CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LANDSCAPES

LA 375  (Graduate students may register for LA 606  CRN 23891)  
Winter 2016 Tuesday- Thursday  12:00-1:50  Lawrence 115  
Kenneth Helphand  <helphand@uoregon.edu>  office: Lawrence 217

“IN THE BEGINNING ALL THE WORLD WAS AMERICA”  John Locke

"A NATION ANNOUNCING ITSELF,
I MYSELF MAKE THE ONLY GROWTH BY WHICH I CAN BE APPRECIATED.
I REJECT NONE, ACCEPT ALL, THEN REPRODUCE ALL IN MY OWN FORMS.
WHO ARE YOU INDEED WHO WOULD TALK AND SING OF AMERICA?
HAVE YOU STUDIED THE LAND, ITS IDIOMS AND [WO]MEN."
Walt Whitman

This course explores the Contemporary American Landscape. It addresses its evolution, 
current conditions, and prospects. It’s an opportunity to examine ourselves through our 
landscapes. The emphasis is on the everyday landscape with a humanistic approach 
toward environmental studies. The goal is for individuals to learn to read the American 
landscape, understand its evolution, and become responsible landscape critics.

The landscape is a manifestation of culture. What are the landscapes of the American 
Dream? What are American landscape tastes? What is the Middle Landscape? The 
themes of individualism, mobility and change, technology, and idealism are examined in 
the context of the contemporary landscape.

The course examines ideas, places and experiences of particular contemporary 
significance, symbolism or iconic value: Disneyworld, suburbia, malls, yards, highways, 
McDonald’s, Main Street, Las Vegas. Landscape as depicted in various media is explored 
including painting, photography, film, television, and advertising.

The course requires three projects and a midterm (each = 25% of the final grade) 
There will also be required short exercises.  
Class participants who are in design studios will be encouraged to relate projects to their 
studio experience and to other courses.  
Non-majors are most welcome- no previous course work in Landscape Architecture is 
required.

A word on Classroom Etiquette: In a class such as this where lectures are conducted in 
dim light -students tend to believe they are “anonymous” and practically invisible. A 
small minority of students may even believe that certain kinds of behavior will go 
unnoticed. Neither belief is true. Carrying on a conversation during the lecture, reading 
the paper or text messaging, or leaving mid class is and distracting to your professor, 
and most important, to your fellow students. Behavior that undermines the quality of 
the classroom experience for all concerned will not be tolerated. Please turn off all 
cellular phones (and other devices that beep) before the start of class.
"If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability."
**SCHEDULE (subject to revision)**

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<td>January 5</td>
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<td><strong>INTRODUCTION: READING THE LANDSCAPE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE LANDSCAPE (individualism &amp; community)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE LANDSCAPE</strong></td>
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<td>(mobility &amp; change, technology &amp; idealism)</td>
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<td><strong>Video: Figure in the Landscape: A Conversation with J.B. Jackson</strong></td>
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<td><strong>CONTEMPORARY TRENDS THE EVERYWHERE COMMUNITY</strong></td>
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<td><strong>CONTEMPORARY TRENDS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Project 1: TBA due</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LANDSCAPE TASTES/ AMERICAN NATURES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>“THE MACHINE IN THE GARDEN</strong>**</td>
<td><strong>LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY</strong></td>
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<td>The Western Film</td>
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<td><strong>THE ROAD</strong></td>
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<td><strong>McDONALDLAND</strong></td>
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<td>February 16</td>
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<td><strong>MIDTERM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SUBURBIA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LANDSCAPE IMAGES</strong></td>
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<td>Real Estate: ads</td>
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<td><strong>Project 3: GUIDE draft due</strong></td>
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<td>March 1</td>
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<td><strong>RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPES</strong></td>
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<td>Driveways</td>
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<td>Telegraph to twitter</td>
<td><strong>CALIFORNIA &amp; THE NORTHWEST</strong></td>
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<td><strong>GUIDE Review (project due ff. week)</strong></td>
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LA 375 CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SCHEDULE ---Winter 2013

REQUIRED READING (portions of the require reading are drawn from these sources as well as others) reading will be available on line

http://www.planetizen.com/
http://www.theatlanticcities.com/
http://www.clui.org/.
This is a reading list and a reference bibliography. Readings with and asterisk (*) are required and will be found online.

**READING THE LANDSCAPE**

"AND I AM WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO REALLY DISCOVER AMERICA".

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 1958

*Ferlinghetti, Lawrence, "I Am Waiting," _A Coney Island of the Mind_, San Francisco: New Directions, 1958.
* Lewis, Peirce "Axioms of the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," *The Beholding Eye: 10 Versions of the Same Scene."


**AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE LANDSCAPE**

"WHAT, THEN IS THE AMERICAN, THIS NEW MAN?" Crevecoeur, 1782


**SPATIAL HISTORY**

"THE LANDSCAPE IS HISTORY MADE VISIBLE."

J. B. Jackson, 1975

* _____, "The Almost Perfect Town." In Horowitz pp. 31-42.
*Mendelsohn, Janet & Merino, Claire “Figure in a Landscape: A Conversation with John Brinkerhoff Jackson,” Conservation Foundation, 1987. (Video)
"THE FIRST CHARM AND VIRGIN PROMISE OF AMERICA WAS THAT IT WAS SO DIFFERENT A PLACE. BUT THE FULFILLMENT OF MODERN AMERICA WOULD BE ITS POWER TO LEVEL TIMES AND PLACES, TO ERASE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HERE AND THERE, BETWEEN NOW AND THEN. AND FINALLY THE UNIQUENESS OF AMERICA WOULD PROVE TO BE ITS ABILITY TO ERASE UNIQUENESS."

Daniel Boorstin, 1973

7 Contemporary American Landscapes

**"Shopping Mall Politics," Editorial, Eugene Register Guard, April 15, 1993


LANDSCAPE TASTES/AMERICAN NATURES

"AMERICA'S MOST DISTINCTIVE LOOK - CASUAL CHAOS".

David Lowenthal, 1964

*Cole, Thomas, "Essay on American Scenery," 1835

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

"THIS IS FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY, AT A SPATIAL AND AESTHETIC EDGE".

Helphand

_____ To Make It Home: Photographs of the American West, N.Y.: Aperture, 1989

"THE MACHINE IN THE GARDEN" AND THE "MIDDLE LANDSCAPE"

"IT IS THAT MIDDLE GROUND, BETWEEN THE HILL AND THE TRACKS, THAT ORDINARY, DISORGANIZED, COMMON PLACE WORLD OF PLAIN EXISTENCE, WHERE SPEAKS MOST ELOQUENTLY OF THESE PARADOXES AND CONFLICTS". David Plowden

Cawelti, John G. The Six-Gun Mystique, Bowling Green University Popular Press.
Kitses, Jim Horizons West, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970

**CONTEMPORARY ARCHETYPES - DISNEYLAND**

"TO ALL WHO COME TO THIS HAPPY PLACE: WELCOME. DISNEYLAND IS YOUR LAND. HERE AGE RELIVES FOND MEMORIES OF THE PAST. . . . AND HERE YOUTH SAVOR THE CHALLENGE AND PROMISE OF THE FUTURE. DISNEYLAND IS DEDICATED TO THE IDEALS, THE DREAMS, AND THE HARD FACTS THAT HAVE CREATED AMERICA . . . WITH THE HOPE THAT IT WILL BE A SOURCE OF JOY AND INSPIRATION TO ALL THE WORLD."
Plaque in Disneyland Town Square
July 17, 1955

*www.Disney.com
*Shenk, Joshua Wolf "Hidden Kingdom, Disney's Political Blueprint,"  **The American Prospect**, No. 21, spring 1995, pp. 80-84.
Findlay, John,  **Magic Lands**, pp. 52-116.
Kuenz, Jane,  **Inside the Mouse Work and Play at Disney World**, Duke University Press.

**THE ROAD**

"SEE THE U.S.A. -- IN YOUR CHEVROLET -- AMERICA'S THE GREATEST LAND OF ALL"
1950's T.V. ad, sung by Dinah Shore

"ITS NOT JUST A CAR, ITS YOUR FREEDOM"
1989 advertising slogan

‘IT’S THE ONLY PLACE I KNOW WHERE YOU CAN BE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE AT THE SAME TIME, AND BE MOVING WHILE STILL STANDING STILL.”
Jerry Seinfeld, on why he likes driving

* highway history  http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/history.cfm
*______, "The Accessible Landscape.", 1988
*______, "Roads belong in the Landscape." In Horowitz, pp. 249-154
*______, "Truck City." In Horowitz, pp. 255-265.
*Peary, Gerald "On the Road", American Film, January/February 1987.
*Salter, Christopher "Thoughts on the Road," Landscape, 23:2, 1979.
Appleyard, Donald, Kevin Lynch and John Meyer The View from the Road, 1964.
Keller, Ulrich The Highway as Habitat, Santa Barbara: University Art Museum,. 1986.
Ladd, Brian Autoaphobia, University of Chicago, 2008.
Wachs, Martin & Crawford, Margaret eds., The Car and the City, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992.
McDONALDLAND

"YOU DESERVE A BREAK TODAY"

* www. McDonalds.com
* www.starbucks.com
* Jackson, J.B. "Other Directed Houses." In Horowitz, pp. 185-198.
  Robbins, Tom "Ray Kroc Did It All For You," Esquire, December 1983.
  ______ ed. Golden Arches East, Stanford, 1997

SUBURBIA/COMMUNITY/NEIGHBORHOOD

"WHATEVER ITS IMPERFECTIONS, LEVITTOWN IS A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE".
Herbert Gans, 1967

* Meinig, "Symbolic Landscapes".
* Morin, Richard and Paul Taylor “Suburbs Not Most Popular, But Suburbanites Most Content”February 26, 2009
  *http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1134/content-in-american-suburbs
  Archer, John, Architecture and Suburbia, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005.
  Gans, Herbert The Levittowners, New York: Pantheon, 1967

**POPULAR IMAGERY AND THE LANDSCAPE - REAL ESTATE ADVERTISEMENTS**

"WINTERGREEN, AFTER 400 MILLION YEARS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ADDRESS IN AMERICA IS READY."
Wintergreen, A Cabot, Cabot and Forbes Sea Pines Community


**THE RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE**

"THE AMERICAN DREAM IS VERY SIMPLE: A BETTER HOUSE AND A NEW CAR".
1979 Bank Loan Advertisement

*________, "Ghosts at the Door." In Horowitz, pp. 107-117.
*________, "The Domestication of the Garage." In Horowitz, pp. 118-125.
Balmori, Diana & Margaret Morton, Margaret *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives*. 
New Haven: Yale, 1993
Rowe, Peter pp. 67-108.

LEISURE, SPORTS AND ENVIRONMENT

"WHERE WERE YOU? OUT. WHAT DID YOU DO? NOTHING."


COMMUNICATION/ REALITY?

"Where is "@" at?"
Kathy High

Deitch, Jeffrey & Friedman, Dan *Artificial Nature*, Athens: Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art, 1990
(http://places.designobserver.com/toc.html?issue=637)
______ e-topia, , Cambridge: MIT, 1999
Contemporary American Landscapes