

"The U.S. is utopia achieved"

-Jean Baudrillard, *America*

Although suburbia as a place often seems to inspire boredom, the intellectual and cultural background of contemporary suburbia is quite interesting. This class delves into this rich history of ideas and real estate developments. Students in this course will discuss the diverse origins of suburban culture, the distinguishing characteristics of suburbia over time, attempts at suburban planning, and the enduring influence of suburbia on American culture, politics, and society.

The seminar will focus on the best suburban histories/studies and each class will include case studies and focused lectures. Occasional in-class writing projects related to primary documents and readings are also possible.

Close discussion of texts will be the central work of the students and the professor. Students should come prepared to analyze the readings, and they will be evaluated based upon their contributions. As this class meets only once a week for two hours, I expect students to make the most of discussion time.

All students will be asked to develop a written project on a local history topic to be discussed the first day of class. Research in primary documents, broadly defined, is required for the project. Students must meet individually (scheduled later in the semester) with the professor to discuss their papers.

Students should buy the six course books on sale at the bookstore. Students are expected to bring books or zeroxes to class with them. All of the additional readings are available in a course packet.

Required Texts at the Bookstore (also on Reserve at the Library)

Herbert Gans, <i>The Levittowners</i> Robert Fishman, <i>Bourgeois Utopias</i> Joel Garreau, <i>Edge City</i> Kenneth T. Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i> Andrew Ross, <i>The Celebration Chronicles</i> John Stilgoe, <i>Borderland</i>
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Grades will be calculated as follows:

30% Class Participation  
20% Midterm  
20% Final  
30% Paper

Seminar Schedule

9/11 **Introduction:** "The Art of Dominion in Italy, Britain, and America"

9/18 **Urbane Suburbs:** "The Industrial/Urban Revolution"

*Case Studies: London Squares, Gramercy Park, Washington Square, Brooklyn Heights, Bolton Hill, Park Village*

Reading

Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 1-154

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 4-44

9/25 **Suburban Culture and Early Planned Suburbs:** "The Romantic Imagination, Cemeteries, Gardening"

*Case Studies: Mt. Auburn, Lake Forest, Mt. Washington, Llewellyn Park*

Reading

John Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 1-149, 165-224

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* 45-72

10/2 **Mature Planned Suburbia:** "The American Real Estate Developer"

*Case Studies: Riverside, Roland Park, Forest Hills, Country Club District, Palos Verdes*

Reading

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 73-102

John Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 223-251

Review Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 121-133

10/16 **Women and Family in Suburbia:** "The Cult of Domesticity"

Reading

Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream* 96-113, 158-176

Review John Stilgoe, *Borderland*

David Contosta, *Suburb in the City*, 160-196

Midterm TBA

10/23 **Working- and Middle-Class Suburbs**

*Case Studies: Chicago Suburbs, Uptown, Ednor Gardens*

Reading

Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 1-14 and 67-116

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 103-137

Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream*, 177-192

John Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 151-162

David Contosta, *Suburb in the City*, 118-159

10/30 **1950s and 1960s Suburban Society**, "The Suburban Critique"

*Case Study: Levittown*

Reading

William Whyte, *The Organization Man*, 311-441

Herbert Gans, *The Levittowners*, Intro, Preface, 22-43, 153-302, 408-432

11/6 **Contemporary Suburban Politics and Economics**

*Case Studies: Brookline, English Turn*

Reading

Herbert Gans, *The Levittowners*, 44-67, 86-150, 368-407

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 138-156, 157-230, 283-305

Joel Garreau, *Edge City*, skim 183-208

Evan Mckenzie, *Privatopia*, skim 122-149, 175-197

11/13 **Urbanization of the Suburbs**

*Case Studies: Evanston, Metairie*

Reading

Joel Garreau, *Edge City*

David Contosta, *Suburb in the City*, skim 197-230

Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, skim 182-207

11/20 **Suburbanization of the City**

*Case Studies: Los Angeles, Baltimore*

Reading

John Findlay, *Magic Lands* 214-264

Herbert Gans, "Urbanism and Suburbanism as a Way of Life," 507-518

Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias* 155-181

11/27 **Contemporary Planned Suburbs**

*Case Studies: Radburn, Greenbelt, Columbia, Reston, Irvine, Celebration*

Reading

Andrew Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles*

Joel Garreau, *Edge City*, review 265-301 and 229-231

Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream*, 193-214

12/4 **Modern Suburban Culture**, Papers Due

Reading

John Dorst, *The Written Suburb*, 8-77

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 246-271

Jean Baudrillard, *America*, 75-105