Reading Texts


**Additional Reading Materials will be distributed in Class**

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INTRODUCTION

The development of suburbs – residential communities on the outskirts of cities – was one of the most dominant features of American cultural landscape. Far from being merely a way Americans organized their residential housing preferences, the suburbs created an entirely new ways of ordering the American political, social and culture life.

The rapid growth of suburbs following World War II drew a great deal of attention from social analysts, and it was in this critical period that television sitcoms and films with distinctly suburban themes began to appear depicting material affluence and social mobility of suburban families.

The tightly detached single family tract homes with its distinctive architecture and landscape as the embodiment of middle class values and culture was best captured in television sitcoms: the Donna Reed Show, Father Knows Best, Leave it to Beaver and Ozzie and Harriet. These television sitcoms and the suburban community they represented sought to portray a happy, white middle class families in which father’s work was remote in cities and his real life took place at home where mother cleaned house and baked cookies in shirtless dresses, high heels and pearls. In this ideal suburban home setting children’s mischief was never malicious and always could be smoothened over in half hour. Like television sitcoms, cinema also reinforced this idealized social world of suburbia in early films like Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House (1948), Adam’s Rib (1949), The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit (1955), and Please Don’t Eat the Daisies (1960).

The course will cover the time period from 1950s to the present with the particular focus on the changing meaning and representations of suburbia in cinematic space. Covering diverse selections of films, the course explores how suburban domesticity, family life, gender role, race, domestic space and architecture were represented in cinematic space. Drawing of historical and contemporary sources, the course explores the production of suburbia in all its complexities and examines the relationship between cinema and suburbia and how cinema as a particular mode of representation sought to address suburbia both as an ideal place and a specific American cultural landscape.

AIM OF THE COURSE

- To provide a critical and informed understanding of the economic, social and cultural forces that shape suburbia both as an ideal and a place,

- To provide critical knowledge of the changing meanings of suburbia within the American cultural and political landscape,

- To develop an understanding of the role of cinema in shaping the material and cultural landscape of suburbia,

- To provide a critical intellectual skills to understanding the intersection between cinema and suburbia and how cinematic depicts and circulates the ideals of suburbia.
Learning outcomes

• To have a deeper knowledge of the history of suburbia as a particular cultural landscape.

• To understanding the social and economic forces that shape the development of suburbia in the United States

• To understand the specific role of cinema in the creation of popular images of suburbia.

Visual Skills Exercise

• Critical evaluations of images and their representation and changing and contested meaning

• Critical evaluation, analysis and interpretations of the role of gender, race, sexual orientations images and other forms of identity and how of these images are represented, contested and negotiated in cinematic space of suburbia.

DISCUSSIONS AND CRITICAL READING

A primary responsibility of students is to complete the weekly reading before the date of the scheduled class meeting and contribute their thoughtful, reflective opinions in class discussion. Students should allocate enough time to complete the required readings. The readings can be interpreted in a variety of ways and students should formulate some initial questions to offer in the class discussion as well as critical responses. For each class, each student must be prepared to explicate the main arguments of that day’s reading and relate it to our previous discussions. Students are expected to voluntarily participate in discussions and should also expect to be called upon.

The best ways to prepare for and contribute to active class discussion are the following: 1) complete the reading on time, and 2) critically analyze the reading. The primary goal of critical reading is to understand the author's argument, identify key assumptions, and evaluate the evidence and influences leading to that conclusion. Never assume a “passive” position when reading a text. To fully comprehend and understand any reading, ask the following questions:

• What is the author's thesis?
• Does the author have a stated or unstated point of view?
• How does the author construct his/her argument?
• Are the author's goals, viewpoints, or agendas revealed in the introduction or preface? Does the author provide evidence to support the argument?
• What kind of evidence is provided and is it persuasive?
• In the final analysis, do you think the author proves the argument or does the author rely on preconceived ideas or personal ideology?
• Why do you think that?
• Does the author take a moral or political stand?
• Is it made explicit or implicit in the way the issues are treated and examined?
• What is the author's view of human nature?
In this regard, does change come from human agency and "free will" or broad socio-economic forces?
What assumptions does the author make about society?
Does the author see society as hierarchical, pluralistic, democratic or elitist?
Does the author present convincing evidence to support his/her views?
How is the narrative constructed or organized?
Why does the author begin and end at certain points?
Does the author present the analysis from the viewpoint of a certain perspective or group? How does this affect the outcome of the analysis?
What issues and events does the author omit or ignore?
Can you think of alternative interpretations or stories that might present a different interpretation of the issues?
What would be some of the implications of looking at the issues differently?

The long tradition of academic freedom in higher education promotes free and open exchange of ideas. My role as the instructor of the course is to insure that this openness prevails. I will make every effort to honor differences of opinion and multiple perspectives, while at the same time encouraging critical analysis and reflection that is informed by readings and related to the course materials.

Student’s final grade will be determined according to attendance, consistence in active participation in class discussions and quality of works submitted and performance on examinations. The weights of assignments and examinations are as follows.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance</td>
<td>15 Percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussion</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film Reviews</td>
<td>30 Percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>35 percent</td>
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ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance and participation in all activities of the course is mandatory. Arriving late is not appropriate and constitutes late arrival and will not be tolerated. Unless you have permission to be absent, no more than three absence of allowed during the quarter. **Students who miss more than two class meetings without permission will have their grade dropped by a letter grade. If you are having problems that prevent you from attending the class you should call me or send an e-mail massage.**

DETAILS OF GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades will be used in evaluation of student work. In the determination of grades on individual assignment(s), midterm and final grades, the issues of quality will prevail. As such students should be mindful of the following guidelines regarding the meaning of grades for assignments and projects.

A. Indicates work of extraordinarily high quality and reflects unusual thoroughness, comprehensives, cogency of arguments, and treatment in the development of ideas,
creativity and originality in meeting stated requirements of assignments. Work also characterized by exceptional writing ability: virtually free of serious grammatical and spelling as well as syntactical errors.

B. Designates work of high quality regarding the organization and development of ideas. Work substantively addresses issues/topics and the like as stated in guidelines of assignment(s). Writing is relatively free of serious grammatical and spelling as well as syntactical errors.

C. Designates work which minimally meets acceptable requirements as stated in guidelines for assignment(s). Writing skills reflect weaknesses in organization and development of ideas; may demonstrate serious grammatical and spelling, as well as syntactical errors and the like. Treatment of ideas and issues often characterized as superficial and simplistic. Work may only address a part of assignment, and not the complex of issues stated in guidelines,

D. Designates work which does not meet the minimum acceptable requirements of the assignment(s). Very poorly written in terms of organization and development of ideas, grammar and spelling, and syntax. May indicate that students have not followed direction.

F. Indicates that assignment has not been submitted at all, has not addressed topics or issues assigned whatsoever, or where relevant, has been turned in later than agreed upon extension. This grade will also be affixed to assignment(s) in which work has been plagiarized or in any way violates academic integrity.

I. An incomplete is designed for the rare occasion when the student has been seriously ill or suffered some other hardship beyond one's control. Permission to receive an "I" must be requested in writing by the student no later than the last regularly scheduled day of class.

Approval is not guaranteed. If the "I" is not removed by the student with one academic year from the date of enrollment in the course, it become an "F". The student will then need to repeat the course.

Late Assignments: papers will be marked down one full grade for each day late; make-up exams will only be given with doctor’s excuse. Papers more than two days will not be accepted, resulting in a grade of F.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY and PLAGIARISM

All students enrolled in this course are expected to abide by the university's Code of Student Responsibility is discussed in the Student Handbook. In particular, academic dishonesty, fabrication, and plagiarism will bear the full weight of sections as stated in the Student Handbook.
Students with Disability

Please identify yourself after class to the instructor early in the quarter. Appropriate arrangements will be made for you to take all examinations at the Office of Disable Student Services.

Late Assignments: papers will be marked down one full grade for each day late; make-up exams will only be given with a doctor's excuse. Papers more than three days will not be accepted, resulting in a grade of F.

Excessive absences and lateness will adversely affect final grade. **Students who miss two class meetings will have their final grade lowered by a full letter grade**

All cellular phone, page beepers etc. must be turned off during class time. Failure to do so will result in student being asked to leave the class. Such individuals will only be allowed to return to class if they agree to abide by this policy. **There will be NO EXCEPTIONS.**

**Eating food in class is NOT allowed under any circumstance.**
Film Reviews

As part of the requirements of the course, you are required to review two films from those scheduled to be screened in class. In reviewing the films students should be careful not to offer a mere description of films you have selected to review. The best review papers will be those that define, analyze and critically address the issues addressed in the films.

Student are strongly urged to develop their review in consultation with the instructor. You must provide scrupulous documentation for factual assertions, provide references for opinions attributed to others, whether through direct quotation or paraphrasing. Any form of plagiarism will result in receiving an F for the review.

Criteria of Grading

The review paper will be graded according to the following criteria:

• How well does the review paper state and develop an argument regarding the subject?

• How is the review paper organized and how persuasively is it argued?

• Does the review paper demonstrate originality and creativity?

• Does the review paper observe the conventions of a film review, are citations complete, does the review paper reflect care in proof-reading regarding language use and grammar?

Format

The film review paper must double-spaced, type written in either 11 or 12 point font on 8.5” X 11” paper, observing a minimum of one-inch margins all around. Pages must be numbered. For the documentation of sources, I strongly recommend that you locate them as endnotes at the end of the paper on separate sheets of paper in the format specified by The Chicago Manual of Style. However, you many choose to follow the MLA format of textual citations. The body of the review paper must be no more than 4-5 pages in length. Notes and bibliography should follow and be numbered as well. The film review must have a separate title page consisting of: the title of the review paper; the student’s name and current e-mail address; the name of the course; and the name of the instructor.

The two film reviews are due on the 5th and 9th weeks of class.
Weekly Reading Assignments and Film Screening

**Week 1 - Course Introduction – Documenting Suburbia – Part I**


*Film: Home Economics: A Documentary of Suburbia, Directed by Jenny Cool*

**Week 2 – Documentary on Suburbia – Part II**

Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, Chapter 1

Beuka, Introduction

Saunders, Preface and Introduction

*Film: The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream,* Directed by Gregory Greene

**Week 3-- Excavating Suburbia of the 1950s**

Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, Chapter 2

Beuka, Chapter  2

Saunders, Chapter  3

*Film: Pleasantville,* Directed by Gary Ross

**Week 4-- Domestic Ideals and Gender Roles**

Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, Chapter 3 and 4

Beuka, Chapter 4

Saunders, Chapter  7

*Film: The Stepford Wives,* Directed by Brian Forbes

**Week 5-- Perfect Families and Forbidden Desires**

Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, Chapter 5 and 6

Beuka, Chapter  3

Saunders, Chapter  9

*Film: Far From Heaven,* Directed by Todd Haynes
Week 6 -- Trouble in Paradise: Alienation and Fragmentation (Part I)
Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, Chapter 6 and 7
Beuka, Chapter 5
Saunders, Chapter 2

Film: The Colony, Directed by Rob Hedden

Week 7 -- Trouble in Paradise: Alienation and Fragmentation (Part II)
Saunders, Chapter 8 and 10

Additional Materials will be distributed in Class
Film: To be announced

Week 8 -- Race, Class and Suburban Anxiety
Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, Chapter 7 and 9
Beuka, Conclusion

Film: Good Fences, Directed by Ernest Dickerson

Week 9 -- Suburban Ideals and Immigrant Lives
No Assigned reading for this week
Film: Avalon, Directed by Barry Levinson

Week 10 -- Suburbia at the End of the 20th Century
Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, Chapter 10 and 11
Saunders, Chapter 6 and 8
Beauregard, ‘Identity and Urbanity” (will hand chapter in class)
Film: American Beauty, Directed by Sam Mendes
American Suburbia in Contemporary American Literature, Photography, Movies/TV Series, and Popular Music

Secondary Sources

First References


General, Historical, and Cultural Studies


**On Suburban Writings**


On Suburban TV Series and Movies


On Suburban Photography and Paintings

