“One of the limits of classical theories of the metropolis...holds that the most revelatory acts of modern metropolitan life lie on the surface, in the ephemeral and the visible (shop front, shop windows, cafe terraces, street cars, automobiles), in the display of the commodity with or without its authentic veil. The privileging of surfaces and visuality can conceal the ubiquity of the metropolitan form...one of the characteristic features of a metropolis is the underneath.” Achille Mbembe, *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (2008).

constant creation in the face of constant destruction
“Did it start with Bergson or before? Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.” Michel Foucault (1980), 70.

“[People] may be broken and scattered, but they remember and think about the reasons why. They decide their own questions and always the truth and love will make them decide.”

**Course Description & Objectives**

Every landscape represents an incomplete or interrupted plan that tells time and intention. Physical landscapes provide evidence of successful, failed and emergent development plans, but only the learned eye sees beyond the material culture of the street. “Death” offers a way to conceptualize the unseen, underground, the underworld, the liminal space between what we know, what is actual and what is yet to be. Linking social theory, geography, public policy and planning history, this course asks: How can planners and critical observers of the built environment begin to access the collection of meanings that script the movement, stasis and location of everyday users? In other words, how do we move beyond official maps, plans and histories to consider contested meanings of place as they are lived, exchanged and created. Through weekly examinations of first person documentary accounts including ethnography, historical fiction, autobiography, film and novels, students will analyze the social, political and geographic impact of various land development strategies in the U.S. and beyond. Displacement defines a major theme of this course -- students will examine: 1) How does this happen? 2) What have been subsequent local responses? And, 3) What are the lasting consequences of population dispersals?

Informed by ethnographic method and archival immersion, this course will provide students with an interdisciplinary framework for identifying and describing the social impact of place-based change and capital movement. Students will develop a critical understanding of urban planning informed by resident-authored analysis across time and space.

**Course Requirements**

In addition to collectively contributing to a client-based public history project based in Boston, coursework includes one short self-mapping essay (500-600 words), class presentations, weekly “engagement posts” and a 10-12 page research paper. Student-led presentations (10-15 minutes) will precede most class discussions and are encouraged to include a primary source document related to the week’s assigned reading material.

**Grading**

Class Presentations (25%)
Written Posts & Class Discussion (25%)
Short Essay (15%)
Profile Map of CGC subject (5%)
Final Paper (30%)
Books Recommended for purchase (also on reserve at Rotch/Hayden Library)


Additional assigned readings and resources can be downloaded from the course website.

**COURSE PLAN**

**Week 1: How to read culture - Examining the meaning, politics and production of place**


Optional


**Part I. Rethinking Urbanization: Futures, Failures & Wealth Accumulation**

**Week 2: Cities in Revolt**


*Wattstax* (1973) dir Mel Stuart [1hr, 39min] [https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x33r4mw](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x33r4mw) (7th anniversary of Watts uprising)


Optional:


**Week 3: Space, Land Use Change & Race in the Archive**


South End Urban Renewal Plan (1966) [http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/c1126d70-d4e7-409c-bb6e-5655d74d1c21](http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/c1126d70-d4e7-409c-bb6e-5655d74d1c21) [https://archive.org/details/southendurbanren01bost/page/n63](https://archive.org/details/southendurbanren01bost/page/n63)

**Feb 17** Visit MIT Archives & Special Collections: Kevin Lynch Collection [https://libraries.mit.edu/archives/research/collections/collections-mc/mc208.html](https://libraries.mit.edu/archives/research/collections/collections-mc/mc208.html)


Writing Assignment Due: Social Location Statement

Optional

Week 4: Embodied Memory & the Archive at the Limit

February 24 Review Cambridge Historical Society/BPL Archives and Special Collections
Caribbean Heritage in Cambridge
https://cambridgehistory.org/category/caribbean-heritage-in-cambridge/ (listen to 1-2 interview short clips and read one transcript)


Week 5: Farmlands & Dispossession


Optional

Part II. Mapping U.S. Borders and beyond the Atlantic Ocean

Week 6: Temporal Displacements


Writing Assignment Due: Preliminary Paper Proposal

**Week 7: The City & Justice**

**March 15** David Harvey, “City and Justice: Social Movements in the City,” *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 188-207.


**Optional**

“A Utopia for Black Capitalism:” NPR on Floyd McKissick’s Soul City
https://www.npr.org/2021/04/20/989108031/a-utopia-for-black-capitalism


Archival map of Martinique (Library of Congress):
https://www.loc.gov/resource/g5000.ar196500/?r=-0.763,0.172,2.527,1.051,0

****SPRING BREAK****

**Part III. Death, Enclosure & Halted Mobilities**

**Week 8**

**March 29** San Francisco Freeway Revolt
https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Freeway_Revolt


San Francisco State University Student Activisms
https://library.sfsu.edu/sf-state-strike-collection

**Week 9**
- April 5 Virginia Indian Archive  

  50th Anniversary of the Occupation of Alcatraz  
  [https://www.nps.gov/goga/red-power-on-alcatraz.htm](https://www.nps.gov/goga/red-power-on-alcatraz.htm)

  American Indian Movement (1968-1978)  

  Richard Oakes reflects on Red Power Movement at 50  

  April 7  

**Week 10**


  April 14  
  Visit to Harriet Jacobs’ (1897) gravesite in Mount Auburn Cemetery  
  [https://mountauburn.org/copy-of-cemetery-map/](https://mountauburn.org/copy-of-cemetery-map/)

**Week 11**
- April 19 Project Updates


Part IV. Repurposing & Reclaiming the Local Environment
Week 12


Optional

“Remembering Resurrection City and the Poor People’s Campaign of 1968”

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/remembering-poor-peoples-campaign-180968742/


Week 13

May 3  Final Project Presentations

May 5  Final Project Presentations

Week 14

May 10  Course Reflections

*Writing Assignment Due: Final Paper*

Short Essay Assignment

Social Location Statement. Map yourself. Detail how you understand and have experienced your social identities based on where and with whom you have lived. This assignment asks you to consider your own biography in relationship to the built and social environments that have formed you. Length: 500-600 words (plus a photograph of your choice). Due Feb 17.

Class Presentations

Most classes will begin with a student-led presentation aimed at deepening engagement with the week’s text and examining primary materials such as plans, maps and photographs. Presentations are 15-20 minutes in length and conclude with a discussion question for the class.

Engagement Posts

Responsive writings (250-300 words) are due each Wednesday by 10 pm. Rather than general summaries of the week’s reading, engagement posts reflect a theme or idea that you found especially challenging or meaningful. Comments should be grounded in the text, carefully considered and posted to Canvas the night before class.

Final Paper

The final paper should include research using both primary and secondary sources to examine an area (within a city or town of your choice) that has been redeveloped. Identify a place, identify an archival collection and analyze the narrative gap. Key inquiry: How do you describe a landscape or territory that hangs between a plan and a “home” for its inhabitants? Length, 12-15 pages. Preliminary paper proposal due March 8 (1-2 pages; topic, argument, annotated
bibliography). Draw especially from class readings. Paper must be based on a strong thesis that is supported with quotations from readings as well as your own analysis. Due in class May 10.

Select Archival Resources

Migrant Mother
https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html
https://petapixel.com/2018/11/30/that-iconic-migrant-mother-photo-was-photoshopped/

Massachusetts Hip Hop Archive at UMASS Boston
http://openarchives.umb.edu/digital/collection/p15774coll30

Hip Hop Archive & Research Institute at Harvard
http://hiphoparchive.org

LGBTQ Libraries, Archives and Museums
https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/lgbtq/graduate-student-resources/libraries-archives-and-museums

GLBT Historical Society Museum & Archives
https://www.glbthistory.org/online-resources

Rosa Parks Papers
https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss85943.001811/?sp=27&r=-1.413,-0.196,3.825,1.67,0

Photo: Embarcadero Freeway stopped at Broadway by protesters. San Francisco History Center, SF Public Library
**Course Principles & Pledge**

My personal commitment is to create and foster an inclusive environment. I will partner with you to build a sense of community in our classroom and will uphold respect and fair treatment as our collective gold standard. Together we pledge to welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – inclusive of visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are asked to contribute actively to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for everyone in our class as well as visitors. This is our shared pledge, if we are falling short and I am missing the mark, please don’t hesitate to speak with me.

**Additional Accommodations**

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. If you have a disability and are not planning to use accommodations, it is still recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with their services and resources. Please visit the DAS website for contact information.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, class staff are ready to assist with implementation. Please inform Professor Crockett kcrock@mit.edu who will oversee accommodation implementation for this course.

**General Student Support**

**Graduate Students: GradSupport** As a graduate student, a variety of issues may affect your academic career including faculty/student relationships, funding, and interpersonal concerns. In the Office of Graduate Education (OGE), GradSupport provides consultation, coaching, and advocacy to graduate students on matters related to academic and life challenges. If you are dealing with an issue that is affecting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, you may contact GradSupport by email at gradsupport@mit.edu or via phone at (617) 253-4860.

Website: [https://oge.mit.edu/development/gradsupport/](https://oge.mit.edu/development/gradsupport/)

**Undergraduate Students: Student Support Services (S3)** If you are dealing with a personal or medical issue that is affecting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, please contact a dean in Student Support Services (S3). S3 is ready to help you. The deans will hear your situation, provide you with support, and help you work with your professor or instructor to determine next steps. In most circumstances, you will not be excused from coursework without verification from a dean. Please visit the S3 website for contact information and more ways that they can provide support.

Website: [https://studentlife.mit.edu/s3](https://studentlife.mit.edu/s3)