

# HSPV 6210 Heritage and Social Justice

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Offered in collaboration with Tuskegee University  
Kwesi Daniels and Taurean Merriweather

Spring 2023, Tuesday 5:15-8:15pm (Eastern)

Meyerson B2 and Zoom

“To accept one’s past – one’s history – is not the same thing as drowning in it;  
it is learning how to use it.”

(James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time)

## COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course explores connections between heritage, historic preservation (and related design, planning and artistic practices), and the pursuit of social justice. The central propositions of the course are: (first) that heritage (and its conservation and design) and social justice (and its applications to many professional and practical domains) are both reparative practices; and (second) exploring connections between these two realms is a worthwhile and even urgent pursuit.

Engaging with scholarship, advocacy and organizing work, research on specific places, and contemporary design practices, we’ll frame several overarching questions: How can historic preservation and other design and humanities professionals contribute to more equitable and just societies? How can our professional work be organized to result in greater equity, access, and social justice? How can heritage conservation and other design fields be deployed as means of repair to address longstanding and widespread injustices?

The course foregrounds three particular aspects of social justice that relate clearly to built environments and design professions – racial, environmental, and public health – and will embrace the intersectionality of these and other arenas of social justice. Course activities will focus first on conceptual, theoretical, and historical work (how we think about built heritage and social change; how we conceptualize social justice), then explore practical examples of advancing social outcomes through preservation and design (how social justice concerns reorganize projects, practices, and organizations).

After a few weeks of setting the intellectual contexts, the class will explore a few places in depth through several lens of social justice – West Philadelphia; Lowndes County, AL; the small East African country of Rwanda. Each of these places will be studied over a two-week segment of the course. More generally, we will encourage debate about cases from the US and abroad.

Our explorations will draw on work by: designers; historians; public intellectuals; geographers, anthropologists and other social scientists; heritage organizations; artists; entrepreneurs; and more. All these kinds of actors – and more – constitute communities-of-practice centering on each of the main concepts of the course. Specific subjects we study will include traditional preservation, historical scholarship, creative placemaking, public art, memorialization, organizing, reparative practices, and managerial-social innovation.

As the course is organized as a graduate seminar, students will have significant agency in finalizing topics, selecting readings, and will take some responsibility for framing and sustaining conversations about class readings and cases. The syllabus details below are starting points for that work. Students’ final projects will be individually designed (in consultation with faculty) as explorations of some specific ways that social justice concerns are (reshaping heritage and design/conservation practice and how they could (or should) reshape our fields in the future. The projects can take any number of forms – research paper, design project, exhibition, creative nonfiction, etc.).

Over the semester, we will work with colleagues at Tuskegee University – professor and chair of architecture Dr. Kwesi Daniels, visiting professor Taurean Merriweather, and others – to organize regular joint discussions and workshops as part of our class schedule (working virtually, across our respective semester schedules, and across our varied graduate and undergraduate curricula).

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes for the semester include:

- Understanding of social justice concepts;
- Understanding heritage as a complex, dynamic phenomenon with social, environmental, and design dimensions;
- Developing an understanding of how social-justice issues relate to matters of heritage, historic preservation, and other design practices;
- Researching and articulating positions on contemporary debates about social justice – emphasizing their connection, expression, and agency with regard to the built environment;
- Articulate and advocate for social justice as a core concern of design professions and practices
- Practicing collaborative dialogue and having difficult conversations around local issues where heritage and social justice dynamics are at work;
- Engaging with social justice concepts and practices of repair through the lens of your own experience, in contexts most familiar to you; and
- Developing individual positions on the issues raised by the course, including the future of one's profession, as prompted by social justice debates.

## CLASS STRUCTURE

The format of this course is something of an experiment. We aim to take advantage of a Tuskegee (Taylor)-Penn (Weitzman) partnership that stretches back to 2019 to foster a deeper and more meaningful discussion of the connections between heritage and social justice. Here is our idea for overcoming the challenges of two university schedules, a variety of student curricula, varied graduate and undergraduate learning outcomes, geographic distance between Philadelphia and Tuskegee, and an hour's difference in time zone: In each class session, we will block out a 60- to 75-minute block of time to join both schools via Zoom for discussions, presentations, or other exercises.

A typical class session for Penn students will be organized something like this:

- 5:15-6:00: OPENER FOR PENN STUDENTS: short introduction by faculty, followed by discussion among Penn students in Meyerson B2;
- 6:00-7:15: JOINT TUSKEGEE-PENN WORK: presentations/discussion/workshop on Zoom including both Penn and Tuskegee students (and other guests)
- 7:15-7:30: *break*
- 7:30-8:15: PENN STUDENT DISCUSSIONS: short presentations/discussions on readings, among those in Meyerson B2, led by Penn student discussion leaders (assigned for each week)

We will undoubtedly learn how to do this better as the semester proceeds, so be prepared for some experimentation! (And of course, your ideas on how to choreograph this kind of joint course are very welcome.)

## CALENDAR AND READINGS

Readings will be available through Canvas, through links provided below, or some means otherwise noted.

### Week 1, January 17

Conceptions of heritage and social justice. Mapping the issues and opportunities in the space between “heritage” and “social justice” communities-of-practice. Defining design justice. Positioning heritage as a human right and a tool for justice-seeking

Joint session: brief talk by [Justin Garrett Moore](#) (Program Officer, Humanities In Place program, Mellon Foundation).

For Penn-only last hour of discussion, read (over break/in class):

- The Constitution of the United States (including the Amendments; available at <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (digital and translated versions available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>)

### Week 2, January 24

Surveying a number of issues, projects, and positions on social justice and heritage.

Joint session: Individual faculty talks of 30-40 minutes: Kwesi Daniels and Randy Mason.

For Penn-only last hour of discussion, sample the background reading on two related topics:

Some readings related to the historic preservation field/profession: Recent surveys/reports on preservation’s relevance to social issues

- “Are Americans Falling Out of Love with Their Landmarks?” <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/07/04/are-americans-falling-out-of-love-with-their-landmarks-227258/>
- Mason, Randall and Kaitlyn Levesque. Preservation and Change: Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Historic Preservation Field (<https://www.design.upenn.edu/work/preservation-and-change-survey>)
- Bonnie McDonald: Relevancy Project: <https://www.landmarks.org/resources/preservation-news/introducing-the-relevancy-project/>

Some recent scholarship on preservation and social justice:

- Avrami, Erica, ed. Preservation and Social Inclusion. Columbia Books on Architecture, 2020; intro and some chapters you select) (<https://www.arch.columbia.edu/books/reader/503-preservation-and-social-inclusion>)
- Roberts, Andrea. “When Does it become Social Justice? Thoughts on Intersectional Preservation Practice” NTHP Forum, 2017 (<https://forum.savingplaces.org/blogs/special-contributor/2017/07/20/when-does-it-become-social-justice-thoughts-on-intersectional-preservation-practice>)
- Page, Max. Why Preservation Matters. Yale University Press, 2016. (available as an ebook through Franklin)

### Week 3, January 31

Reading and debating: Racial justice and heritage

Joint session: Individual faculty talk of 30-40 minutes: Brent Leggs.

For Penn-only last hour of discussion, read the first two pieces, sample the EJI reports, and listen to the NPR interview with Stephenson.

Reading:

- Cep, Casey. "The Fight to Preserve African-American History." *New Yorker*, January 27, 2020. (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/02/03/the-fight-to-preserve-african-american-history>)
- Leggs, Brent. "Growth of Historic Sites: Teaching Public Historians to Advance Preservation Practice." *The Public Historian* (2018) 40 (3): 90–106. <https://online.ucpress.edu/tph/article-abstract/40/3/90/90974/Growth-of-Historic-SitesTeaching-Public-Historians?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- Equal Justice Initiative. *EJI Reports*. <https://eji.org/reports/> (The Transatlantic Slave Trade; Slavery in America; Reconstruction in America; Lynching in America; Segregation in America)
- Brian Stephenson Fresh Air interview: <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/20/796234496/just-mercy-attorney-asks-u-s-to-reckon-with-its-racist-past-and-present>

### Week 4, February 7

No class meeting due to Weitzman's studio travel week.

Assignment:

- Watch the documentary film *Descendant* (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81586731>);
- Skim (read parts in detail) the book *Barracoon* by Zora Neale Hurston (HarperCollins, 2020; suggested purchase); and
- Write a two-page reaction paper about the issues raised, the media of documentary film-making and oral history, and the takeaways for yourself and for general audiences.

### Week 5, February 14

Reading and debating: Environmental justice and heritage, including heirs land issues and toxic waste

Joint session: Penn students outline issues from readings – all students encouraged to bring examples from personal experience or research that illuminate the issues of environmental justice and heritage.

For Penn-only last hour of discussion – continue discussion and debate:

Reading:

- Taylor, Dorceta, *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection*. (Duke University Press, 2016; available as an ebook through Franklin)
- Bullard, Robert. "Race and Environmental Justice in the United States," *Yale Journal of International Law* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 319-336– and <https://drrobertbullard.com/>
- Jed Purdy, *This Land Is Our Land: The Struggle for a New Commonwealth*. (Princeton University Press, 2019; available as an ebook through Franklin)
- Thomas W. Mitchell, "From Reconstruction to Deconstruction: Undermining Black Ownership, Political Independence, and Community Through Partition Sales of Tenancy in Common Property." *Northwestern University Law Review*, Vol. 95, p. 505, 2001. ([https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1544380](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1544380))

**Week 6, February 21** [RM traveling in Columbus, IN; class conducted by Zoom]

Reading and debating: Public health justice and heritage

Joint session: Penn students outline issues from readings – all students encouraged to bring examples from personal experience or research that illuminate the issues of public health justice and heritage.

For Penn-only last hour of discussion – continue discussion and debate:

Reading:

- Fullilove, Mindy. Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, And What We Can Do About It (New Village Press, 2016; available as an ebook through Franklin).
- Finney, Carolyn. Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors. (University of North Carolina Press, 2014; available as an ebook through Franklin)
- Outdoor Afro website (<https://outdoorafro.org/>)
- National Register of Historic Places. “U.S. Public Health Service Syphilis Study, Macon County, AL, 1932-1973”

**Week 7, February 28**

Repair and reparation: the larger societal discussion about responding to acknowledgements of historic injustice. What does reparation look like in the design, preservation, heritage fields?

Joint session: [potential guest speakers – still in the works]. Discuss and debate the issues of reparations related to heritage, using the following readings as reference points.

For Penn-only last hour of discussion – continue discussion and debate:

Reading:

- Coates, Ta-Nehisi, “The Case for Reparations” The Atlantic, June 2014.
- Smith, Clint. “Monuments to the Unthinkable” The Atlantic, December 2022.
- Franke, Katherine. Repair: Redeeming the Promise of Abolition. (Haymarket Books, 2019).
- Griffin, Farah Jasmine. “What Justice Looks Like.” Boston Review special issue on Repair, 47/1, 2022.

**[Penn and Tuskegee spring break is the week of March 6-10 – no class meeting this week]**

**[The schedule and topics for the next six sessions are a little flexible, in terms of schedule and topics, owing to the availability of guests. We also have the opportunity to think as a group about some additional topics, if that’s the will of the group. We’ll solidify our plans and discuss our strategy over the first few weeks of the course. Here is the plan as it stands:]**

**Weeks 8-9, March 14 & 21**

Place exploration: West Philadelphia

Themes: Displacement and gentrification in Penn's history; Gosnell Clinic; MOVE

Guest: Chris Rogers, Robeson House/Friends of Tanner House

Optional field walk between March 14 and 21 (timing TBD); we are also planning a joint discussion/workshop with Prof. Daniela Fabricius and her Penn Architecture seminar on Reparations

Readings:

- Wilder, Craig Steven. Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities. (Bloomsbury, 2013).
- Wolf-Powers, Laura. University City: History, Race, and Community in the Era of the Innovation District. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022).
- Mike Africa Jr. Fifty Years Ona Move: The History of the Philadelphia Based MOVE Organization. (MAJIC, LLC, 2020).
- [for reference] Puckett, John and Mark Frazer Lloyd. Becoming Penn: The Pragmatic American University, 1950-2000. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015; available as an ebook through Franklin).

### **Weeks 10-11, March 28 & April 4**

Place exploration: Lowndes County, AL, and the Alabama Black Belt

Themes: enslavement economy; civil rights activism; generational poverty; rural development & public health  
 Guests: Hasan Jeffries and/or Catherine Flowers

Readings:

- Flowers, Catherine. Waste: One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret. (The New Press, 2020).
- Jeffries, Hasan Kwame. Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt. (NYU Press, 2010; available as an ebook through Franklin).

### **Weeks 12, April 11**

Memorials

The fate of confederate and colonial memorials has been a consuming issue of the last few years, in the U.S. and globally. Brent Leggs will lead discussion around several examples, including Stone Mountain, GA.

Readings:

- Upton, Dell. What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South. (Yale University Press, 2015; available as an ebook through Franklin).
- View the Atlanta History Center's documentary film, Monument: The Untold Story of Stone Mountain
- [additional reading will be added to address international perspectives on memorial issues]

### **Weeks 13, April 18**

Rwanda and genocide memory

Themes: genocidal trauma; trust and reconciliation processes; heritage and post-colonial societies  
 Guests: Jean-Damascene Gasanabo, former director or research, Rwandan CNLG; Freddy Mutanguha, Executive Director, Aegis Trust

Readings:

- Longman, Timothy. Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda. (Cambridge University Press, 2017; available as an ebook through Franklin).
- Mukasonga, Scholastique. Cockroaches. (trans. Jordan Stump; Archipelago Books, 2016). [excerpt]
- Mason, Randall. , "Carrying Weight: Rwandan Genocide Memorials," Platform (May-June, 2020). (<https://www.platformspace.net/home/carrying-weight-rwandan-genocide-memorials>; <https://www.platformspace.net/home/carrying-weight-rwandan-genocide-memorials-part-2>)
- Mason, Randall. "Valuing Traumatic Heritage Places as Archives and Agents" in Erica Avrami, Susan Macdonald, Randall Mason, David Myers, eds. Values in Heritage Management: Emerging

Approaches and Research Directions. (J. Paul Getty Trust/Getty Conservation Institute, 2019; [https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications\\_resources/books/values\\_heritage\\_management.html](https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/books/values_heritage_management.html)).

- o Gourevitch, Philip. "After the Genocide." The New Yorker (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1995/12/18/after-the-genocide>) and "Remembering in Rwanda." The New Yorker (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/21/remembering-in-rwanda>)

## **Week 14, April 25**

Final student presentations of individual projects. Students will be asked to pre-record short videos, which we'll all watch before class, then use them as a basis for discussion and feedback. There will be one additional week to address feedback in the final projects. More details on the process to come.

## **ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING**

### **[1] Two brief position papers on classes 2-7**

Short essays (2-3 pages) for two of the class sessions. You have the choice of which weeks/topics you write about – but these two papers must not be about Week 4 (which is the basis for Assignment 2, below) or about the week when you co-lead the class session (the basis for Assignment 3). The two papers together will account for 15% of total grade.

### **[2] Reaction paper on Descendant / Barracoön**

After watching Descendant and reading at least parts of Barracoön, write a short paper (2-3 pages) paper about the issues raised, the media of documentary film-making and oral history, and the takeaways for yourself and for general audiences. The paper will account for 15% of total grade.

### **[3] Co-leading a class session**

Prepare an introduction and co-lead one of the class discussion sessions – in weeks 2, 3, 5-13. Create a very brief text or slide deck to share at beginning of the session to prompt and focus discussion. Each student will sign up for one session (given class numbers there will be at two students contributing to each session, and they are expected to collaborate and complement one another's work). All are encouraged to research beyond the syllabus' suggested readings to seek additional perspectives and insights on the topic. Your work for the session you sign up for will account for 30% of total grade.

### **[4] Final project**

Conceive and complete a long-form creative/analytical project on some issue connecting heritage and social justice. These projects can take many forms (combining visual, textual, and other modes of work), but we suggest you include in your research at least one interview with a figure central to your chosen topic (an activist, academic, funder, public official, etc.). Ideally, when combined at the end of the term, these projects can be presented as a semester-end collective digital exhibition/publication on course themes. A one-page proposal for your semester-end project is due by Week 9. The final project is due May 3 (one week after your in-class presentations summarizing the project on April 25/Week 14). The project will account for 30% of total grade.

### **[5] Participation and engagement in class**

You are expected to attend all class sessions, participate in exercises and discussions to the greatest extent possible, and generally be intellectually present and engaged. 10% of total grade.

### **Overall grading rubric for the course:**

Assignment 1	15% (7.5% for each paper)
Assignment 2	15%
Assignment 3	30%
Assignment 4	30%
Assignment 5	10%
Total	100%

Final letter grades will be figured on the basis of these assignments. General guidelines for grades are as follows: A+ Exceptional; A Outstanding; A- Excellent; B+ Very good; B Good; B- Competent; C+ Fair; C Acceptable; C- Marginal; F Failure.

## **ACADEMIC CULTURE**

Academic integrity is the foundation of the University's culture of learning and research. Everyone, at all times, is expected to abide by the principles set out in the [University's Code of Academic Integrity](#). Students with questions or concerns about plagiarism or any other issues regarding academic integrity or the classroom environment are welcome to approach the professor in confidence. ChatGPS and other AI tools may only be used in the course by permission of the instructor, and only if it meets a legitimate research purpose.

Use of digital devices and wireless internet access during class time must be confined to course-related activities. Uses unrelated to the course can be distracting to others. This will be monitored and managed throughout the semester (and could result in dismissal from a class session).

Wearing masks in class is at the discretion of each individual. If public health conditions change, however, professors may require students to wear masks.

### **Academic and Support Resources**

Our Commitment to Diversity, as stated on the School's [webpage](#): "The University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design is committed to creating an educational setting in which all students, faculty members, and staff members are valued. We strive to create an inclusive culture that celebrates difference and is strengthened by contributions from people of all races, religions, countries of origin, genders, ages, sexual orientations, physical abilities, learning differences, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We aspire to support and retain a student body, faculty and staff who are representative of the multiple communities and publics with which we collaborate and work. A diverse community here enhances our ability to prepare the next generation of artists, architects, landscape architects, planners, and preservationists to become leaders and innovators in a multicultural society."

We want to ensure that everyone has the resources they want or need in order to participate fully in this course. Students who are differently abled are welcome let me know if you need special accommodations in the curriculum, activities, instruction or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. All conversations will be kept confidential.

The University provides a number of resources to support improvement of your writing, studying and learning skills. I encourage you to take advantage of them. The following University-wide points of contact may be helpful: The [Marks Family Writing Center](#) provides individual help with writing. The [Weingarten Learning Resources Center](#) provides support and guidance on a range of academic work issues, including time management and organizational skills. [Communication within the Curriculum](#) offers guidance on speaking and making effective presentations. [Weigle Information Commons in Van Pelt Library](#) is a clearing house to these and other sources of support. And [Career Services](#) offers assistance on a number of issues related to academic work – as well as post-academic job searching and career advice. As always, the School of Design's Student Services office, and [the University's Wellness resources](#), are ready to help with any issues that arise in or outside the classroom. Please don't hesitate to take advantage of these folks' ability and eagerness to support you. In this and every other course in the School, you are welcome to make an individual appointment to talk to your instructor. Please email us directly, at any time, to arrange an appointment or have a conversation.