***Los Angeles: A Polymathic Inquiry***

A trans-disciplinary examination of the City of Angels

**USC Dornsife College of Letters and Sciences|CORE 450**

Part B—Spring 2018

2 units per semester

USC Sidney Harman Academy for Polymathic Study, DML 241

Co-Instructor: Co-Instructor, Course Tutor:

William Deverell, Professor of History Dr. Karin Huebner

Office hours: by appointment Office hours: by appointment

deverell@usc.edu khuebner@usc.edu

**Course Description and Learning Objectives**

As social, cultural, engineering, environmental, and demographic constructs, cities are among the most complex entities on the planet.  Los Angeles fits this description in archetypal fashion. To study a city in its components and its totality, its people and its systems, its physical fabric and moral meaning, is by definition an integrated, interdisciplinary, or – *polymathic* – pursuit. Guided by the history discipline, but ambitiously inter-disciplinary, this course embodies a polymathic inquiry into the heart of Los Angeles through four organizing themes or conceptions.

1. **Los Angeles Imagined.**

Los Angeles, as any city, is the hybrid result of the real and unreal, of history and error, of certainty and hunch. As we move into our year, we explore *the idea of Los Angeles* first – we build our foundation not on what we know, but on what imagining Los Angeles can tell us about the expectations and obligations of the place and the city. This period of our course will fit well together with the *UNDER LOS ANGELES* conference to be held on November 11th, which the Harman Academy is co-sponsoring with the Institute on California and the West and the USC Libraries’ Collection Convergence Initiative.

1. **Los Angeles Past.**

In this period of our course, we add the history to imagination and try to determine the ways in which they overlap and influence one another. In doing so, we ask questions about how historians piece together the fragmentary historical record in and about Los Angeles, which interpretations seem to have held sway (and why), and whether or not we can talk about particular “schools” of Los Angeles history.

1. **Los Angeles Present.**

In this period, we go into the city in search of today. Dynamic and chaotic like any city in the world, Los Angeles is (as it always has) undergoing deep and even radical changes: in its make-up, its urban forms, its landscape, and its view of, and place in, the global arenas of metropolitan life and culture. As we explore “L.A. today,” we will look to find the memories and influences of the past and the imaginary, because if we look closely, these aspects of LA will glimmer at us, too.

1. **Los Angeles Future.**

As we move to concluding our year together, we try to put it all together: imagination, the past, and the present, and we propose and predict the future. How can the amalgam of past and present help us predict the future? What can we see, as a collective of L.A. scholars (by the spring of 2018), about what we think will/must/might happen in the L.A. of 2019, 2025, 2050? And what building blocks will have to be in place – in economic, cultural, political, and other spheres – to make the future as hopeful, bright, and egalitarian as possible? Can L.A. rise above too-easy pronouncements of the place as either light or dark, as heaven or as hell, to be something richer, something and someplace more complex? And what will we have to do to play a part in this?

The class is preparation for intense and in-depth research for undergraduate students. The course co-instructor and tutor, Dr. Huebner, works closely with students throughout the semester in twice-monthly one-on-one meetings. The course expands modes of analysis through polymathic learning, which will prepare the student entering the increasingly complex 21st century global community that requires inter/multidisciplinary approaches for innovation, problem solving, and ultimately success. In this, we take L.A. as our topic, obviously, but as our case study, as well; how do we bring polymathic expertise and curiosity to bear on a subject as variegated, complicated, and fascinating as this place?

Broad learning objectives for this course include: 1) immersion in the conventions of academic research through guided instruction and mentoring by course and library faculty – i.e., forming research questions, learning methodological practice, developing bibiographies, understanding evidence and data collection, forms of representation and presentation; 2) indepth understanding of Los Angeles “in its components and in its totality” and awareness of how the approaches used might be applied to the study of other cities or other topics; and, 3) understanding of evolving, historical notions of “polymathy” through exposure to disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches across the academy.

**Requirements/Grading**

Students will be graded on their course journal, a bibliographical essay, a research proposal, class presentation, and final paper/project.

1. **Course Journal (10% -- weekly)** students are required to reflect and record on a weekly basis their scholarly journey in terms of the course readings, class discussions, personal research, and ongoing dialogues with their student colleagues and course faculty. Students will review their weekly journaling with the course tutor during their scheduled bi-weekly meetings.
2. **Readings questions (10%** -- **bi-weekly)** students are required to prepare and submit three (3) questions related to the required reading assignment for the bi-weekly discussion sessions. The questions are to be submitted via email to Professors Huebner and Deverell Tuesday evenings 8pm prior to our Wednesday sessions.
3. **The Neighborhood Research Project (20%)**. Knowing Los Angeles – knowing any city – requires broad historical understanding melded with insight at the local level. Out of the “big view” and the “micro view” emerges knowledge and perspective. This research project is focused on the very specific, neighborhood level of research and understanding. The class will, once in the fall and once in the spring, choose a single neighborhood, which you will study in detail. We ask that you arrange yourself into teams of no more than four students per team. The teams will change, fall to spring. Each team will focus in on a different thematic aspect of the chosen neighborhood from the list below (you are welcome to propose some theme not on this list). Each team has the same general obligation to the assignment, and we will devote end-of-term time for presentations by the full class.
4. **Class presentation of research project/paper (10% -- final session)**
5. **Research Project/Paper (50% -- due on assigned day of final**) [a paper is to be 15+ pages, double-spaced with footnotes and bibliography of primary and secondary sources, and a list of the collections, archives, and repositories consulted; a project must include an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources, and a list of the collections, archives, and repositories consulted].

**Required and Suggested Readings—PART A/B (readings not posted on blackboard will be available for purchase)**

# Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*  (available for purchase at USC bookstore)

1. **Larry Bell** in conversation with Douglas Kent Hall “Strange Days,” in *Zones of Experience: The Art of Larry Bell* (1997) (available on blackboard)

# *Blackwell Companion to Los Angeles*, William Deverell and Greg Hise, eds. (selected readings available on blackboard)

# Leo Braudy, *The Hollywood Sign*  (available for purchase at USC bookstore)

1. **Octavia E. Butler**, *Parable of the Sower* (available for purchase at USC bookstore)

# William Deverell and Greg Hise, *Land of Sunshine: An Environmental History of Metropolitan Los Angeles* (<http://digital.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/t/text/text-idx?idno=31735062135573;view=toc;c=pittpress>)

# Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (1998) (selected readings available on blackboard)

# Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (1990) (selected readings available on blackboard)

# John Mack Faragher, *Eternity Street: Violence and Justice in Frontier Los Angeles* (W. W. Norton & Company; 1st edition; 2016) (available for purchase at USC bookstore)

# Douglas Flamming, *Bound For Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (2006) (available for purchase at USC bookstore)

# LA as SUBJECT:<http://www.laassubject.org/>

1. **Liz Goldwyn,** *Sporting Guide: Los Angeles, 1897* (available for purchase at USC bookstore)
2. **Adrienne Lafrance,** “How *The Twilight Zone* Predicted our Paranoid Present,” in *The Atlantic* (Dec. 31, 2013) (available on blackboard)

# Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (1946) (available for purchase at USC bookstore)

1. **Marlyn Musicant**, *Los Angeles Union Station* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2014) Please note: this book will be provided to students.
2. **Nancy Perloff,** “Tap City Circus,” in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*, Rebecca Peabody, Andrew Perchuk, Glenn Phillips, and Rani Singh, eds. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011) (available on blackboard)
3. **Sarah Schrank**, *Art and the City: Civic Imaginations and Cultural Authority in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) (available on blackboard)

# D.J. Waldie, *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2013) (available for purchase at USC bookstore)

1. **Lawrence Weschler,** “LA Glows,” from *The New Yorker,* February 23, 1998 <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1998/02/23/l-a-glows> (available on blackboard)
2. **David Ulin,** *Sidewalking* (available for purchase at USC bookstore)
3. **Alan Zilberman,** “*Escape From L.A*., Today: How a 1996 Sci-Fi Thriller Imagined the Year 2013,” in *The Atlantic Monthly (Aug. 8, 2013)*

**\* \* \* \* \***

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**January 10**

***PEOPLE***

Guest discussant: **Kelly Lytle Hernandez,** professor of history, UCLA

Required readings for roundtable discussion:

* Kelly Lytle Hernandez, “Hobos in Heaven: Race, Incarceration, and the Rise of Los Angeles, 1880-1910,” *Pacific Historical Review* v 83, n 3 (August 2014). Available on blackboard.
* McWilliams, SC, chapter 3, pgs 49-69; chapter 5, pgs. 84-95; chapter 7, pgs. 113-137.
* Stephanie Lewthwaite, “Race, Place, and Ethnicity in the Progressive Era,” in *Blackwell Companion to Los Angeles*. available electronically: <http://zb5lh7ed7a.search.serialssolutions.com/?V=1.0&L=ZB5LH7ED7A&S=JCs&C=TC0000414482&T=marc>
* Scott Kurashige, “Between “White Spot” and “World City”: Racial Integration and the Roots of Multiculturalism,in *Blackwell Companion to Los Angeles*. available electronically: <http://zb5lh7ed7a.search.serialssolutions.com/?V=1.0&L=ZB5LH7ED7A&S=JCs&C=TC0000414482&T=marc>
* Review Douglas Flamming, *Bound For Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (2006), introduction; chapters 1, 2, and 3.

**January 17**

Class tutorial with **Curtis Fletcher,** digital and mapping scholar, and Associate Director of the Polymathic Digital Lab; and **Andy Rutkowski**, Visualization Specialist, Cinematic Arts Library

Tutorials: (*Throughout the year, tutorials will include immersion in close reading aimed at improving comprehension of course materials, planning and advisement on course research project, and writing analysis.  In these one on one and small group meetings, students conceptualize and develop their projects under the guidance and supervision of the Course Tutor and individually appointed Research Librarians.*)

**Sunday, January 21**

On-site class at Disneyland.  USC Professor Trudi Sandmeier, Professor in the School of Architecture and a passionate expert on the iconic space. Prof. Sandmeier will guide students in an on-site investigation of Disneyland's problematic representations of America’s (and Los Angeles’) constructed “ideals” of race, gender, and class across the park. There will be two 2-hour on-site discussion sessions, coupled with a guided all-day tour of the space employing race, gender and class as categories for analysis.

**January 24**

***CULTURE***

Guest discussant: **Liz Goldwyn**

Required readings:

* **Liz Goldwyn,** *Sporting Guide: Los Angeles, 1897*

**January 31**

One on one, 20 minute tutorial meeting with Prof. Huebner

**February 7**

***MOVING IN LA***

Guest discussant: **Laura Nelson**, *LA TIMES* transit reporter

Required readings:

* Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies (2009)*

**February 14**

One on one, 20 minute tutorial meeting with Prof. Huebner

**February 21**

***REFRACTIONS: REAL LA?***

Guest discussant: **Leo Braudy,** University Professor

Required readings:

* Leo Braudy, *The Hollywood Sign: Fantasy and Reality of an American Icon*
* Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*,introduction; and chapter 7 (available on blackboard).

**February 28**

One on one, 20 minute tutorial meeting with Prof. Huebner/Deverell or research librarian

**March 7**

***OCTAVIA BUTLER***

Guest discussant: **Lynell George**

Required readings:

* Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

**March 10-18 – Spring Break**

**March 21**

***ENTREPRENEURSHIP***

Guest discussant: **Cedd Moses**, (we will meet him at Union Station)

Required readings:

* Marlyn Musicant, *Los Angeles Union Station*

**March 28**

Neighborhood Research Project Presentations (in lieu of midterms)

**April 4**

***DANGER or PROMISE?***

Guest discussant: **Raphael Sonenshein**, Executive Director, Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs, Cal State University, Los Angeles

Required readings:

* McWilliams, *SC*, review chapter 10, pgs. 183-204.
* Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, review chapters 1, 2, and read chapter 3 (excerpts available on blackboard)

**April 11**

***FUTURES***

Guest Discussant: **Shrikanth Narayanan,** professor of electrical engineering, with joint appointments computer science, linguistics, and psychology

Required readings:

* McWilliams, *SC*, chapters 10, 17, and “Epilogue”.
* RAND Corporation studies: <http://randstatestats.org.libproxy.usc.edu/index.php?randxdata=Y3VycmVudF9pcF9vZl91c2VyOjM0NixzZXNzaW9uX2lkOjRjOTk0NjVmMGE0NWNjYzNkMmNkMjk5NmM1ZTg1YzVh>
* Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, chapters 1, 2, 6 and 7 (available on Blackboard).
* *Blade Runner* – 1982 film (available on reserve at Leavey Library) loosely based on the 1928 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* by Philip K. Dick.
* Peter Westwick, introduction, *Blue Sky Metropolis* (available on Blackboard).
* Douglas Flamming, *Bound For Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (2006), review chapters 4, 5, and 6.

**April 18**

One-on-one tutorials. Preparation, review, and advisement on student’s oral presentation and final project.

**April 25 –** CONCLUDING SESSION

**STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**FINAL EXAM DATE: Wednesday May 9, 2018 5p**

**TERM PAPER/PROJECT DUE**

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.