

DRAFT

SPPD PLUS 599 A Humanities Planning Seminar
Summer 2000

American Cultural Landscapes Seeing the Extraordinary in Ordinary Places

David C. Sloane
Monday and Wednesday, 3:00 to 5:20

DESCRIPTION

This reading and research seminar explores the ordinary landscapes of America's cities since roughly 1880. Drawing upon a variety of readings and site visits, the class will engage in discussions about the historical development of these landscapes. We shall discuss the role of social class, gender, ethnicity and race in shaping these places, and the organization of cultural space by individuals, groups and governments. Los Angeles shall serve as our landscape, but the readings will discuss examples from a wide range of American places.

Students shall be responsible for a review of a text, leading a group discussion, and a research paper on a topic to be decided between individual students and instructor. In general, the research paper should illuminate a specific cultural landscape in time and space.

READINGS

Required readings are available through the University Bookstore. The American Cultural Landscapes Reader is available through Magic Machine in University Village

- I. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*
- P. Groth, *Living Downtown*
- P. Groth and T. Bressi, *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*
- G. Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*
- R. Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*
- C. Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*
- G. Wright, *Building the Dream*

OFFICE HOURS

My office is in 313 Ralph and Goldy Lewis Hall. My office phone is (213) 740-5768, home phone (310) 837-5858. Please call me at home only after 8:00 a.m. and before 10:00 p.m. My email is dsloane@usc.edu. I check it pretty much every day. My office hours will be on Wednesdays from 1-2 or by appointment. I am glad to talk and more than willing to find a convenient time to meet.

EXPECTATIONS

1. PARTICIPATION/INVOLVEMENT: Class attendance is mandatory. Promptness is appreciated. This is a collaborative seminar. I will not be lecturing but interacting with you about the readings and your work. I presume that students will attend class.
3. WRITING ISSUES: Proper spelling, grammar, and style are important. Your argument will be

more persuasive if it is elegantly and effectively presented. Please avoid "mankind," "Man," and "man-made," when discussing all humanity. I believe that such a characterization is outdated and unnecessary; "human" is a perfectly acceptable word which encompasses both genders. If you need a practical reason, you never know when the person for whom you are writing will be offended by such language. Most gender bias is as easy to correct: Instead of "If a planner improves the city, he will help humanity", write, "If planners improve cities, they will help humanity."

2. ASSIGNMENTS: The primary assignments will be to (1) research and write a paper on a cultural landscape topic of your choice (but okayed by me), (2) make a short presentation about the paper, (3) facilitate one of the group discussions, (4) write a book review of a major reading, and (5) participate regularly in class. Grades will be determined using the following formula: Participation/Group Facilitation 25%; Book Review 25%; Research Paper/Paper Presentation 50%.

Research paper: The paper should explore a specific historical cultural landscape topic through primary and secondary literature. The topic is your choice with the caveat that I have to approve its appropriateness for this course. I would expect that the only issue that might arise is if you wish to look at a current landscape you must place it in historical perspective. I expect that the paper will be from 20-40 pages with a strong interpretative analysis. If you are new to landscape studies, you might look ahead at the readings -- specifically, for models of project, Chris Wilson, Richard Longstreth, and Gwendolyn Wright, and for discussion of methods, Groth/Bressi. Logistically, the papers are due on July 31st by 5 pm. Late papers will be reduced in grade. I have attached a "Hints on Papers" that I regularly hand out to my undergraduates as a guide to the simple things that drive me crazy as a reader.

Book Review: You shall choose one of the books in this class that is not during your week that you facilitate the discussion and write a book review of it. I expect that the review will refer to other literature related to the topic and place the book firmly into the scholarly literature. The review should be 7-10 pages. I would encourage you to look at Reviews in American History or Vernacular Architecture Forum Newsletter (in my office) as guides to the type of review that I am seeking.

Class Facilitation: Each week we shall have a student (or students depending on our numbers) facilitate the discussion of the readings. The expectation is that you will have carefully read the material, developed questions and discussion points prior to class, and be prepared for all the usual contingencies that accompany such facilitation. I also expect that the class members will respect each facilitator and help them through this ordeal/opportunity.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES**

Class will meet on Monday and Wednesday for two hours and twenty minutes (ah, the glories of summer session). We are going to get out and experience the landscape during a few class sessions. Discussions will be in situ, but they will still demand that you have read the assigned materials. The semester is going to fly by, so be prepared to work early and often so you can meet the deadlines.

The course schedule is organized around topical themes rather than chronologically. We will primarily discuss the late nineteenth century onwards, but will dip occasionally back further in time. The decision to make it topical was hard for this historian, but I felt that it provided us a more flexible approach to the material I wanted to cover.

We will be establishing a schedule of student facilitated discussions starting June 5th. Think about which day you would like to facilitate.

Week One

May 17 Introduction
Discussion of logistics, themes, and getting to know each other.

Week Two

May 22 Knowing Landscapes, Interpreting Landscapes
We start with definitions. What is landscape? More precisely, how do we look for one, know one when we see it? What framework does Jackson suggest? How does it differ from Groth's? Do Lewis' axioms provide an alternative, yet complementary framework? How does Calvino force us to see the physical as the social and the social as the physical?

Reading Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, G/B (Paul Groth), Simon Schama, "Introduction," *Landscape and Memory*, Pierce Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," D. W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye."

May 24 No Class
Reading: You might take the opportunity of this hiatus to read ahead, say, Chris Wilson's *Myth of Santa Fe*, our first entire book.

Week Three

May 29 Memorial Day Holiday

May 31 No Class

Week Four

June 5 The Beach: Landscape and Scenery
No scenery in Southern California tops the ocean, at least for me. How do we read it? Is it cultural, cultivated, or just natural? We will also take some time today to discuss the methodology of landscape studies. Upton and Meinig are pushing us to see, to read this landscape, and all others.

Reading G/B (Dell Upton); J. B. Jackson, "Nearer than Eden," Wilbur Zelinsky, "Structure," J. B. Jackson, "Concluding with Landscape." and Roy Ritchie on the beach.

- Location** We will meet for this class on the Santa Monica pier, using our location as a stimulus to discuss the beach, nature, scenery, and landscape
- June 7** **A Stranger's Path**
Perhaps JB Jackson's definite piece on urban landscapes, this article is my favorite of his writings. It raises so many possible topics, especially when one remembers that he was an inveterate traveler, a closeted gay man (actually, no one talks about Jackson's sexuality, which may be even more intriguing), and a hopeless romantic. I have paired this article with some other "strangers" amid the city, and how their city exists inside another city.
- Reading** Jackson, "The Stranger's Path;" George Chauncey, "Privacy Could Only be Had in the Streets': Forging a Gay World in the Streets," in *Gay New York*; Walter Benjamin, Selections from *Illuminations*.
- DUE** Research Project Abstract and Bibliography. For the project, please come to class on June 7th with a preliminary abstract for your research project, accompanied by a bibliography.
- Week Five**
- June 12** **Constructing Myths, Building Landscapes**
The Southwest has gone through a remarkable set of landscape changes, both physical and cultural over the last millennium. Using Chris Wilson's study of Santa Fe and some other readings, let's look at how Anglos asserted their political rights through a reconstruction of the landscape. And, how that reconstruction was built over earlier layers of Indian, Spanish, and Mexican landscapes.
- Reading** Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, G/B (Rina Swentzell)
- June 14** **LA Landscapes: Subverting the Past**
A walking tour of downtown to look at and discuss some critical places in an alternative history of Los Angeles. Hayden will serve as one guide, but I expect that each of you will have your favorite places. As we walk, let's think about what Wilson has taught us about Santa Fe.
- Reading** G/B (David Chuenyan Lai); Dolores Hayden, "Power of Place," Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 9-38.
- Location** Olvera Street, Biddy Mason Memorial, etc.
- Week Six**
- June 19** **Public Spaces: Streets, Boulevards, Squares, etc.**
Over the last generation scholars have revised our understanding of public space by increasing our understanding of the contested nature of these places. We take two different approaches to such spaces today. First, the more theoretical, represented by Cosgrove. Then, the political, such as in Hayden and Davis.
- Reading** Susan Davis, *Parades*; G/B (Denis Cosgrove, Dolores Hayden, Anthony King).
- DUE** Book Review
- June 21** **Public Spaces: Memorials**
Memorials define and reinforce identities. They are also often contested places where one identity excludes others. The cemetery is not a cultural landscape that is well studied by scholars, who are more interested in the more "public" memorials at Gettysburg or on the Mall. Let's talk about such spaces and their

- place in the culture.
- Reading Kirk Savage, "Lincoln Memorial," David Sloane, "Selling Eternity;" Jim Weeks, "Gettysburg: Display Windows for Popular Memory;" G/B (Reuben Rainey and Wilbur Zelinsky)
- Location Hopefully we will meet at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale. Not only does Forest Lawn represent a wonderfully well preserved mid-twentieth century landscape, it is also full of evocative examples of public memorials for us to bounce ideas off.

Week Seven

- June 26 Commercial Spaces
The most important change in the city's landscape over the last two centuries is arguably the commercialization of the public landscape. that commercialization is epitomized by the shopping mall as suburban community center. Richard Longstreth provides us with wonderful insight into the evolution in Los Angeles. Kostof puts Longstreth's particular evolution into a broader relief, while Sorkin challenges the meaning of the change for the future of the "public."
- Reading Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, entire.
- June 28 Mall Medicine
We will extend Longstreth's story by looking at a more recent phenomenon, the transformation of the health care landscape. How does that new landscape reflect the social, ethnic/racial disparities of contemporary society?
- Reading Sloane and Conant Sloane, "Mini-Mall Medicine," Jackson "Other-Directed Houses" and "The Vernacular City."
- Location A mall to be determined by us, such as Del Amo or Farmers' Market.

Week Eight

- July 3 Fourth of July Holiday
- Reading None
- July 5 Thinking About Landscapes: Doubts
We have come far enough, how about some doubts?
- Reading G/B (Lowenthal, Appleton, Riley).

Week Nine

- July 10 Private Spaces: The Hotel
The hotel plays many roles in our society. Probably its use as a residential space is one of the least discussed. Groth, however, forces us to reconsider this omission through a brilliant study of life downtown, and the ways that planners and politicians have consistently tried to marginalized hotel residents.
- Reading Paul Groth, *Living Downtown*, entire
- July 12 Public Spaces: The Hotel
Hotels bridge the private and public in a peculiar manner unlike virtually any other space. The conversation today shifts from the private nature of the hotel to that public one. I wish we could meet in a Las Vegas hotel for the right ambiance, but instead let's just imagine our room in Lewis Hall is actually just above a casino (wouldn't our dean just love that!).

Reading Hal K. Rothman, Selections from *Devil's Bargain*.

Week Ten

July 17

Suburban Plans

The suburban landscape is much less studied than the urban. However, with Hise's book, Borchert's article, and Marsh's chapter, we can begin thinking about the elements of that landscape, how it differs from the urban (if it does), and what the elements suggest about the society it represents.

Reading

Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*.

July 19

Suburban Lives, Gendered Lives

Reading

G/B (James Borchert); Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives*, chapter.

Week Eleven

July 24

Private Spaces: The House

We end by leaving public space and entering the central private institution in American life, the residence.

Reading

Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream*, entire

July 26

Reading a House: Welcome to Our Home

We meet in the relaxed atmosphere of our home for a session about residential housing. We will build on Monday's discussion, adding in the readings for today, to try and understand better the place of the house in the American landscape.

Reading

Jackson, "The Domestication of the Garage;" Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, chapter.

Location

We will meet at David and Beverlie Conant Sloane's home, 10353 Northvale Road. Take the 10 East from campus to the National exit. Go straight through the light at the exit and travel on Manning to the next light, at Motor Avenue. Take a left onto Motor, then a very quick right onto Northvale Road. Go to the top of the hill. Our house is on the right just past Gilmerton road.

Week Twelve

July 31

Student Presentations of Research Papers

Reading

None

DUE

Research papers are due today

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Reader

1. Simon Schama, "Introduction," *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995): 3-19.
2. Pierce Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 11-32
3. D. W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Two Versions of the Same Scene," *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford

- University Press, 1979): 33-50.
4. J. B. Jackson, "Nearer Than Eden," *Necessity For Ruins* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980): 19-35.
 5. Wilbur Zelinsky, "Structure," *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973): 109-140.
 6. J. B. Jackson, "Concluding With Landscapes," *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984): 145-157.
 8. Jackson, "The Stranger's Path," *Landscape 7/1* (Autumn 1957): 11-15.
 9. George Chauncey, "'Privacy Could Only be Had in the Streets': Forging a Gay World in the Streets," in *Gay New York* (New York: Basic Books, 1994): 179-206.
 10. Walter Benjamin, Selections from *Illuminations*.
 11. Dolores Hayden, "Power of Place" pamphlet.
 12. Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* 9-38.
 13. Susan Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theater in 19th Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), selection.
 14. Kirk Savage, "Lincoln Memorial," *Journal of American History*
 15. David Sloane, "Selling Eternity;" draft chapter from *Modern Metropolis: Los Angeles in the 1920s*, edited by William Deverell and Tom Sitton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
 16. Jim Weeks, "Gettysburg: Display Windows for Popular Memory;" *Journal of American Culture*
 17. David C. Sloane and Beverlie Conant Sloane, "Mini-Mall Medicine," draft manuscript from *Mall Medicine: The Evolving Health Care Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
 18. J.B. Jackson, "Other-Directed Houses" *Landscape 6/2* (Winter 1956-7): 29-35.
 19. J. B. Jackson, "The Vernacular City," *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*, edited by Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997): 237-248.
 20. Hal K. Rothman, Selections from *Devil's Bargain*.
 22. J.B. Jackson, "The Domestication of the Garage;" *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*, edited by Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997): 118-128.
 23. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (New York: Basic Books, 1988): 3-15, 162-182.