

**Winter Quarter**  
**Planning 184/284    Looking at LA**  
**Room:                    2214 Public Policy Building**  
**Day and Time:        Thursday, 2:00 to 4:50 pm**

**Instructor and Contact Information**

**Professor Jacqueline Leavitt**  
**Department of Urban Planning**  
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**Appointment Hours:**

**Tuesday: 11:30 to 12:30, some days extended**  
**4:00 to 6:00**

**Thursdays after class**

**Teaching Assistant**

**Hector Magana**

**Contact Information TBA**

**Introduction**

Los Angeles is a complex city. On the one hand, some people focus on its built form and call it the epitome of low-density and sprawl. Some hold on to the idea that L.A. is a non-city. At times, analyzing the population and the changes over time, L.A. has been cited as the best example of multiculturalism, a headline that crumbled after the rioting in 1992 upon the non-guilty verdict at the Rodney King trial. LA has been called a third world city living within a first world city. LaLaland and lotusland call attention to its hedonistic and banal aspects, especially when seen through the eyes of filmmaker Woody Allen. Irrevocably tied to Hollywood, once a subdivision known as Hollywoodland, the media casts Los Angeles in many roles, e.g., as the city of dreams and of illusions where you can remake yourself. Film noir has used Los Angeles to depict a dark city, a character that draws from the many landscapes of the city. The expanding L.A. School of Literature makes visible the many LAs, Mosley's South Los Angeles from the 1950s on; the racial and ethnic tensions in T.C. Boyles *Tortilla Curtain*; the romanticizing of mission Indians in Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*. The City of Los Angeles is frequently interchangeable with the County although the latter contains 88 cities. The city is sometimes confused with the term Southern California although this includes five or six other counties depending on the source (Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara). The look of Los Angeles is equally complicated and while top-ranked architects have won recognition and their buildings been awarded prizes, no one architecture exemplifies Los Angeles; postmodernism embraces the eclecticism; the Case Study houses its groundbreaking examples of merging indoor and outdoor space and use of modern materials. L.A.'s residential stock has influenced housing all over the nation; although outsiders may think of LA as a city of homeowners, the city has long been one of renters.

The shape of the city is partly due to transportation decisions such as the location of the port and the freeways, also a response to the discovery of oil and shifts away from inter- and intra-rail. Always present has been real estate speculation tied to major infrastructure projects.

This class will look at the many issues, juxtaposing history and popular interpretations of culture, focusing on population shifts, boosterism, real estate and land use decisions, and the economy. Underlying all these issues is the impact of race and class and the ways in which public and private interventions have shaped the City of Angels.

**Required Readings:**

Carey McWilliams. 1973 ed. *Southern California: An Island on the Land*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books.

Allen, James P. and Eugene Turner, *Changing Faces, Changing Places: Mapping Southern Californians*. Northridge, CA, The Center for Geographical Studies, 2002.

Other required readings will be available through the ecampus website.

Eric Avila. 2004. *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Grading:**

**Attendance and Participation in class discussion: 15 percent.**

**Written Assignment Part I: 35 percent.**

**Discussion and Oral Presentation Part I: 15 percent**

**Written Assignment Part II: 35 percent**

**Assignments:**

**Note: GRADUATES may elect to do the undergraduate assignment but will be expected to offer an analysis and more pages in Part I. ALTERNATIVE: A topic of your choice; Response to specific questions related to analysis of readings (e.g. select, analyze, and argue for the L.A. decade of importance; looking further back than Watts and Rodney King, develop a history of the riots; select three books by critical theorists of Los Angeles, compare and contrast ). If selecting the alternative, an outline has to be turned in by the third week, a detailed outline by the fifth week, and the paper by the 9<sup>th</sup> week.**

**Undergraduates:**

**Parts I and II are related; your choice in I will determine the neighborhood assignment.**

**Part I. Due by 5<sup>th</sup> week, February 9. Choice to be turned in by January 26.**

**Explain LA through a building's social, physical, and economic history.**

**Note: go to this web site for useful information**

**[http://www.laobserved.com/archive/cat\\_la\\_history.html](http://www.laobserved.com/archive/cat_la_history.html)**

**Part II. Due by 10<sup>th</sup> week, March 16**  
**Expand your building analysis to include the neighborhood.**

**Explanation of the Assignment**

Physical determinism does not explain a city. However, buildings and open space can be markers, reminders of and signifiers of key developments that reflect economic and social shifts in the cities. Buildings do not always remain as they were intended, nor are their uses always benign. If we walk through downtown and glance upward, we see open windows that may have been offices and are now sweatshops; behind the facades people with and without papers are literally sweating as they sew goods at wages that are insufficient to afford housing. We may pass a building on Cesar Chavez Boulevard in Boyle Heights whose façade is inscribed with the name of a long dead Jewish store owner, superinscribed with a Latino name, the goods being sold having shifted from egg bread to sweet rolls in the panderia. Some buildings may stay vacant for a long time only to be discovered by a developer who is promoting market rate housing; other buildings may be rehabilitated or preserved and used differently; and still others may rise on lots where buildings have been demolished. Downtown development sometimes resembles an archaeological dig as in the case of Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights where artifacts have been found.

**Pages are minimum required; you may exceed minimum for extra credit.**

**Steps Part I:**

1. Select a building from the List below. If you wish to analyze a building that is not on the list you need to meet with the TA and Instructor and gain permission from Instructor.
2. Write a Six Page Paper. This does not include endnotes (use Chicago Manual of Style), references, illustrations, photographs, maps. **Successfully completing this assignment requires answering all questions.** You may add other points/issues that you think are important.

**1) Building Profile: Identify the basic information about the building:**

- a. address
- b. location in City, County
- c. year(s) built, include any additions
- d. primary construction materials in the exterior, interior
- e. height
- f. square footage

**2) Use of building**

- a. how is the building organized; i.e., number of offices/apartment units/single room occupancies – whatever is appropriate for the composition of the type of building it is
- b. who uses the building; who is it intended for; does this change over time
- c. if the building was part of a larger plan, please describe

**3) Public roles; Private roles; role of Architects and Planners**

- a. who is the builder/developer; is there more than one over time
- b. who is the architect if there is one; planner if there is one
- c. source of financing

d. public and or private intervention

**4) Reaction to building**

e. protests and or support for building

**4) Ties to history of Los Angeles**

a. describe, draw from readings assigned and other references

**Steps: Part II**

**Neighborhood Profile** of the building selected in Part I: Five Pages. This does not include endnotes (use Chicago Manual of Style), references photographs, maps, illustrations.

a. what is the primary type of use in the surrounding neighborhood now;

b. what was the primary type of use in the surrounding neighborhood at the time the building was constructed, expanded;

c. what is the racial, economic, and social background of the neighborhood; how has this changed over time;

d. what role do you think the building played in the development of the neighborhood?

**Examples of Buildings and General Location. These are among the better known; you can select a building that is less well known as long as you can show professor that research resources are available. A building can be either public or private. You should also select a building that you can visit in order to take photographs, video, illustrate, talk to people in building, etc. Try to stay within the City and County of Los Angeles.**

Commercial - Sears Building, Boyle Heights; Bullocks-Wilshire, Westlake

Commercial/Artistic - Wiltern Building, Koreatown

Housing/Homeless - Downtown Women's Shelter, Downtown; Rescue Mission, Downtown

Civic – L.A. City Hall, Metropolitan Transit Authority; Downtown

Sports - Coliseum, Downtown; Staples Center, Downtown

Religious - St. Vibiana, Downtown; Breed Street Shul/Synagogue, Boyle Heights

Transportation - Union Station, Downtown; LAX Airport Tower old and new

Cultural - Disney Hall, Downtown; Coburn School of Music, Downtown

Health - Los Angeles County Medical Center, Lincoln Heights/Highland Park

Health – Martin Luther King/Drew Hospital, South Los Angeles; LA County Hospital; Watts

Health Center, South Los Angeles

Music/Culture – Capital Records Building, Hollywood

Art/Culture – Temporary Contemporary, Little Tokyo; Japanese American National

Museum, Little Tokyo

Hotels – Biltmore, Downtown; Ambassador, Westlake; New Otani, Little Tokyo

Houses – 3 Case Study Houses anywhere in LA

Houses – 3 Ranch houses anywhere in LA

Houses –Craftsman Bungalows in South Los Angeles

Business – Golden State Mutual Life Insurance, Adams, South Los Angeles

Civic – Bob Hope Patriotic Hall

Recreation – YMCA, Vernon Central;

Missions – select two in different parts of Los Angeles area

Movie Studios – Paramount, Sony/RKO, Disney

Music – McCabes

Housing – public housing development, select one or group geographically

Housing – LaBrea Towers

Restaurant – Cliftons, Downtown

## Syllabus and Reading Assignments

### Week 1

January 12

#### Overview

#### Video from PBS

### Social Relations: As Los Angeles Expands, Who's Left on the Bottom

### Week 2

January 19

Carey McWilliams

Chapters II "The Indian in the Closet"

Chapter III "Californios and Mexicanos"

pp. 11-69

Allen and Turner. Read Chapters 1 – 3, Tables.

#### **Ecampus.**

Sikivu Hutchinson. "Waiting for the Bus,"

[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/social\\_text/v018/18.2hutchinson.ht...](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/social_text/v018/18.2hutchinson.ht...)

Eric Avila

Chapter 1

"Chocolate Cities and Vanilla Suburbs: Race, Space, and the New 'New Mass Culture' of Postwar America"

pp. 1-19

#### **Speaker: Hector Magana**

### Week 3

January 26

Carey McWilliams

Chapter V "Cathay in the South"

Chapter XV "The Los Angeles Archipelago"

pp. 84-95, pp. 314-329

Allen and Turner. Complete.

Eric Avila

Chapter 2

"The Nation's 'White Spot': Racializing Postwar Los Angeles"

pp. 20-64

## **Land Use Decisions and the Aftermath: Fact and Fiction**

### **Week 4**

**February 2**

Carey McWilliams

Chapter VII “Years of the Boom”

Chapter VIII “The Cultural Landscape”

Chapter XI “The Sociology of the Boom”

Chapter VI “The Island of Hollywood”

pp. 113-137, pp. 138-164, pp. 227-248, pp. 330-349,

#### **Ecampus.**

Ralph Harrington. “Automobile City? Transport and the making of twentieth-century Los Angeles.”

<http://www.greycat.org/papers/losang/html>

Blaine Harden. “Out West, a Paradox: Densely Packed Sprawl”

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/)

[content/article/2005/08/10/AR2005081002110.html](http://content/article/2005/08/10/AR2005081002110.html)

Eric Avila

Chapter 3

“The Spectacle of Urban Blight: Hollywood’s Rendition of a Black Los Angeles”

pp. 65-105

**Speaker to be confirmed.**

### **Week 5**

**February 9**

**Presentation**

**NOTE: Assignment Part I Due**

### **Order and Disorder**

#### **Week 6**

**February 16**

Carey McWilliams

Chapter X “Water! Water! Water!”

Chapter XIV “The Politics of Utopia”

pp. 183-204, pp. 273-323

Eric Avila

Chapter 4

“‘A Rage for Order’,: Disneyland and the Suburban Ideal”

pp. 106-144

**Public Intervention**

**Week 7**

**February 23**

Carey McWilliams  
Chapter XVII “A Slight Case of Cultural Confusion”  
pp. 350-370

Eric Avila  
Chapter 5  
“Suburbanizing the City Center: the Dodgers Move West”  
pp. 145-184

**Speaker to be confirmed**

**Week 8**

**March 2**

Eric Avila  
Chapter 6  
“The Sutured City: Tales of Progress and Disaster in the  
Freeway Metropolis”  
pp. 185-224

**Week 9**

**March 9**

Epilogues McWilliams and Avila  
McWilliams pp. 371-378  
Avila pp. 224-242

**Week 10**

**March 16**

Wrap Up. Informal Discussion based on second  
assignments with Class Participation

**March 16 Final Assignment Due**

