the beginning of class—that is, when the lecture formally begins. Work received after the lecture begins is considered late, and receives a reduced grade. Thereafter, late work can be turned in at section meetings. Grades of late papers are reduced by one third of a grade (from an A to A-, A- to B+, and so on) for every week after the deadline. For grading purposes, weeks start at the beginning of the section meeting for that week. We can accept no late student work after the last lecture of the term.

Academic honesty means don't plagiarize. This means when you are referencing another person's ideas or work, you cite that other person. Referencing and citing another person's work is a good thing, claiming another person's work as your own is not. Unsure if you're doing it right? Ask me. Here are some resources that may help:

- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL): owl.english.purdue.edu
- Berkeley's Guide to Citations: lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/citations.html
- Berkeley's Academic Integrity Policy: sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity

CONTACTING the INSTRUCTOR

Your best, first point of contact is your GSI and their office hours. Most logistical and many content questions regarding the course are best directed to them. If you wish to contact me directly, email is the best way; I will attempt to respond to emails within 48 hours. Unless instructed otherwise, I will not respond on the weekend. Further, as a general rule, if the questions you are asking require a lengthy response, see me in person.

OUTLINE OF LECTURE TITLES

Introductions and the American West (1870s to 1910s)

- Tu 1/17 1. Introductions
- Th 1/19 2. Fences, farms and forts: enforcing official spatial rules
- Tu 1/24 3. From the open range to the cattle ranch
- Th 1/26 4. Regional differences in the many Wests: bioregions and migrations as factors
- Tu 1/31 5. Western workers' settlements: work camps, company towns, and mining towns
- Th 2/2 6. Mechanized farmsteads and fields, 1890 to 1920
- Tu 2/7 7. Science lesson one: key processes of cultural landscape formation and change
- Th 2/9 8. Science lesson two: *more* key processes of cultural landscape formation and change

Spatial Reordering of the Progressive Era and New Deal (1890s to 1930s)

- Tu 2/14 9. The idea of efficiency and the central planning of work in large urban factories
- Th 2/16 10. Science lesson three: landscape orders and innovation diffusion
- Tu 2/21 11. Rebuilding downtown as the heart of a New City
First 2 pp of text and prelim. source list for your research essay due in section this week
- Th 2/23 12. Urbane alternatives to the single family house: hotels, apartments, and flats
- Tu 2/28 13. Urban outskirts: old additions vs. new packaged districts
- Th 3/2 14. Small houses made more socially polite
- Tu 3/7 **Midterm exam** (beginning of the 8th week)
- Th 3/9 15. Rediscovery of the road and highway, 1870 to 1930
- Tu 3/14 16. Country towns in their 1920s heyday
- Th 3/16 17. Family farms of the 1920s and regional landscapes of the 1930s Depression era
- Tu 3/21 18. Recreational and rural landscapes of the New Deal
- Th 3/23 19. The urban New Deal and its housing ideas
- 3/27 to 3/31 *Spring recess! No classes.*

The Troubled Triumph of Single-Use Landscapes (1945 to the Present)

- Tu 4/4 20. WW II squeezing and postwar stretching of the city, 1940 to 1955
- Th 4/6 21. Re-thinking urban edges to create the "city of realms" by the mid-1960s
- Tu 4/11 22. Suburban tract houses and yards since 1950
Research essays due 4/11 at the beginning of lecture (Tuesday of Week 12)
- Th 4/13 23. Residential suburbs since 1980
- Tu 4/18 24. Suburban shopping
- Th 4/20 25. Processes at work in the re-building of downtown, 1955 to the present
- Tu 4/25 26. Recreation as cosmic conversion: helix sports
- Th 4/27 27. Industrial farms
- Tu 5/2 RRR week: Slide interpretation review with the GSIs on processes of landscape change

Final Exam: TBA

DETAILED SYLLABUS OF LECTURES AND READINGS

This detailed syllabus indexes the required reading passages, lecture-by-lecture. Occasional titles in the reader are identified as “primary sources”—voices or documents that date directly from the period under study.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTIONS AND THE AMERICAN WEST (1870s to 1910s)

WEEK ONE

Lecture 1. Introductions. People in the class and a preview of axioms, landscape elements, and ideas we will use to help us read the environment. Various sales pitches: we want you to take this class!

Lecture 2. Fences, fields, and forts: enforcing official spatial rules. New Midwestern fences, military forts, and Indian boarding schools using "isonomic" order. Rural cattle-raising ideas of the humid East clash with new ideas as settlers reach the arid West. Settlement challenges of the Great Plains region.

Readings:

No readings required this week.

Sections, Week 1: Sections do not meet during the first week.

We will be fine-tuning the section lists. Final section lists will be posted by the instructor's office (location TBA), and by Lecture 2 (before and after lecture only) near the doors of our lecture room.

WEEK TWO

Lecture 3. From the open range to the cattle ranch. Early cattle-raising traditions of the Great Plains and desert West. "Open order" and the nature of abstract landscape orders. Transitions from the open range to the fenced ranch, with speculation on the dude ranch as an influence on the 1950s ranch house.

Lecture 4. Regional differences in the many Wests: bioregions and migrations as factors. Bioregion factors (especially mountains, dryness, and separation) as frames for the sequence of Native and Euro-American settlements in the several Wests. The Mormon culture region and the St. Louis “Southwest” as examples of social factors and business connections as creators of culture regions.

Reading:

Paula Lupkin, “Rethinking Region along the Railroads,” next-to-last article in the reader
J. B. Jackson, “The Vernacular City” [on Lubbock, Zenith, and the Western city], in reader
Joan Didion, “Notes from a Native Daughter,” in reader
Andrew Phillips, “The Shape of America’s Population” [reference pictograms], in reader

Sections, Week 2: Student introductions.

Students introduce themselves and where they have lived, perhaps sharing a favorite place, or (as Joan Didion does) invoking specific landscape details from their past that still reverberate with meanings of “home” or personal identity. As time allows, discussion of key readings from week 2. GSIs divulge secrets on how to get an A in the course.

WEEK THREE

Lecture 5. Western workers’ settlements: work camps, company towns, and mining towns. Street grids, lots, buildings, and land uses as key physical elements of towns and cities; privatism as a policy of landscape development. Work camps, company towns, and mining towns of western resource extraction; rural Chinatowns in California.

Lecture 6. Mechanized farmsteads and fields, 1890 to 1920. Basic farmstead forms of the small farms built after the Civil War, contrasted with early corporate farms whose investment and specialization matched railroad-sized capital and railway spaces.

Reading:

James Buckley, “A Factory without a Roof...” in reader

Patricia Limerick, “Disorientation and Reorientation,” in reader

Sarah Deutsch, “Landscape of Enclaves: Race Relations in the West, 1865-1990,” in reader

Paul Groth, “Seeing Farms and Farmsteads as Open Spaces,” in reader

Sections, Week 3: Reading articles and the floor plans of buildings for social and cultural clues.

Looking for and remembering arguments of readings. Quick pre-reading introductions to structuration and Pierre Bourdieu (in the Stevens reading assigned next week): individual experience versus social structure. Then: comparing floor plans of the Southwest, post-World War II suburban houses, an urbane apartment, plus two site plans—essentially a crash course in reading plans and deciphering them for ideas about spatial organization, social connections, and cultural meaning.

WEEK FOUR

Lecture 7. Science lesson one: key processes of cultural landscape formation and change. Questions about general processes that have operated historically and still operate today in shaping landscape forms and human relations. In this lesson, we look at the inertia of nature; connection; migration and other movements of people; and first settlement and settlement inertia. Don’t miss this lecture or the other two “science lessons”! These are central ideas in the course and its exams—and, hopefully, in the ways you will look at and understand the world in the future.

Lecture 8. Science lesson two: more key processes of cultural landscape formation and change. We continue our survey of questions about key general processes, including basic economics (a big category); creating and reinforcing individual and social identities; and the sparking of new ideas and the spread of innovations. Innovations are so important, we take them up again in Science Lesson Three.

Reading:

Paul Groth, "Key Processes of Cultural Landscape Change," last article in the reader
Garry Stevens, "The Sociological Toolkit...." from *The Favored Circle*, in reader
Albert Eide Paar, "Heating, Lighting, Plumbing, and Human Relations," [very short] in reader
Chris Wilson, "When a Room Is the Hall," in reader
J. B. Jackson, "The Abstract World of the Hot-Rodder," in reader

Sections, Week 4: Readings re-cap—summaries and discussion of readings to date.

Review of Bourdieu's four kinds of cultural capital (from pp. 62/63 of the Stevens reading) and structuration. Comparing and contrasting the arguments and methods of the authors we have read so far. Strategies for reading *Babbitt*, assigned next week. (Remember, one question on the midterm is based entirely on the readings).

PART TWO: SPATIAL REORDERING OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA AND NEW DEAL (1890s to 1930s)

WEEK FIVE

Lecture 9. The idea of efficiency and the central planning of work in large urban factories. The city as a place of modern production. The factory manager as innovation agent (Frederick Winslow Taylor); scientific management and behavioral design in factories, offices, and public relations.

Lecture 10. Science lesson three: landscape orders and innovation diffusion. Definition of monomic landscape order, and a discussion of just what "landscape orders" are. A crash course in notions of change and the recurring general processes of the adoption of new ideas; how variations in innovation diffusion help to explain differences in culture and cultural landscapes, as well as similarities in culture and landscapes. Again, don't miss this lecture: key ideas for the whole course.

Reading:

Spiro Kostof, excerpt from "The American Workplace," *America by Design*, in reader
Malcolm Gladwell, "Case Study: Rumors, Sneakers, and the Power of Translation," in reader
Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (whole novel); this is a good time to start reading *Babbitt*

Sections, Week 5: Survival workshops about research strategies, by a Library staff member.

For this week, section location may shift to a room TBA. Professional library staff will survey research resources and techniques tuned specifically for this course. A primary focus will on-line tools. Don't miss this section!

WEEK SIX

Lecture 11. Rebuilding downtown as the heart of a New City. Urban challenges of the Old City versus the New City. Overlapping urban reform groups and their approach to downtown. The drive for establishing new order, organization, and single-use space in the City Beautiful spaces of business leaders from 1890 to 1930.

Due in section this week: the introduction and preliminary source list for your research essay

Lecture 12. Urbane alternatives to the single family house: hotels, apartments, flats. Old-city survivals of living downtown: Apartments, flats, and single-room housing (i.e., residential hotels) as components of traditional mixtures, densities, and employment up to the 1930s. Zoning as an antidote for uncertainties in real estate investment.

Reading:

Webster Tomlinson, "Apartment House Planning..." (floor plans) primary source, in reader
Paul Groth, "SF's Third and Howard Streets..." in reader

Sections, Week 6: Reading cultural history on maps: the western half of the U.S. Interpreting place names, land divisions, rural and urban settlement features on present-day USGS quad maps for Lubbock, Texas; Manti, Utah; and Anaheim, California. Reinforcement of the idea of the many Wests. Learning map-reading skills you can apply to any place in the U.S., urban or rural.

WEEK SEVEN

Lecture 13. Urban outskirts: Old additions vs. new packaged districts. Self-built "zones of emergence" and curbstoner's additions as 20th century counterparts to 19th century cottage districts; more elitist and centrally-planned additions and suburbs. Conflicts over urban residential expansion.

Lecture 14. Small houses made more socially polite. In response to new household roles and economic realities, developers hammer out early forms of small houses for middle-income families—often called bungalows and “cubic” houses.

Reading for Lecture 13:

James Borchert, "Visual Landscapes of a Streetcar Suburb," in reader
Gwendolyn Wright, "The Progressive Housewife and the Bungalow," in reader
Christine Frederick, excerpt from *Household Engineering*, in reader (primary source)

Sections, Week 7: Review for the midterm exam.

Most of this review session will be practice for the slide interpretation questions on the midterm, and some basic strategies for short answer and essay questions. Bring questions you may have on the lectures and readings.

WEEK EIGHT

Midterm exam (on material through Lecture 14). As you review, you will be pleased by how much you already know. If you have attended lectures and sections faithfully, and have kept up with the readings, nothing on the midterm should be a surprise.

Lecture 15. Rediscovery of the road and highway, 1870 to 1930. The road as a machine track for farm wagons to bicycles; the Good Roads movement, and early trucks; in the 1920s, seeds of change in experimental parkways and a notion the traffic engineer Fritz Malcher called "steady flow."

Readings:

Fritz Malcher, "A Traffic Planner Imagines a City," in reader (primary source diagram)

Sections, Week 8: One-hour field trip of Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley.

Meet for this section at the round fountain by Kroeber Hall. Seeing key processes of landscape change on site: change over time, different phases of investment in general-purpose retail space. How to "read" changing ideas about retail life in the exterior forms, construction materials, and building details of very ordinary storefronts near campus.

WEEK NINE

Lecture 16. Country towns in their 1920s heyday. The classic farm-service small town, usually established in the railroad era of the late 1800s, and then later plugged into rural highways. The 1920s re-sorting of small towns and more urbane farm and country-town life due to postal, auto, and road-building developments. Main Street patterns and regional variations of the "wrong side of the tracks."

Lecture 17. Family farms of the 1920s and regional landscapes of the 1930s Depression era. By using tractors and dry land farming techniques, western farmers transform their farmsteads and fields, and also open up the entire High Plains—and inadvertently create the Dust Bowl. Rural and urban problems in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and to the rescue, FDR's highway and electrification plans, the CCC, TVA, and other regional resource management schemes. Recreation as a public issue, and the traditions of recreation for the masses.

Reading for Week 9:

J. B. Jackson, "The Almost Perfect Town," in the reader

John Steinbeck, excerpt from "The Harvest Gypsies," in reader

Sections, Week 9: Readings discussion:

The themes to be discussed in this week's section will be determined by the GSI team.

WEEK TEN

Lecture 18. Recreational and rural landscapes of the New Deal. Restructuring vacation places: making formerly private amenities into public ones. Remaking farms and fields with rural electrification, soil conservation, and resettlement plans; re-building and connecting much of rural America.

Lecture 19. The urban New Deal and its housing ideas. New and updated parks, play fields, and public buildings. Important home-building experiments and hammering out the fateful rules of the FHA.

Readings, Week 10:

Phoebe Cutler, "On Recognizing a WPA Rose Garden," in reader

Greg Hise, "The Minimum House," from *Magnetic Los Angeles*, in reader

Kenneth Jackson, "Federal Subsidy," [on HOLC red lining] from *Crabgrass Frontier*, in reader

Sections, Week 10: Writing workshop on revising and rewriting as the crux of good writing.

How to edit your own work, integrate illustrations and text, and get pesky details right so your manuscripts will read and look like those of professional writers.

WEEK ELEVEN:

Spring Break, no classes.

PART THREE: THE TROUBLED TRIUMPH OF SINGLE-USE LANDSCAPES (1940s TO THE PRESENT)

WEEK TWELVE

Lecture 20. World War II squeezing and postwar stretching of the city: 1940 to 1955.

"Warspeed" factory construction in large cities; rural-edge factories and speed-up of the use of trucks (and less use of railroads) for urban connection. War and postwar migrations—both voluntary and forced—and the baby boom's impact on an already tight housing supply in the U.S. In all, significant headway toward building the fully-reordered New City, designed and managed by experts.

Lecture 21. Re-thinking urban edges to create the "city of realms" by the mid-1960s. Design of the true super highway. Truck culture. Suburban white-collar work in suburban offices and research parks, blue-collar work in factories located at the periphery. Developments that transform the old metropolis form of the urban region into what the geographer James Vance calls the "city of realms."

Readings for Week 12:

Norman Bel Geddes, "Full Speed through Bottlenecks" from *Magic Motorways*, in reader

Carl Abbott, "War and the Westward Tilt, 1940-1950," in reader

Eric Avila, "The Folklore of the Freeway...." in reader

Sections, Week 12: One-hour field trip to Central Berkeley—the New Deal in Downtown Berkeley.

For sections this week, we meet in the vicinity of the downtown Berkeley BART station at Shattuck and Central. We compare visually spectacular remnants of the 1930s: the New Deal building now used as Berkeley's City Hall, and a New Deal section of Berkeley Central High School.

WEEK THIRTEEN

Lecture 22. Suburban tract houses and yards since 1950. The "house and yard of extension" (or the "outward-looking" house and yard)—suburban houses built from about 1950 to 1980, with the kitchen as laboratory, compared to the "inward-looking house and yard" of 1980 to the

present: double-incomes, conspicuous consumption, and extreme isolation, with master suites, and the kitchen as recreational health spa and social entertaining space.

Research papers due at the beginning of lecture on Tuesday. Late penalties begin when lecture starts!

Lecture 23. Residential suburbs since 1980. Refinements of completely packaged and income-stratified suburbs. Designers' and planners' attempts (still a tiny proportion of the suburban extent of the U.S.) for alternatives: in the 1970s, planned unit developments; in the 1990s, rediscovery of Zenith's 1920s suburbs in the New Urbanism of mixed-use, social-neighborhood towns. The social neighborhood vs. the "island house."

Readings for Week 13:

D. J. Waldie, *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*, all

Ruth Little, "...Postwar Modern Subdivisions..." in reader (last reading)

Julie Mathaei, "The Entrance of Homemakers into the Labor Force as Homemakers," in reader

J. B. Jackson, "The Popular Yard," in reader [illustrations not necessary for argument]

Sections, Week 13: Presentations of student research work

Students present a 1-minute summary of their research essay.

WEEK FOURTEEN

Lecture 24. Suburban shopping. Hammering out rules of shopping and recreation for the automobile: the 30-MPH and 50-MPH highway strips; evolution of the supermarket, shopping centers, and franchise rows along highway strips and at freeway exits.

Lecture 25. Processes at work in the re-building of downtown, 1955 to the present. Abstraction (alienation) as a common phenomenon associated with the erosion and deposition of new plots, land-uses, and freeways downtown. Urban renewal, and the center city of multinational corporate offices and new-economy startups. Rediscovery since 1980 of multiple-use settings and mixed land uses.

Reading for week 14:

Tim Davis, "The Miracle Mile Revisited . . . along the Commercial Strip," in reader

Joan Didion, "Bureaucrats," [the Santa Monica Freeway] *The White Album*, in the reader

Sections, Week 14: Readings review

Usually there are a few student research reports left over from the prior week. Then the rest of this section will be devoted to analysis of recent readings, with an eye to the final exam approaching inexorably over the horizon.

WEEK FIFTEEN

Lecture 26. Recreation as cosmic conversion: helix sports. Skate-boarding, skiing, hang-gliding, and dirt-biking as channels of innovation diffusion, religion, and self-design. Recreation as a possible vector for cultural change.

Lecture 27. Industrial farms. Agribusiness as more than efficient industry: the meaning and significance of totally managed soil, plants, and animals in American farms since 1960. The case studies of California's "five-scape," and the layers of change in Edenton, North Carolina.

Reading for Week 15:

Carol Bly, "Getting Tired," [very short] from *Letters from the Country*, in reader
Walter Goldschmidt, "The Spread of Agribusiness," from *As You Sow*, in reader
J. B. Jackson, "Preface," from *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, in reader

Sections, Week 15: How to get an "A" on the final exam.

Quick discussions and comparisons of readings from second half of the course. Exam writing strategies, plus any leftover work from prior weeks.

WEEK SIXTEEN:

Reading, review, and recitations (RRR) week. No lecture, however, **on Tuesday, May 2nd, there will be an optional slide interpretation review with the GSIs on 8 processes of landscape change.**

Sections will not meet during the reading, recitation, and review week.

WEEK SEVENTEEN: FINAL EXAM

Date and Time TBD; With luck, we will be able to reserve our lecture room for the exam.