Modern Metropolis: Los Angeles Since 1848

- What makes Los Angeles Los Angeles and not New York, Chicago or Miami?
- What are the major historical patterns of urban development in Southern California and might they constitute a paradigm of twentieth-century urbanism?
- Does Los Angeles present a unique historical paradigm of urban development or does its’ growth model a larger pattern of urban development in the early 21st century?

These are some of the ‘big questions’ that historians of Los Angeles grapple with and they will guide our analysis this quarter as we explore the history of the city since 1848, emphasizing the relationship between politics, economic and culture within a regional and historical framework. Rather than understanding the history of Los Angeles for its own sake, we will survey the city and its past as a case study for understanding the dynamics of power in the making of cities, considering what constitutes power, who has it and who does not. Key themes to be addressed this quarter include the tension between nature and culture; the nature of community formation within a decentralized urban region; the historical significance of Los Angeles to a) the U.S. West, b) the American city, and c) the global economy; the relationship between public institutions and private enterprise; the interactions of diverse social groups; and the rise of Los Angeles as the seat of the American “Culture Industry.”

There will be substantial readings in this class (three books and several articles). The midterm is scheduled for the sixth week of class and it will cover readings and lectures up through week 5. The final exam is a take-home exam and it is due on Monday, March 19, by 4pm. It will provide an opportunity for you to choose one among three broad questions, in which you will generate an original creative argument drawing upon specific historical examples from readings and lectures.

Course Requirements:

- Midterm (in class, BRING BLUE BOOK) 40%
- Take-home final exam 60%

*An extra credit assignment will also be available towards the end of class, which will count towards 2% towards your course grade

Readings: Texts available @ ASUCLA Textbooks, Ackerman Union, with the exception of a few articles that will be available for download on the class website.

Carey McWilliams, Southern California: An Island on the Land (HISTORY TEXT)
D.J. Waldie, Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir (AUTOBIOGRAPHY)  
Nathaniel West, The Day of the Locust (NOVEL)  

Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments:

Week 1

Tu. 1/9: The Long Mexican American War  
Th. 1/11: City for Sale: Los Angeles and its Boosters  

Mike Davis, “Sunshine or Noir?,” from City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles  

McWilliams, Southern California, Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 4 (pp. 3-83)  

Week 2

Tu. 1/16: Railroads, Harbors and Aqueducts: Imperial Los Angeles  
Th. 1/18: Streetcars and the Origins of Sprawl in southern California  


McWilliams, Southern California, Chapters 5, 6, & 7 (pp. 84-137)  


Week 3

Tu. 1/23: “The Better City”: Los Angeles During the Progressive Era  
Th. 1/25: Los Angeles and the Automobile  

McWilliams, Southern California, Chapters 8, 9, & 10 (pp. 138-204)  


Required Film Viewing: Chinatown. 4:15-6:30pm. PUB AFF 1234.  

Week 4

Tu. 1/30: The Rise of Hollywood
Th. 2/1: Religion in the City of the Angels
McWilliams, *Southern California*, Chapters 11, 12, & 13 (pp. 205-272)

**Week 5**
Tu. 2/6: The Noir City: Los Angeles and the 1930s
Th. 2/8: Race, Redlining and the Geography of Racial Inequality
McWilliams, *Southern California*, Chapters 14-17 (pp. 273-370).
**Required Film Viewing:** *Sunset Boulevard*. 4:15-6:30pm. PUB AFF 1234.

**Week 6**
Tu. 2/13: **IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION** BRING 2 BLUE BOOKS!!
Th. 2/15: Martial Metropolis: World War II and its Impact on Los Angeles

**Week 7**
Tu. 2/20: The Political Culture of Homeownership in Southern California
Th. 2/22: Los Angeles Enters the ‘Big League’: The Dodgers Move West
D.J. Waldie, *Holy Land*
“Acknowledgements,” Chps. 1-133.
Week 8

Tu. 2/27: Disneyland, White Flight and the Rise of Orange County
Th. 3/1: An Ecology for Architecture


Week 9

Tu. 3/6: The Age of the Freeway
Th. 3/8: LA and Sixties


Mike Davis, “Fortress L.A.,” in *City of Quartz*, pp. 223-263.

Week 10

Tu. 3/13: Guest speaker: Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Th. 3/18: Conclusion: From Cowtown to Global Metropolis


Mike Davis, ‘The Case for Letting Malibu Burn,’ *Ecology of Fear*


**FINAL PAPERS DUE**: Monday, March 19, by 4pm through TURN-IT-IN.COM.
NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED, AND REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED. NO EMAILED OR HANDWRITTEN FINALS ACCEPTED.