Spring 2012
The Geography of Housing in the United States
GEOG 383.14/703.05
Monday: 1735-2015
Room: HN 1021
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All Email Correspondence MUST include the Course Name in the Subject
Office Hours: Monday 16.30-17.30 (HN 1032)
Subject to Change

Description:
This course will draw from a range of academic and popular sources in order to give students a strong
foundational understanding of the geographic, social, and economic realities of housing in the United
States. We will critically examine the geography of housing development as it has varied in time and
place. We will query the popular ambivalence towards renting, the normative ideology of ownership, and
look at the community-based attempts to rethink and reconstruct residential property relations. We will
investigate major local, state, and federal housing laws and policies of the past century. We will demystify
the relationship between the US housing market and the global economy. Based on what we learn
through these lines of inquiry we will take up and grapple with the key issues in housing today:
gentrification, uneven development, local housing shortages, the affordable housing crisis and the
foreclosure crisis.

Objectives and Expectations:
The main objective of this course is to develop students’ critical thinking skills so that they are able to
coherently grapple with the diversity and dynamism of social and spatial phenomena. Specifically, we will
try to make sense of the myriad aspects of housing in the United States by looking at history, government
policy, social problems, and the current mortgage crisis. As critical and creative thought must be
coherently argued in language, this course will be writing intensive, and students will be expected to
improve on all aspects of their writing, including grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Moreover, as class
readings will be compiled from a variety of sources, it will be of the utmost importance for students to
cultivate a sensitive reading eye; so a further objective of the course will be to hone reading skills in order
to understand how authorial intentions, semantic ambiguities, and cultural allusions add to and/or
subtract from the texts.

Assessment:
This will be a writing and discussion intensive course. Students will be required to maintain a blog
throughout the semester with weekly 300-word postings and submit a 3000-word essay at the end of the
semester. In addition, students will need to compose two questions for each reading to be discussed in
class. We will discuss these assignments in detail at the beginning of the semester. All students will be
expected to turn in well-composed and proofread writing assignments and to come to class on time
prepared to engage in thoughtful and critical conversation.
Final Project – Research paper on the history and geo-social context of the students’ first (or current) residential address. This should involve a well-theorized real estate-development history, local contextualization, and discussion of relevant laws/policies.

Class Participation and Weekly Reading Questions (2 per reading): 20%
Blog Entries (12 postings 300 words each): 40%
Final Paper (3,000 words): 40%

Attendance is mandatory and excessive tardiness will not be tolerated. All unexcused absences over two will result in a grade deduction; two instances of tardiness will be regarded as one unexcused absence. Late assignments will be accepted up to one week after the original due date, after that no credit will be given. Incompletes will not be given except in the case of exceptional and well-documented circumstances. Breaches in academic integrity will not be tolerated and will result in an ‘F’ for the relevant assignment.

**Hunter College Statement on Academic Integrity:**
Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

**Required Texts (Available at Shakespeare and Co. 939 Lexington Ave.):**


All other readings will be made available in class.

**Week-by-Week Syllabus:**

January 30 – **Introduction** – presentation of variety of extant housing forms in US + pre-history of pre-New Deal housing in US (long lecture)

February 6 – **The American Dream: post-WWII suburbanization**/Architecture: Aesthetics and Ideology (White Picket Fences contra Public Housing)
- Hayden, D. *Building Suburbia* – chapter 5 ‘Streetcar Build-outs’ and/or 6 ‘Mail-Order and Self-Built Suburbs’
- Chapter 6 “Architecture: Roof, Fire, and Center” in D. Hayden *Redesigning the American Dream* – pp 141-190

February 13 – NO CLASS
February 20 – NO CLASS
February 21 – **Government finance and support**
- Mark Stephens - Mortgage Market Deregulation And Its Consequences
- Peter Marcuse - The Liberal/Conservative Divide In The History Of Housing Policy In The United States

February 27 – **Property taxes and Zoning** – California tax revolt – geo-political repercussions of single-family, detached housing
- Freund, D. ‘Marketing the Free Market: State Intervention and the Politics of Prosperity in Metropolitan America’ in *The New Suburban History*

March 5 – **Financial Institutions involved in housing finance**

March 12 – **Personal Finance**

March 19 – **Current Mortgage Crisis**
- The new road to serfdom: An illustrated guide to the coming real estate collapse By Michael Hudson [http://harpers.org/archive/2006/05/0081029](http://harpers.org/archive/2006/05/0081029)

March 26 – **Homelessness**:
- Issues as identified by National Alliance to End Homelessness: Chronic Homelessness; Families; Veterans; Youth; Rural Homelessness; Domestic Violence; Mental/Physical Health; Re-Entry
April 2 – **Gentrification / New Urbanism**
- Brockerhoff, Martin; Smith, Neil - The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City
- Duany, Andras. – Three cheers for gentrification

April 9 – NO CLASS – Spring Break

April 15 – **Low-income and Affordable housing: public/private rental/ownership developments**
- Chapter 12 “Public Housing for The Worthy Poor” in G. Wright *Building the Dream* pp 215 - 239
- J. Michael Collins "Federal Policies Promoting Affordable Homeownership" – *Chasing the American Dream*
- Stone, Michael E. ‘Housing Affordability: One-Third of a Nation Shelter-Poor’ in *A Right to Housing* pp.38-60
- Anne B. Shlay - Low-income Homeownership- American Dream or Delusion?

April 22 – **Rent Regulation**

April 29 – **Community Development/Community Resistance**

May 7 – **Alternative Forms of Residential Land Tenure**
- Curtin, Julie Farrell. ’CLTs- A Growing Trend in Affordable Home Ownership’
- Garciano, Jerome L. ‘Affordable Cohousing- Challenges and Opportunities for Supportive Relational Networks in Mixed-Income Housing’
- Saegert, Susan. ‘Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives’
- Stein, Sarah Ilene ‘Wake Up Fannie, I Think I Got Something To Say To You- Financing Community Land Trust Homebuyers Without Stripping Affordability Pro Visions.’
May 14 – Environment/Sustainability: