

**HSPV 6380 / CPLN 6870: PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE CITY:
The Visual Construction of Urban and Suburban America**

*At the discretion of the instructor, this syllabus is subject to modification during the semester.
For the very latest updates (e.g., to readings, assignments), refer to Canvas.*

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advance: <https://francescaammon.youcanbook.me/>

Spring 2025

DRLB 4N30

Wednesdays 8:30-11:30am



Source: Chris Jordan, *In Katrina's Wake* (2005).

Course Description

This seminar explores the intersecting social and cultural histories of photography and the urban and suburban built environment. No prior background in photography is necessary. Since its inception in 1839, photography has provided a critical means for documenting change in American cities and suburbs. We might characterize the medium's evolution as moving through four major phases: 1) celebration of the great structures of the industrial city; 2) documentation and attempted reform of the social life of Progressive and New Deal era cities; 3) critique of postwar cities and suburbs; and 4) reflection on change in the post-industrial city. Each week, we will compare at least two image collections as the basis for our discussion. While authorship by individual photographers provides the entry point to many of these conversations, our primary focus will be the images' portrayal of urban and suburban people, structures, and space. Through our investigations, we will explore how photography's dual documentary and aesthetic properties have helped to reflect and transform the city, both physically and culturally.

Course Objectives

This course will train students in the application of visual research methods to the study of urban and architectural history. We will practice the skills of reading photographs as we would any other archival document, as well as consider the diverse types of urban photographic archives that exist, from gallery prints, to journalistic photo-essays, bureaucratic archives, art books, and digital mappings. The course will demonstrate the place of photography as much more than just documentary illustration, but also critically-inflected evidence imbued with cultural values through its production, circulation, and appropriation in broader society.

Course Requirements

- (1) *Class Attendance, Discussion, Preparation, and Participation*: Thoughtful and active participation is vital to a successful seminar; it represents 25% of the course grade. Included is the requirement that each student post 1-2 discussion questions or comments to Canvas (in the Discussions thread for the week) by 6pm the night before each class. Feel free to build upon others' postings. Students can skip two weeks of postings (but not Week 2). More than two skipped weeks of posting will result in a reduction in this portion of the grade. More than one absence from class will also result in a reduction in this portion of the grade.
- (2) *Seminar Leadership and Presentation*: Each student will lead the first half of class (including giving a ~30-minute presentation using images) at the start of one weekly meeting. Your presentation should offer a close reading of one or more images from that week and place it/them in the context of the readings and the overall topic for the week. If more than one student is presenting on a single day, presenters should coordinate in advance to avoid duplication. Seminar leadership and presentation represent 10% of the course grade.
- (3) *Photo Essay: Due Mar 5 (8:30am)*. Spend a few hours photographing Philadelphia. Select ~8-12 of those images to pair with text (extended captions and/or a single narrative) to create a photo essay about the city and its physical environment. See Canvas for full details. Come to class prepared to reflect upon the experience of photographing the city and using images to create an argument. This assignment represents 20% of the course grade.
- (4) *15-Page Research Paper: Due Monday, May 5 (Noon)*.
Develop a thesis-driven research paper based upon a collection of photographs of the city. Ideally, you will discuss a collection that we have not discussed in-depth during class (although the Ruscha images are an exception). Students are encouraged, but not required, to select a collection found in a local repository (e.g., Architectural Archives, Athenaeum of Philadelphia, City Archives, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center at Penn Libraries, Library Company of Philadelphia, Temple University Special Collections Research Center, etc.). Your paper should draw upon course readings to place the image collection in its appropriate historical and aesthetic context, analyze the content and structure of individual photographs and the overall set of images, and assess the meaning and significance of the collection—when produced, and as it may have changed over time.

One possible format for the paper is to draft an essay that follows the approach of the Stories section of the *Sunset Over Sunset* website, albeit focused on a theme not already covered by existing Story authors. But, this is just one approach to this assignment, among many.

The final, double-spaced paper should follow the standards of scholarly writing, including incorporation of a bibliography and proper citations throughout. Citations should follow Chicago Manual of Style (the guide for which is available via [Penn Libraries](#)). Be sure to caption and source all images, and reference each image at least once within the text. The use of AI in drafting this paper is prohibited.

Two ungraded preparatory assignments will help you develop your final paper:

- 1-2 paragraph preliminary topic proposal, including identification of major photographic archive plus a list of 3-5 sources (**due Feb 19, 8:30am**)
- Full proposal, including a ~500-word description of your topic and argument/research question, a one-page outline of the full paper, and a bibliography of ~10 primary and secondary sources (at least five of which should be annotated) (**due March 19, 8:30am**)

The paper and preparatory assignments represent 40% of the course grade.

- (5) *Final Presentation*: For the final class sessions (**April 23 and 30**), each student will give a ~10-minute presentation on their research paper, followed by time for Q&A. This represents 5% of the course grade. You must upload your presentation slides to Canvas before the start of class.

Summary of Components of Course Grade

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|-----|---|
| 25% | Seminar attendance and participation, including weekly discussion questions |
| 10% | Seminar leadership and presentation |
| 20% | Photo-Essay (8-12 images, plus accompanying text) |
| 5% | Final Presentation (~10 minutes) |
| 40% | Research paper (15 pages, plus images & bibliography) and preparatory assignments |

General Policies

Academic Integrity

All students are responsible for being familiar with and following Penn's Code of Academic Integrity, <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>. **There will be no tolerance for the appropriation of others' language, images, or ideas without the proper use of quotation marks and citations.** All violations will result in substantial penalties. If you have any doubts or questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, including [plagiarism](#), please do not hesitate to contact the instructor, library staff, etc.

Late Work

Unless you contact the instructor at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline or have a last-minute emergency, the assignment grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter for each day that it is late. The instructor also reserves the right not to accept any late assignments.

Course Readings and Texts

There are no required book purchases for this course. But you may wish to purchase the two suggested texts, from which we will be reading multiple chapters. Most readings are available digitally via Canvas and/or in hard copy, on reserve at the Fine Arts Library (see the “Course Materials@Penn” link on Canvas for a list of all course reserves). Canvas also often contains citations (and often links) for optional texts and images by week. Students who are presenting that week, or who have a deeper interest in the theme, may wish to consult these resources.

Suggested Books:

Peter B. Hales, *Silver Cities: Photographing American Urbanization, 1839-1939* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

The first two assigned chapters are scanned (the legal limit) and posted to Canvas. You may read the additional chapters in the hard copy book on reserve or via Interlibrary Loan. Or you may purchase your own copy for future reference.

Miles Orvell, *Empire of Ruins: American Culture, Photography, and the Spectacle of Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021). Available as an e-book via [Penn Libraries](#).

Assigned Photograph Collections:

Most assigned photograph collections are on reserve at the Fine Arts Library. Where possible, I have also tried to post links to digital versions of some or all of the included images in a given collection. Please plan accordingly to ensure that you are not all scrambling to view the sole hard copy at the same time. So that others will also have a chance to use these materials, please do not renew the photo book for more than your initial one-hour loan if someone else is waiting.

Assigned Readings:

Supplementary readings—as well as a few digitized photograph collections and accompany texts—are accessible on websites or (as denoted by *) scanned and available as PDFs on Canvas.

Additional Supports and Accommodations:

The University of Pennsylvania – as well as its constituent departments, programs, and schools – has numerous support services and accommodations for students. Below is a list – that is not at all exhaustive – of some of the services offered at the University. Please feel free to reach out directly to the instructor if you need a referral or guidance navigating these services. The website and office of the [Vice Provost for University Life](#) will also have guidance for students in need.

Teaching and Learning: [Center for Teaching, Learning and Innovation](#)

Learning Resources: [Weingarten Learning Resource Center](#)

Disabilities: [Disabilities Services](#)

FGLI: [Penn First Plus](#)

Food Insecurity and other Emergency Funds: [Emergency and Opportunity Funding](#)

Student Health and Counseling Services: [Wellness](#)

Interpersonal Violence: [Penn Violence Prevention](#)

Public Safety: [Division of Public Safety](#)

Spiritual and Religious Life: [Office of the Chaplain](#)

Sexual Harassment and Assault:

- [Office of the Chaplain](#) (students, staff, faculty, or visitors)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (students)
- [LGBT Center](#) (students, staff, or faculty)
- [Office of the Ombudsman](#) (students, staff, or faculty)
- [Penn Women's Center](#) (students, staff, or faculty)
- [Special Services Department](#), Division of Public Safety (students, staff, faculty, or visitors)
- [Student Health Service](#) (students)
- [Title IX Coordinator](#) (complaints by/regarding staff, students, faculty, or visitors)
- [Vice Provost for University Life](#) (students)

Substance Abuse: [Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Program Initiatives](#)

Summary of Weekly Schedule

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>
1.	1/22	Introduction	
Part I: Celebrating Growth and Great Structures			
2.	1/29	The City as Early Photographic Subject <i>Visit to Kislak Center</i>	
3.	2/5	Aerial Perspectives	
4.	2/12	The City Grows Skyward and Uptown	
Part II: Investigating Social Life and Advocating Reform			
5.	2/19	Social Documentary of the Poor	<i>Preliminary Topic</i>
6.	2/26	New Deal Landscapes	
7.	3/5	Public Housing and Urban Renewal	<i>Photo Essay</i>
	3/12	Spring Break – No Class	
Part III: Visualizing & Critiquing the Postwar City & Suburb			
8.	3/19	Postwar Street Photography and Social Life	<i>Full Proposal</i>
9.	3/26	Art in the Everyday Landscape <i>Visit to Kislak Center</i>	
10.	4/2	Critiques of Development	
Part IV: Change Over Time through Destruction and Preservation			
11.	4/9	Picturing Decline	
12.	4/16	Preserving the City	
13.	4/23	Student Presentations	<i>Presentation Slides</i>
14.	4/30	Student Presentations	<i>Presentation Slides</i>
	Mon, 5/5		<i>Final Paper</i>

Detailed Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1 (1/22): Introduction

This introductory session will include a short slide lecture providing an overview of the themes of the course and an interactive discussion of the aesthetic and documentary potential of photography, particularly in relationship to the development of cities. We will also review the syllabus. For the second half of the class session, we will begin to discuss recent city photographs together. In preparation for class, prior to our first class meeting, students should read the following background texts and also spend some time thinking about the ongoing photographic coverage of the Los Angeles wildfires.

Image Collections:

Spend some time exploring the online photographic coverage of the Los Angeles wildfires.

Reading:

*Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 71-82. (originally in *Atlantic Monthly* 38 (1859))

*Peter B. Hales, "Introduction," in *Silver Cities: Photographing American Urbanization, 1839-1939* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 1-9.

Miles Orvell, "Introduction: Our Time in Ruins," in *Empire of Ruins: American Culture, Photography, and the Spectacle of Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), <https://academic.oup.com/book/31961/chapter/267694821>.

I. CELEBRATING GROWTH AND GREAT STRUCTURES

This module of the course will consider the use of photography to capture and celebrate urban growth, including architectural, engineering, and urban planning achievements.

- What choices have photographers made to imbue their images with a celebratory tone?
- Why might they have done so?
- How did these photographers select their subjects? What subjects did they leave out?
- How did technology shape photographic practice during this early era of the medium?

WEEK 2 (1/29): The City as Early Photographic Subject

This class will explore the strengths, limitations, and content of relatively early forms of photography. We will consider why the city offered such a compelling subject for this developing medium. Our collections of interest include the earliest existing photographic record of an American city, as well as a photo book produced by one of the first female press photographers in the United States.

Likely class visit to **Kislak Center for Rare Books** to view relevant photograph collections.

Image Collections:

George R. Fardon, *San Francisco Album: Photographs of the Most Beautiful Views and Public Buildings of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Herre & Bauer, 1856). (1999 reprint on Reserve, Fine Arts Library, [Penn Libraries](#))

You can also review 33 views available online via [NYHS](#).

Frances Benjamin Johnston, *The Hampton Album* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966). (Selected from an album of photographs originally made for the Paris Exposition of 1900.) (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

OR Review selections from *The Hampton Album* available on MoMA's website: <https://www.moma.org/artists/7851?locale=en>.

Review the general descriptions and holdings of the digital photograph collections at the Library Company of Philadelphia:

<https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/islandora%3Aroot>.

Reading:

*Peter B. Hales, "Development of an Urban Photographic Style, 1839-1870" in *Silver Cities*, 11-95.

*Laura Wexler, "Black and White and Color: *The Hampton Album*," in *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 127-176.

WEEK 3 (2/5): Aerial Perspectives

This class will examine urban photographs taken from above—from panoramas shot from atop tall buildings, to birds-eye views taken from airplanes. These types of images have functioned variously as booster projects, historical maps, artworks, and (later on) planning tools for urban renewal. We will examine two collections: Eadweard Muybridge's famous panorama of San Francisco, and the work of the Fairchild Aerial Survey Company, the preeminent early twentieth-century commercial enterprise of this sort. Two online reference collections provide Philadelphia comparables to the Fairchild-style work.

Image Collections:

Eadweard Muybridge, "Panorama of San Francisco taken from the tower of the house of Mrs. Mark Hopkins," 1878.

Available through [NYPL](#).

Mark Klett, "San Francisco Panorama," 1990. (This panorama is a rephotography project of Muybridge's earlier work.)

Available on [Mark Klett's home page](#).

*Thomas J. Campanella, *Cities from the Sky: An Aerial Portrait of America* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

See "Central" chapter on Canvas.

See also (for reference):

Regional Planning Federation of the Philadelphia Tri-State District, Aerial Survey of the Philadelphia Region, ca. 1928, Map Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. (See [Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network](#))

Dallin Aerial Survey Co., Aerial Survey of Philadelphia, PA, ca. 1930, Map Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. (See [Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network](#))

Reading:

Peter B. Hales, "Grand-Style Urban Photography, 1865-1893," in *Silver Cities*, 123-211. (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

*Thomas J. Campanella, "Introduction: Sherman M. Fairchild & the Airborne Camera," in *Cities from the Sky*, 8-13.

*Thomas J. Campanella, "Epilogue: The Airplane and the City," in *Cities from the Sky*, 120-123.

WEEK 4 (2/12): The City Grows Skyward and Uptown

This class will examine photographs of the growth of the early twentieth-century city. Using New York City as our case study, we see how the city grows vertically via skyscrapers (in the photos of Berenice Abbott and Lewis Hine) and also grows uptown into Harlem (in the photos of James Van Der Zee). You might consider, in particular, how race and gender inform these collections.

Image Collections:

Berenice Abbott and Elizabeth McCausland, *New York in the Thirties* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973). (Originally *Changing New York* (New York: E.P. Dutton Co., 1939). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

E-book available via [Penn Libraries](#).

Paperback available for purchase on [Amazon](#) for \$17.70.

*Lewis W. Hine, *Men at Work; Photographic Studies of Modern Men and Machines* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977). (Originally 1932) (On reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Paperback available for purchase on [Amazon](#) for \$11.95.

*Allon Schoener, ed. "An Urban Black Culture, 1920-1929," in *Harlem on my Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900-1968* (New York: Random House, 1968), 49-122 (esp. photos 86-122). (Fine Arts Library, Locked Case)

Reading:

*Mary N. Woods, "The 'New' New York: Alfred Stieglitz and the City from Above and Below," in *Beyond the Architect's Eye: Photographs and the American Built Environment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 7-82.

Peter B. Hales, "Silver Metropolis: Photographing the Cosmopolitan City, 1915-1939," in *Silver Cities*, 415-474. (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

*Bridget R. Cooks, "Black Artists and Activism, *Harlem on my Mind*, 1969," in *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 53-86.

E-book also available via [Penn Libraries](#).

II. INVESTIGATING SOCIAL LIFE AND ADVOCATING REFORM

This module of the course will consider the relationship between photography and the investigative documentation, aestheticization, and attempted reformation of material and social life in the city, particularly among immigrant and minority groups.

- How has photography been used to advance reform movements?

- What are the ethics of the voyeurism inherent in much social documentary photography?
- How did photographers exploit photography's seemingly objective nature to advance their moral arguments? What messages might they have conveyed under the guise of objectivity? Why did the viewing audience believe them?
- In contrast to the distant past, how might the ubiquitousness of investigative photography today serve to negate its power to reform?
- How have some photographers after the Progressive era promoted the aestheticization of poor urban life, rather than its critique?

WEEK 5 (2/19): Social Documentary of the Poor

Preliminary Topic Due

This class will examine the Progressive Era photography of activist journalist and photographer Jacob Riis in New York City's Lower East Side. A more contemporary counterpoint can be seen in Margaret Morton's photographs of community gardens.

Image Collections:

Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*

(New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1890, 1904). (On reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Be sure to read a version that includes the photos, not drawn illustrations (which is what the original 1890 version included).

[Amazon](#) sells a paperback version for \$6.95 and a Kindle version for \$4.99.

In addition, several versions – with drawn illustrations based upon the photos – are available for download via HathiTrust. If interested, see, for example, the [1907 Scribner's publication](#), which can be fully downloaded or viewed online.

*Diana Balmori and Margaret Morton, *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). (On reserve, Fine Arts Library)

E-book available for one-hour loan via [Internet Archive](#) (must create free login to access).

Reading:

Peter B. Hales, "The Hidden Hand: Jacob Riis and the Birth of Reform Photography," in *Silver Cities*, 270-347. (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

*Susan Sontag, "On Plato's Cave," in *On Photography* (1977), 3-24.

Kristin Hankins, "Framing the Litterbug: Picturing and Policing Public Cleanliness in Mid-Twentieth Century Philadelphia," *Journal of Urban History* (Online First December 14, 2020), <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0096144220978780>.

(Note that this article is "out of time" for this week. But the points Hankins raises and the process she uses to dissect the photographs are relevant to our weekly theme and to this point in the semester, more generally.)

WEEK 6 (2/26): New Deal Landscapes

This class will examine federally-funded Farm Security Agency (FSA) photographs and privately conducted surveys of urban conditions in poor ethnic and racial enclaves of early-to mid-twentieth century cities. Our case studies include a photo book on African American

life in New York City and Chicago's South Side, as well as the smaller town and city work of New Deal image makers like Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Gordon Parks.

Image Collections:

Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam, *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (New York: Viking Press, 1941). (On reserve, Fine Arts Library)

E-book available via [Penn Libraries](#).

Julia L. Foulkes, *To the City: Urban Photographs of the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011). (On reserve, Fine Arts Library)

E-book available via [Penn Libraries](#).

See also the Farm Security Administration photographs available through T. Arnold, N. Ayers, J. Madron, R. Nelson, L. Tilton, L. Wexler, *Photogrammar* (Version 3.0), 2021, <https://photogrammar.org/>.

Reading:

*Nicholas Natanson, "The Photo-Series: Russell Lee, Chicago, and the 1940s," in *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography* (1992), 142-202.

*Julia L. Foulkes, "Introduction," in *To the City*, 1-9.

WEEK 7 (3/5): Public Housing and Urban Renewal

Photo-Essay Due

This class will examine the use of photography to document typically poor neighborhoods and substantiate redevelopment. Our case studies are government-funded public housing and urban renewal in post-World War II New York City, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Philadelphia. In follow-up to previous analysis of artists' photographic books, this week we will also consider a more expansive version of the archive, including the productions of journalists and municipal government agencies.

Image Collections:

"How Public Housing Transformed New York City, 1935-67 (Part 1), video, 2011, based upon New York City Housing Authority Collection, La Guardia and Wagner Archives, <https://youtu.be/Y-aH0zz1L38> (9 minutes). (Optional Part 2 video: <https://youtu.be/kJ62bxhj3iA> (8 minutes)). Also browse collection photographs [here](#), by searching under your keywords of choice and clicking on "Photos" as your choice media type.

Leonard Nadel, "Leonard Nadel photographs for the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, 1948-1997," Getty Research Institute.

Select online photos available through the GRI,

https://primo.getty.edu/permalink/f/tjqn6u/GETTY_ROSETTAIE207604. (You may also explore other Getty photos taken by Nadel, including those depicting Pueblo del Rio, Aliso Village, and Community Redevelopment Agency projects.)

*Ira Nowinski, "No Vacancy," in *Ira Nowinski's San Francisco: Poets, Politics, and Divas* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2006). (originally *No Vacancy: Urban Renewal and the Elderly* (San Francisco: C. Bean Associates 1979)). (On reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Browse the use of photographs in Philadelphia redevelopment plans, available at:

https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/?_id=1681399819729&f%5Bcollection_sim%5D

[%5B%5D=Philadelphia+Neighborhoods+Project+Collection+%28University+of+Pennsylvania%29](#) (formerly held at “Philadelphia Neighborhoods—Histories, Plans and Futures,” Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text & Image, University of Pennsylvania, <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/PhilaNeighborhoods/>).

Reading:

Moriah Ulinskas, “Imagining a Past Future: Photographs from the Oakland Redevelopment Agency,” *Places* (January 2019), https://placesjournal.org/article/imagining-a-past-future/#.X_35jel_PFY.mailto.

Stefano Bloch, “Considering the Photography of Leonard Nadel,” *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 74 (2012): 76-95, http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2084/apps/doc/A296572514/ITOF?u=upenn_main&sid=ITOF&xid=76b9a0c1.

Francesca Russello Ammon, “Picturing Preservation: Photographs as Urban Renewal Planning Knowledge in Society Hill, Philadelphia,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 42, no. 3 (2022): 314-330, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X18815742>.

SPRING BREAK (3/12) – No Class

III. VISUALIZING AND CRITIQUING THE POSTWAR CITY AND SUBURB

This module of the course will consider photographers’ efforts to capture and critique changing urban/suburban development.

- What are the ethics of photographing subjects with an eye toward critiquing their lifestyle?
- What criticisms have photographers and activists made in portraying this subject?
- How does scale (of both the photographic image and the subject depicted) change the meaning and function of a photograph?

WEEK 8 (3/19): Postwar Street Photography and Social Life

Full Proposal Due

This class will examine the lifestyles and structures spawned by the development of postwar cities and suburbs. Our case studies include photographs by Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander, Diane Arbus, and Bill Owens from the 1960s and ‘70s. We will also consider some Philadelphia photographs from the era by Laurence Salzmann. These images of the social side of postwar life raise questions of art versus documentary and truth versus irony.

Image Collections:

Bill Owens, *Suburbia* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972). (Fine Arts Library, Locked Case)

Sarah Hermanson Meister, *Arbus, Friedlander, Winogrand: New Documents, 1967* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2017). (On Reserve – Fine Arts Library)
Selections posted to Canvas.

Laurence Salzmann, selected projects, including “City/2,” 1971; “Face to Face,” 1995; and “Single Room Occupancy,” 1969. See photographer’s full website here:

<https://www.laurencesalzmänn.com/>. Additional images also available via Penn's Colenda Digital Library: <https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/>.

Reading:

- *Martha Rosler, "Post-Documentary, Post-Photography?" in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 207-244. (originally 1991)
- *Susan Sontag, "America Seen Through Photographs Darkly," in *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 27-48.

WEEK 9 (3/26): Art in the Everyday Landscape

This class will examine postwar photographers' identification of visual art in the everyday landscapes of commercial, residential, and roadway development. We will look, in particular, at the work of landscape photographers that is devoid of text. Through the digitization of Edward Ruscha's "Streets of Los Angeles" Archive at the Getty Research Institute, we will also consider the relationship between the digital and the material image.

Class visit to **Kislak Center for Rare Books** to view Ed Ruscha book collection.

Image Collections:

- Francesca Russello Ammon, Brian D. Goldstein, and Garrett Dash Nelson, *Sunset Over Sunset*, <https://www.sunsetoversunset.org> (2024).
- Getty Research Institute and Stamen Design, *12 Sunsets*, <https://12sunsets.getty.edu/> (2020).
- *Robert Adams, *Denver: A Photographic Survey of the Metropolitan Area* (Denver: Colorado Associated University Press, 1977). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

To Be Viewed via Special Collections during Class:

- Edward Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* ([Los Angeles]: 1966). (Fine Arts Library Rare Books)
- Edward Ruscha, *Twenty Six Gasoline Stations* (1962). (Fine Arts Library Rare Book)
- Edward Ruscha, *Various Small Fires and Milk* (1964). (Fine Arts Library Rare Book)
- Edward Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966). (Fine Arts Library Rare Book)
- Edward Ruscha, *Thirty Four Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (1967). (Kislak Center Rare Book)
- Edward Ruscha, *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970). (Kislak Center Artists' Book)
- Edward Ruscha, *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968). (Kislak Center Artists' Book)
- Edward Ruscha, *A Few Palm Trees* (Hollywood, CA: Heavy Industry Publications, 1971). (Fine Arts Library Rare Book)

Reading:

- *"Every Building on the Sunset Strip: Interview with Ed Ruscha by Doris Berger," March 21, 2002, in *Within, Alongside, and Between Spaces*, Ed. Doris Berger (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2003), 39-45.

Mariana Mogilevich, "Monuments and Mediocrity: Landmarking Los Angeles," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 11, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 34-52, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/futuante.11.1.0035.

Read any two stories of your choice on the *Sunset Over Sunset* website, <https://www.sunsetoversunset.org/stories>.

WEEK 10 (4/2): Critiques of Development

This class will examine more explicit critiques of development—particularly the encroachment of the human landscape on the natural one—often through extended photo essays that combine image and text. As part of our discussion, we will revisit the place of aerial images in documenting the landscape.

Image Collections:

*Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964). (On reserve, Fine Arts Library)

*Dolores Hayden and Jim Wark, *A Field Guide to Sprawl* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Edward Burtynsky, "Landscapes of Oil: A Photo Essay by Edward Burtynsky," *Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2015): 163-169, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/jinteaffa.69.1.163>.

Reading:

*Deborah Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (1989), 124-143. (originally 1985)

*Holly Wlodarczyk, "Intermediate Landscapes: Constructing Suburbia in Postwar American Photography," in *Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes*, ed. Andrew Blauvelt (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2008), 101-112.

Miles Orvell, "Framing the Postmodern Waste Land," in *Empire of Ruins: American Culture, Photography, and the Spectacle of Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), <https://academic.oup.com/book/31961/chapter/267695245>.

IV. CHANGE OVER TIME THROUGH DESTRUCTION AND PRESERVATION

This final module of the course will use several urban case studies to consider photographic efforts to visually document change over time in the buildings and spaces of individual cities. These images tell a story of rise, decline, and rebirth, as well as of construction, destruction, and remembrance. The change that occurs is both gradual and sudden, resulting, variously, from neglect, disinvestment, demolition, and/or disaster.

- How have some photographers inflected their work with a sense of nostalgia? What alternative attitudes do other images of ruin convey?
- How can photography help preserve the past? Conversely, how can it seem to sanction change?
- Is there a danger to aestheticizing ruin? Can it be avoided?
- How well can/do static photographic images convey change over time?

- In what ways do photographs of urban destruction suggest future paths to revitalization?

WEEK 11 (4/9): Picturing Decline

This week, we consider urban decline and destruction as depicted in photographs of San Francisco, New Orleans, Detroit, and Camden, NJ. We will also consider the high-end art book as a format in relationship to this subject matter, as well as the place of people in these often emptied-out landscapes.

Image Collections:

Mark Klett, *After the Ruins, 1906 and 2006: Rephotographing the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

E-book available for one-hour loan via [Internet Archive](#) (must create free login to access).

*Robert Polidori, *After the Flood* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Selected images available as PDF on Canvas.

Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, *The Ruins of Detroit* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Selected images available on photographers' website:

<http://www.marchandmeffre.com/detroit>.

LaToya Ruby Frazier, *The Notion of Family* (New York: Aperture, 2016). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Select photographs available on the artist's [website](#).

Camilo J. Vergara and Howard Gillette, Jr., *Invincible Cities Home Page*,

<https://invinciblecities.camden.rutgers.edu/intro.html>.

[Note: in late 2020, the website reached its end of life as Adobe discontinued a necessary plug-in. In place of viewing the actual website, then, you may wish to view selected images that have been archived by the [Library of Congress](#). Canvas also contains some screenshots from the website. But, if you can somehow still access the website itself on some browser, it's worth a look.]

Reading:

Dora Apel, "Detroit Ruin Images: Where Are the People?" in *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 75-112.

E-book available via [Penn Libraries](#).

Miles Orvell, "Things Fall Apart: Modernity and Entropy," in *Empire of Ruins: American Culture, Photography, and the Spectacle of Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

E-book available via [Penn Libraries](#).

Teju Cole, "LaToya Ruby Frazier," *Aperture* 223 (Summer 2016), 126-135,

<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?&url=https://www.jstor.org/stable/43825335>.

*Rebecca Solnit, "The Ruins of Memory," in Mark Klett, *After the Ruins, 1906 and 2006*, 18-31.

WEEK 12 (4/16): Preserving the City

This week we consider the ways in which photography has served as an act of preservation itself, through the National Park Service organization established to preserve via documentation, as well as the work of individual artists to photograph buildings at risk of, or undergoing, demolition.

Image Collections:

*Richard Nickel, *Architectural Photographs by Richard Nickel* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1973). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Danny Lyon, *The Destruction of Lower Manhattan* (New York: Macmillan, 1969) (Rev. Ed., 2005). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Robert Frishman, "Ghosts of Segregation," (Ongoing),
<https://www.ghostsofsegregation.com/>. (See Gallery→Images section)

Optional:

Browse the online HABS/HAER/HALS photograph collection at the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>.

Reading:

Sarah Rogers Morris, "Richard Nickel's Photography: Preserving Ornament in Architecture," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 67-80,
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/futuante.10.2.0067>.

Francesca Russello Ammon, "Captioning Milton-Parc," with photographs by Clara Gutsche and David Miller, in *What You Can Do with the City* (Canadian Centre for Architecture), October 20, 2017, <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/issues/12/what-you-can-do-with-the-city/52534/captioning-milton-parc>.

WEEK 13 (4/23): Student Presentations

In our last two class sessions, each student will give a presentation based upon their research paper in progress. Students should prepare supporting images and plan to speak for ~10 minutes each. Upload your slides to Canvas in .pdf format by 8pm the night before.

WEEK 14 (4/30): Student Presentations

In our last two class sessions, each student will give a presentation based upon their research paper in progress. Students should prepare supporting images and plan to speak for ~10 minutes each. Upload your slides to Canvas in .pdf format by 8pm the night before.

FINAL PAPER DUE
Monday, May 5, by 9am

Photography Exhibits in the Region, Spring 2025 (please share others!)

This exhibit is local and highly relevant to our topic—check it out by Feb 2 if you can!

In the Moment: The Art & Photography of Harvey Finkle, Woodmere Art Museum, August 3, 2024 – February 2, 2025.

<https://woodmereartmuseum.org/experience/exhibitions/in-the-moment-the-art-photography-of-harvey-finkle>

The work of the Philadelphia-born photographer and activist Harvey Finkle offers an intimate view of the hardships, sacrifices, and joys experienced by members of the diverse communities and political movements he has engaged with over the course of his career. *In the Moment* explores photography's ability to interrogate social inequities, arouse empathy, and inspire political action. Consisting of photographs that Finkle has taken over the past half-decade, the show surveys the multiple and sophisticated ways in which his work forges meaningful connections with its audiences. Guest-curated by Antongiulio Sorgini, categorical groupings take us through Finkle's journey, chronicling the stories that shape our collective consciousness.

The Woodmere Art Gallery is located in Chestnut Hill and is accessible via the Chestnut Hill East and West train stations (SEPTA regional rail) and SEPTA bus #23. Admission is free for Students with ID, and free to all on Sundays. It is open Wed-Sun, 10am-5pm.

Other Photography Exhibits in the Region:

Informal Moments: Portraits from Photography's First Decade, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Now through March 2025.

<https://philamuseum.org/calendar/exhibition/informal-moments-photography>

This installation brings together a group of early photographic portraits with Edouard Baldus's celebrated scene, *Group at the Château de la Faloise* (1857) as the centerpiece. Early photographers often worked outdoors by necessity, giving up the controlled atmosphere of a studio for abundant sunlight outside. This led them to improvise portrait poses and settings, gradually contributing to changed conventions and subtly influencing developments across the visual arts.

Baldus's informal group portrait, widely recognized as a proto-Impressionist outdoor scene, will be shown with portraits by other artists including Julia Margaret Cameron, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, Jean-Baptiste Frénet, and Charles Nègre, all of which demonstrate the exciting modernity of early photography.

Staged: Studio Photographs from the Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Opens February 2025.

<https://press.philamuseum.org/upcoming-exhibitions-through-fall-2025/>

This exhibition will explore ways that photographers have used their studios to create moving, dynamic, and daring photographs since the medium's earliest years. Drawn primarily from the PMA's permanent collection, *Staged* will feature studio portraits ranging from the austere to the fantastical, as well as commercial and editorial photography, still lifes, and images of scientific experimentation. Highlights include works by Berenice Abbott, Samuel Fosso, Irving Penn, Rachel Stern, and many more.

The '70s Lens: Reimagining Documentary Photography, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Now through April 6, 2025.

<https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2024/70s-lens-documentary-photography.html>

The 1970s was a decade of uncertainty in the United States. Americans witnessed soaring inflation, energy crises, and the Watergate scandal, as well as protests about pressing issues such as the Vietnam War, women's rights, gay liberation, and the environment. The country's profound upheaval formed the backdrop for a revolution in documentary photography. Activism and a growing awareness and acceptance of diversity opened the field to underrepresented voices. At the same time, artistic experimentation fueled the reimagining of what documentary photographs could look like.

Featuring some 100 works by more than 80 artists, *The '70s Lens* examines how photographers reinvented documentary practice during this radical shift in American life. Mikki Ferrill and Frank Espada used the camera to create complex portraits of their communities. Tseng Kwong Chi and Susan Hiller demonstrated photography's role in the development of performance and conceptual art. With pictures of suburban sprawl, artists like Lewis Baltz and Joe Deal challenged popular ideas of nature as pristine. And Michael Jang and Joanne Leonard made interior views that examine the social landscape of domestic spaces.

The questions these artists explored—about photography's ethics, truth, and power—continue to be considered today.

The New Art: American Photography, 1839–1910, Metropolitan Museum of Art, April 11 – July 20, 2025.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/the-new-art-american-photography-1839-1910>

This exhibition presents a bold new history of American photography from the medium's birth in 1839 to the first decade of the 20th century. Major works by lauded artists such as Josiah Johnson Hawes, John Moran, Carleton Watkins, and Alice Austen are shown in dialogue with extraordinary photographs by obscure or unknown practitioners made in small towns and cities from coast to coast. Featuring a range of formats, from daguerreotypes and cartes de visite to stereographs and cyanotypes, the show explores the dramatic change in the nation's sense of

itself that was driven by the immediate success of photography as a cultural, commercial, artistic, and psychological preoccupation. In 1835, even before the nearly simultaneous announcement of the invention of the new art in Paris and London, the American philosopher essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson noted with remarkable vision: “Our Age is Ocular.”

Weegee: Society of the Spectacle, International Center of Photography, NYC, January 23 – May 5, 2025.

<https://www.icp.org/exhibitions/weegee-society-of-the-spectacle>

The career of photographer Weegee (born Arthur Fellig, 1899-1968) is often divided into two distinct phases, one gritty, the other glamorous. Celebrated for his sensationalist images of crime scenes, fires, car crashes, and the onlookers who witnessed these harrowing events across New York City in the 1930s and ‘40s, Weegee also spent time in his career documenting the joyful crowds, premieres, and celebrities of Hollywood. His documentary images on both coasts gave way to experimental portraits late in his life, which were distorted using a kaleidoscope and other tricks from his technical toolbox. *Weegee: Society of the Spectacle* aims to reconcile these two sides of Weegee through an investigation of his focus, throughout his career, on a critique of 20th century popular culture and its insatiable appetite for spectacle.

To Conjure: New Archives in Recent Photography, Institute for Contemporary Photography, NYC, January 23 – May 5, 2025.

<https://www.icp.org/exhibitions/to-conjure-new-archives-in-recent-photography>

To Conjure: New Archives in Recent Photography brings together the work of seven artists primarily working in photography—Widline Cadet, Koyoltzintli, Tarrah Krajnak, Shala Miller, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Keisha Scarville, and Sasha Wortzel. The exhibition reimagines what an archive can be or might look like—more than just a means of recuperating the past, these artists utilize the archive as a form for imagining new futures.

Moving away from the centrality of the institutional archive, the artists in *To Conjure* expand its parameters by engaging with materials—clothing, instruments, the landscape and more—beyond photographs and documents alone. By working with a myriad of contemporary materials, these artists create new histories and material sensibilities.