

Subaltern Urbanism
Graduate Seminar
Latin American and Iberian Cultures
Institute for Comparative Literature and Society
Columbia University
CPLS GU4892/LAIC6892GR
6:10-8PM Tuesdays
Casa Hispánica 501

Instructors:

Anupama Rao arao@barnard.edu

Ana Paulina Lee ana.lee@columbia.edu

Course Description

This seminar asks how spatial politics intersect with economic inequality and social difference (race, gender, caste, and ethnicity) to produce marginalized and stigmatized spaces such as “favelas,” “slum,” and “ghettos.”

The seminar draws on the convergent yet distinct urban trajectories of Bombay/Mumbai and Rio de Janeiro as a place from which to explore questions of comparative and global urbanism from an explicitly South-South perspective. That is, we ask how Bombay and Rio’s distinct yet connected urbanity might force us to alter our approaches to the city; approaches that are largely drawn from modular Euro-American paradigms for understanding urbanization as coeval with modernity, as well as industrialization. We do so in this seminar by focusing on people and practices—subaltern urbanity (and on those whose labor produced the modern city), as well as on spatial orders—the informal or unintended city—to ask the question: “what makes and unmakes a city?”

How might questions about built form, industrialization, capital flows, and social life and inhabitation that takes the perspective of “city theory from the Global South” shed new understanding on the history of the city, the extranational frames of colonial modernity, and the ongoing impact of neoliberalism? How can we rethink critical concepts in urban studies (precarity, spatial segregation,

subalternity, economies of eviction, urban dispossession) through embedded studies of locality and lifemaking?

About the Structure and Expectations of the Course

We propose to co-teach this course with two course numbers at the 4000 level (CSR, ICLS, GSAPP)/ 6000 level (LAICS) seminar in Spring 2020.

The course will follow a broad chronology by tracing the effect of planning, policy, colonialism, and labor-capital relations in shaping Bombay and Rio de Janeiro. We then explore the traces of this history in contemporary urban policies, in emerging forms of urban activism and protest that harness historical memory for political purpose.

The course is thus essentially divided into a study of the colonial and industrial city, with relevant themes such as planning, the organization of social difference, public health, housing and the slum/favela, political violence, and forms of cultural production and consumption that developed in response to and as a result of the effects of both planning and “unplanning.”

Throughout we reverse the order of comparison that tends to be adopted in courses on the urban sensorium, to ask how the association of Rio and Bombay with the favela and the slum, respectively, as spatial orders that structure social life, might impinge on rethinking north Atlantic histories of subaltern urbanization. (Here, we are especially interested in thinking about convergences with studies of racial capitalism and histories of “the ghetto,” and “the project.”)

Assignments

All students registered for the course will be responsible for brief critical responses, and facilitating class discussion. This will count for **60% of the course grade.**

- a) **Discussion posts (30%)** Over the course of the semester each student will post at least ten (10) critical responses (one to two paragraphs) on the week’s assigned readings to Canvas by 6:00 PM the evening before our class meets. The weekly critical response should include comments on issues raised by

one or more of the assigned readings as well as questions you want to address in class. You are strongly encouraged to read the responses of your colleagues prior to class. You are also encouraged to post media, images, or links, etc. that relate to themes from that days readings or previous discussions.

- b) **Facilitation (30%):** Each week, one student will present for 10 minutes on a reading in our syllabus for the given week. The presenter will also facilitate the first 20 minutes of discussion, laying out some connecting points between the readings.

Students may then choose between doing a mapping project, which involves collaborative team-work, or writing a seminar paper. This will count towards **40% of their grade.**

Both groups of students will grapple with the challenges of using map-based representations to visualize and discuss subaltern issues albeit in a slightly different manner depending on the mode of representation (which is also always a mode of visualization).

Mapping Project Team (40%)

Students who choose to work on the mapping project will work individually on a series of mini projects during the semester that will then be compiled on a course website with narrative links between them. Here, the focus will be to create spatial datasets from archival materials (as a means to spatialize these histories).

a) First, students will work individually on mini projects to create spatial datasets from archival materials. For example, they might chose to: track the development of railroad route constructions in colonial Rio and Mumbai; map the development of medical facilities or public health institutes in Rio de Janeiro and Mumbai, and their relation to public health crises; map legal regulation of coastlines as a way to address environmental urbanism, and so forth.

b) Each student will research and compile data relevant to their layers and visualize their data on the digital mapping platform that best suits their data. c) Projects will

then be compiled on the course website, with students working collaboratively to chart narrative links between individual projects.

d) In the process, students will experience how the order of narration transforms the story one wishes to tell about the relationship between past and present, the many lives of infrastructure, the impress of social difference on the politics of space, the relation between land and water, and so forth.

Students who choose this option will be required to enroll in the course “Questions in Spatial Research,” a half semester course that meets **6 times** during the semester. <http://c4sr.columbia.edu/courses/questions-spatial-research>

The workshops are run by the Center for Spatial Research and they are designed to introduce students to basic fluency with open-source mapping software, QGIS, methods of data collection and creation, and approaches and concepts in critical spatial analysis and map design.

2) Seminar Paper (40%)

Students who choose this option will write a **20-page seminar paper (20%)** that addresses the major theoretical concerns of the course, including the challenges of doing interdisciplinary work that brings together the concerns of urban studies with humanities studies’ concerns about culture and aesthetics.

In addition, students who choose this option will submit a **book review (10%)** and a **5- page prospectus (10%)** with a working bibliography mid-semester for feedback.

Concept Histories

January 21: City Theory

Howard Winant, “The Modern World Racial System.” *Souls*, 4, no. 3: 17-30, 2002.

Debbie Becher, Chapter 8: “Race as a Set of Symbolic Resources: Mobilization in the Politics of Eminent Domain” in *Race and Real Estate*, edited by Adrienne Brown and Valerie Smith

Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: The Politics of Subaltern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35:2, March 2011

Suggested:

Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives*

January 28: Urban Dispossessions

David Harvey, "Right to the City." *New Left Review* 53, September-October, 2008.
<http://newleftreview.org/II/53/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>

Saskia Sassen, "The Return of Primitive Accumulation."
http://saskiasassen.com/PDFs/SS_return_of_primitive_accumulation.pdf

Loic Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration"
<https://newleftreview.org/issues/II13/articles/loic-wacquant-from-slavery-to-mass-incarceration>

Recommended:

The Art of Inequality: Architecture, Housing and Real Estate
<https://cdn.filepicker.io/api/file/tlZMjdISfKKIPLo5trCw?>

Pieces in the *New York Times* by Matthew Desmond, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

February 4 : Visualization

Presentation by CSR Assistant for the course

Recommended:

Kurgan, Laura. "Million Dollar Blocks." In *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology and Politics*, 187-206. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2013

Stanford Spatial History Project, especially their "Terrain of History":
<http://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/index.php>

Kelly Hernandez, Million Dollar Hoods: <http://milliondollarhoods.org>

Weizman, E. (2014). Introduction: Forensis. *Forensis. The Architecture of Public Truth*: 9-32

Rahul Mehrotra? (will confirm by mid-November)

February 11 : The Favela, History I

Valladares, Licia do Prado. *The Invention of the Favela*

Chapter 1: “Genesis of the Rio Favela: From Country to City, from Rejection to Control.”

Chapter 2: “The Favela of the Social Sciences”

Carolina de Jesus, *The Unedited Diaries of Carolina Maria de Jesus*.

Carolina de Jesus (short film to be viewed in class)

February 18: The Favela, History II

Perlman, Janice. *Myth of Marginality*

Chapter 3: “Portrait of the Migrant.”

Chapter 4: “Marginality Theory and the Ideal Type.”

Larkins, Erika Robb. *The Spectacular Favela*.

Chapter 3: “Favela, Inc.”

Amy Chazkel, “Toward a History of Rights in the City at Night: Making and Breaking the Nightly Curfew in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 62:1 (forthcoming in January 2020)

Black Orpheus, 1959 (film clips to be viewed in class)

February 25 : The Slum, History 1

Invited guest: Debjani Bhattacharyya and Amy Chazkel

Ask Debjani for readings

Arjun Appadurai, "Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (Summer 2000), 627-51

Nikhil Anand, "Leaky States: Water Audits, Ignorance, and the Politics of Infrastructure," *Public Culture* 27, issue 2_76 (2015): 305-330

March 3: The Slum, History II

Swapna Banerjee-Guha, "Shifting Cities: Urban Restructuring in Mumbai," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, issue 2 (2002): 121-28

Shirish B. Patel, "Dharavi: Makeover or Takeover?," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, issue 24 (2010): 47-54.

March 10: Global Policy, Local Activism, Social Networks

*****Indian Ocean Urbanisms Symposium on March 12-13, 2020 *****

Urban Theory from the South

March 24:

Global Reparations Conference, March 27-28

Rohit De, The People's Constitution

March 31 - Class rescheduled to April 1 (optional) and April 2

April 1st, Wednesday Film Screening and Q&A with Film Director "Not in My Neighborhood"

April 2, 6pm-8:30: Precarity

Invited Guests: Ros Fredericks (Gallatin, NYU) and Robin Nagle (NYU)

Ask Ros and Robin for suggested readings

April 7: Waste, Value, Culture

Millar, Kathleen. 2018. "Introduction" in *Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor in Rio's Garbage Dump*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Stam, Robert. "Hybridity and the Aesthetics of Garbage in Brazilian Cinema."
<http://www7.tau.ac.il/ojs/index.php/eial/article/view/1091/1123>

Schmidt, Christopher. "Vik Muniz's *Pictures of Garbage* and the Aesthetics of Poverty." *Art Margins*, 6 n., 3 (October 2017).

Gidwani, Vinay, CSSAAME

April 14: Urban Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics

Keisha-Khan Y. Perry, *Black Women Against the Land Grab*
Introduction: Diasporic Blackness and Afro-Brazilian Agency

1. Engendering the Grassroots
2. The Gendered Racial Logic of Spatial Exclusion

Namdeo Dhasal, "Namdeo on Namdeo," trans. Dilip Chitre, *Indian Literature* 58, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2014): 34-44.

Anand Patwardhan, *Jai Bhim Comrade* (film)
Excerpts

Catalytic Communities:
<http://catcomm.org/mission/>

Museu Sankofa:
<https://ims.com.br/tag/museu-sankofa/>

URBZ:

<http://urbanology.org/>

April 21: Student presentations

Mapping projects and Seminar Paper presentations

April 28: Student presentations

Mapping projects and Seminar Paper presentations