

**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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Spring 2023

Fisher-Bennett Hall 201

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 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. When possible, we will try to view these images in their archival context (e.g., museums, galleries, libraries). Finally, 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 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 to Canvas (in the Discussions section) by 6pm the night before each class. Feel free to build upon others' postings. Students can skip two weeks of discussion questions (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 in-person attendance in class will also result in a reduction in this portion of the grade.
- (2) *Seminar Presentation*: Each student will give a ~30-minute presentation at the start of one weekly meeting. Your presentation should offer a close reading of 1-2 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. Presentation represents 10% of the course grade.
- (3) *Photo Essay: Due Mar 1 (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 1 (Noon)*.
In this thesis-driven research paper, consider a collection of photographs we have not discussed in-depth during class. Students are encouraged, but not required, to select a collection found in a local repository (e.g., Architectural Archives, Athenaeum of Philadelphia, City Archives, Temple University Special Collections Research Center, Library Company of Philadelphia, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 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 of the selected images—when produced, and as it may have changed over time. *Alternative topics are possible, but interested students should speak with the instructor early about such proposals.*

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 [Franklin](#)). Be sure to caption and source all images, and reference each image at least once within the text.

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

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 15, 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 15, 8:30am**)

(5) *Final Presentation*: For the final class session (**April 26**), each student will give a ~10-minute presentation on their research paper. 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

- 25% Seminar attendance and participation, including weekly discussion questions
- 10% Seminar presentation (30 minutes)
- 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 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.

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), <https://academic.oup.com/book/31961/>. Available as an e-book through Franklin.

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. Please also do not renew the book for more than your initial one-hour loan so that others will have a chance to use it.

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 instructors 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.

COVID-19: <https://coronavirus.upenn.edu/>

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

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

Disabilities: [Student Disabilities Services](#)

FGLI: [First-Generation, Low-Income Program](#)

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

Health: [Student Health Service](#)

Interpersonal Violence: [Penn Violence Prevention](#)

Mental Health: [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)

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

Racial Justice: [Vice President for Social Equity and Community](#)

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.	1/18	Introduction	
Part I: Celebrating Growth and Great Structures			
2.	1/25	The City as Early Photographic Subject	
3.	2/1	Aerial Perspectives	
4.	2/8	The City Grows Skyward and Uptown	
Part II: Investigating Social Life and Advocating Reform			
5.	2/15	Social Documentary of the Poor <i>Guest: Kimberly Noronha, PhD Candidate, CPLN</i>	<i>Preliminary Topic</i>
6.	2/22	New Deal Landscapes	
7.	3/1	Public Housing and Urban Renewal	<i>Photo Essay</i>
	3/8	Spring Break – No Class	
	3/10	Optional: Visit to NYC photography exhibits Opening of MCNY’s <i>New York Now: Home—A Photography Triennial</i>	
Part III: Visualizing & Critiquing the Postwar City & Suburb			
8.	3/15	Postwar Street Photography and Social Life <i>Guest: Jennifer Whittaker, PolicyLab, CHOP</i>	<i>Full Proposal</i>
9.	3/22	Art in the Everyday Landscape <i>Visit to Kislak Center</i>	
10.	3/29	Time for Independent Research – No Class	
11.	4/5	Critiques of Development	
Part IV: Change Over Time through Destruction and Preservation			
12.	4/12	Picturing Decline	
13.	4/19	Preserving the City <i>Visit to Architectural Archives</i>	
14.	4/26	Student Presentations	<i>Presentation Slides</i>
	5/1		<i>Final Paper</i>

Detailed Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1 (1/18): 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 consider Camilo José Vergara's COVID-19 urban photographic projects. Students should ideally read the following background texts before our first class meeting. Students are also welcome to review the three online photograph exhibits in advance, although we will devote time to viewing and discussing them together during class time.

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>.

Image Collections for In-Class Viewing and Discussion:

- Camilo José Vergara with Chrysanthe Broikos, "Documenting Crossroads: The Coronavirus in Poor, Minority Communities," National Building Museum, March-April 2020, <https://www.nbm.org/exhibition/documenting-crossroads/>.
- Camilo José Vergara with Elihu Rubin, "Documenting Crossroads: The New Normal," National Building Museum, June 2020, <https://www.nbm.org/exhibition/the-new-normal/>.
- Camilo José Vergara with Elihu Rubin, "Documenting Crossroads: Survival and Remembrance Under the Pandemic," National Building Museum, December 2020, <https://www.nbm.org/exhibition/survival-and-remembrance/>.

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 (1/25): 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.

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, [Franklin](#))

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.

Optional:

Catherine E. Clark, "Imagination and Evidence: Visual History at Paris's Municipal Historical Institutions," in *Paris and the Cliché of History: The City and Photographs, 1860-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 14-49. E-book available via [Franklin](#).

WEEK 3 (2/1): 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](#))

Optional:

Eadweard Muybridge and Mark Klett, *One City/Two Visions: San Francisco Panoramas, 1878 and 1990* (San Francisco: Bedford Arts, Publishers, 1990). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library – Includes a fold-out panorama of both the Muybridge and Klett photographs)

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.

Optional:

Thomas J. Campanella, “Cities from the Sky: An Aerial Portrait of America,” public lecture, MIT, November 8, 2001,
<https://techtv.mit.edu/videos/8f3d3ce987074818a2123fc04e8485e5/>.

WEEK 4 (2/8): 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 [Franklin](#).

Paperback available for purchase on [Amazon](#) for \$22.95.

*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 [Franklin](#).

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 (2/15): 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. PhD candidate Kimberly Noronha will turn the tables on the outsiders' gaze onto low-income, informal communities through a discussion of her doctoral research in progress in India and Ghana.

Guest: Kimberly Noronha, PhD Candidate, City & Regional Planning

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 [\\$0.99](#). 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 (2/22): 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 through HathiTrust via [Franklin](#).

[Amazon](#) sells a paperback version for \$15.69.

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 [Franklin](#).

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 (3/1): 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))

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](#). (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 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_35jcl_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>.

Optional:

Luis Ferre-Sadurni, “The Rise and Fall of New York Public Housing: An Oral History,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/nyregion/new-york-city-public-housing-history.html>.

Themis Chronopoulos, “Robert Moses and the Visual Dimension of Physical Disorder: Efforts to Demonstrate Urban Blight in the Age of Slum Clearance,” *Journal of*

Planning History 13:3 (August 2014): 207-233,
<http://jph.sagepub.com/content/13/3/207.abstract>.

Mike Christenson, "The Photographic Construction of Urban Renewal in Fargo, North Dakota." *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 23, no. 2 (2017): 116–128, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/645658>.

*Samuel Zipp, "Remaking the Ethic of City Rebuilding," in *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 73-113.

*John Tagg, "God's Sanitary Law: Slum Clearance and Photography in Late Nineteenth-Century Leeds," in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 117-152.

SPRING BREAK – No Regular Class

3/10: Visit to NYC Photography Exhibits (OPTIONAL, Friday of Spring Break)

Subject to student interest and availability, we will consider an optional class trip to attend the opening of the Museum of the City of New York's *New York Now: Home—A Photography Triennial* exhibit. MCNY is located at 5th Avenue, between E 103rd and E 104th Streets, in East Harlem. On Fridays, the museum is open 10am-5pm.

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 (3/15): 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. These images of the social side of postwar life raise questions of art versus documentary and truth versus irony.

Guest: Jennifer Whittaker (PolicyLab, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia)

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.

Jenny Whittaker, *Our Rural Pennsylvania*, 2022, <https://www.ourruralpa.com/>.

Optional:

Robert Frank, *The Americans* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959). (Originally published as: *Les Américains* (Paris: R. Delpire, 1958)) (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

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* (1977), 27-48.

C. Wang and M.A. Burris, "Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment," *Health Education & Behavior* 24, no. 3 (June 1997): 369-387, <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/doi/epdf/10.1177/109019819702400309>.

Optional:

Nicholas Dawidoff, "The Man Who Saw America," *New York Times*, July 2, 2015, <https://nyti.ms/1IQHygv>.

Available on *The Daily* podcast, June 28, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/2BM46s6>.

WEEK 9 (3/22): 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:

Edward Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* ([Los Angeles]: 1966). (As only accessible as a Fine Arts Rare Book, please wait to view the book during class)

See also a playful, multi-year digital version of this project: *12 Sunsets*:

<https://12sunsets.getty.edu/>.

*Robert Adams, *Denver: A Photographic Survey of the Metropolitan Area* (Denver: Colorado Associated University Press, 1977). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Optional:

**New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (Rochester, NY: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

To Be Viewed via Special Collections during Class:

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.
*Tod Papageorge, "What We Bought," in Robert Adams, *Robert Adams: The Place We Live: A Retrospective Selection of Photographs, 1964-2009*, vol. III (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

Optional:

*Virginia Heckert, "Revisiting Some Los Angeles Apartments," in *Ed Ruscha and Some Los Angeles Apartments* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2013), 6-32.

WEEK 10 (3/29): No Class – Work on Independent Research

WEEK 11 (4/5): 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>.

Optional:

John Ganis, "Consuming the American Landscape," based upon 2003 book, <https://johnganisphotography.com/galleries/consuming-the-american-landscape/>.

Manufactured Landscapes, dir. Jennifer Baichwal (Mercury Films, 2007).
87-minute video available for streaming via [Franklin](#).

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 12 (4/12): 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>.

This website looks to be defunct due to reliance on Adobe Flash. But, if you can somehow access it on some browser, it's worth a quick look. Canvas also contains screenshots of some archived pages from the website.

Optional:

David G. Spielman, *Katrinaville Chronicles: Images and Observations from a New Orleans Photographer* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press 2007). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

Camilo José Vergara, *American Ruins* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

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-books available via [Franklin](#) and [Franklin](#).

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 [Franklin](#).

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.

*Nick Yablon, "'Plagued by Their Own Inventions': Reframing the Technological Ruins of San Francisco, 1906-1909," in *Untimely Ruins: An Archaeology of American Urban Modernity, 1819-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 191-242.

William M. Taylor, "Composing Catastrophe: Robert Polidori's Photographs in 'After the Flood' and Comparative Visual Records of Post-Katrina New Orleans," *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* 16 (Spring 2011): 31-51, http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_16/pdfs/taylor.pdf.

Optional:

*Arnold Genthe, "Earthquake and Fire," in *As I Remember*, 87-97.

Eric S. Jenkins, "Seeing Katrina: Perspectives of Judgment in a Cultural/Natural Disaster," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 14:2 (Spring 2007): 90-107, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15551390701555969>.

- Robert A. Beauregard, "Images of Renewal and Decline," *Invincible Cities Home Page*.
<http://invinciblecities.camden.rutgers.edu/papers/RobertBeauregard.pdf>.
- *John Patrick Leary, "Detroitism," *Guernica Magazine*, January 2011.
- Wes Aelbrecht, "Decline and Renaissance: Photographing Detroit in the 1940s and 1980s," *Journal of Urban History* (Online before Print, January 8, 2015),
<http://juh.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/01/05/0096144214563500?papetoc>
 (requires Penn login).
- Rebecca Solnit, "Detroit Arcadia: Exploring the Post-American Landscape," *Harper's Magazine*, July 2007, 65-73, <http://harpers.org/archive/2007/07/0081594>.
- Miles Orvell, "Picturing Climate Change: 'It's the Apocalypse,'" 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/267695288>.

WEEK 13 (4/19): 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. We will also visit the spring exhibit at Architectural Archives which uses photography to (re)discover and remember the life and work of Philadelphia area architect Minerva Parker Nichols.

Class Visit to **Architectural Archives** to view the exhibit *What Minerva Built*.

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>.

For background for the exhibit visit, review the website: Molly Lester, *Preserving Minerva*, <https://www.minervaparkernichols.com/>.

Optional:

C. Ian Stevenson, "Proving Preservation: Boston Subway Construction Photography, 1894–1897," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 17-31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/futuante.10.2.0017>.

Richard Cahan, *They All Fall Down: Richard Nickel's Struggle to Save America's Architecture* (Washington, DC: Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994). (On Reserve, Fine Arts Library)

WEEK 14 (4/26): Student Presentations

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

FINAL PAPER DUE
Monday, May 1, by 9am

Related Area Photography Exhibits, Spring 2023 (please share others!)

Unstill Waters: Contemporary Photography from India, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian, Washington, DC, Dec 10, 2022 – June 11, 2023, <https://www.si.edu/exhibitions/unstill-waters-contemporary-photography-india:event-exhib-6644>.

Unstill Waters: Contemporary Photography from India foregrounds landscapes of India, real and reimagined, as powerful means of examining environmental and social issues concerning us all. Through still and moving image, seriality, and portraiture, five leading contemporary artists explore rapidly changing natural and built environments in India, from riverbanks, ancient forests, and city streets to surreal symbolic settings.

Ravi Agarwal and Atul Bhalla convey the profound importance of water in human life, highlighting enduring social and cultural connections to the sacred yet endangered Yamuna River. Gigi Scaria and Ketaki Sheth produce dynamic and disorienting portrayals of life in New Delhi and Mumbai. Sheba Chhachhi composes a provocative self-portrait that evokes a profound relationship to place as well as to her own focus on the representation of women in visual culture. Dynamic and varied in scale, format, and content, *Unstill Waters* also celebrates the spectacular recent gift of Sunanda and Umesh Gaur, which significantly expands the museum's holdings of South Asian photography.

This Is Britain: Photographs from the 1970s and 1980s, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Jan 29 – June 11, 2023, <https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2023/this-is-britain-photos.html>.

Profound changes in British society in the 1970s and 1980s inspired a revolution in British photography. *This Is Britain* highlights the socially conscious photographers who captured this moment in time, among them Vanley Burke, Pogus Caesar, Anna Fox, Paul Graham, Sunil Gupta, Chris Killip, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, and Martin Parr. The exhibition features some 45 newly acquired prints in the National Gallery of Art's collection. It brings together works by photographers who explored the national identity as Britain grappled with deindustrialization, uprisings in inner cities, the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the controversial policies of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The exhibition also includes *Handsworth Songs* (1986), a 59-minute film on the uprisings that rocked London and Birmingham in 1985. It was produced by the Black Audio Film Collective and directed by John Akomfrah.

Projects: Ming Smith, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, Feb 4 – May 29, 2023, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5514>.

For Ming Smith, photography is where the senses and the spirit collide through the prism of light, a process she has compared to “getting that precise moment...getting the feeling...like the blues.”

Projects: Ming Smith offers a critical reintroduction to a photographer who has been living and working in New York since the 1970s. She has inspired a generation of artists engaging the politics and poetics of the photographic image in relation to experiences of Blackness. Through her use of long exposures, Smith dissolves the boundaries between her subjects and their surroundings, creating dreamlike, abstract images led by intuition and honed through repetition.

The result of the curators' deep dive into Smith's archive, Projects: Ming Smith bridges the distance between the present and the past, opening a photographic portal through which to encounter her images anew. The exhibition highlights how Smith's images collapse the senses, encouraging us to attend to the hue of sound, the rhythm of form, and the texture of vision. As critic A. D. Coleman has written, Smith "sees and thinks in the minor key."

Berenice Abbott's New York Album, 1929, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, Mar 2 – Sept 4, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2023/berenice-abbott>.

In January 1929, after eight years in Europe, the American photographer Berenice Abbott (1898–1991) boarded an ocean liner to New York City for what was meant to be a short visit. Upon arrival, she found the city transformed and ripe with photographic potential. "When I saw New York again, and stood in the dirty slush, I felt that here was the thing I had been wanting to do all my life," she recalled. With a handheld camera, Abbott traversed the city, photographing its skyscrapers, bridges, elevated trains, and neighborhood street life. She pasted these "tiny photographic notes" into a standard black-page album, arranging them by subject and locale.

Consisting of 266 small black-and-white prints arranged on thirty-two pages, Abbott's New York album marks a key turning point in her career—from her portrait work in Paris to the urban documentation that culminated in her federally funded project, Changing New York (1935–39). Berenice Abbott's New York Album, 1929 presents a selection of unbound pages from this unique album, shedding new light on the creative process of one of the great photographic artists of the twentieth century. For context, the exhibition also features views of Paris by Eugène Atget (French, 1857–1957), whose extensive photographic archive Abbott purchased and publicized; views of New York City by her contemporaries Walker Evans, Paul Grotz, and Margaret Bourke-White; and photographs from Changing New York.

New York Now: Home—A Photography Triennial, Museum of the City of New York, New York, NY, Mar 10, 2023 –, <https://www.mcny.org/exhibition/new-york-now>.

The Museum of the City of New York is pleased to announce the first in an ongoing series of triennial photography exhibitions that will engage themes and issues of the contemporary city. The first installment will examine the idea of "Home." At its most practical, "Home" refers to the literal places we dwell. Yet it can also stand for family, or the communities of which we choose to be a part. This vital and complex concept arises in often surprising ways in our urban context, from highly personal experiences to debates over public policy. This exhibition aims to look at how artists have responded to and interpreted these issues.

In recent years, the city has struggled to reckon not only with the ongoing dynamics of economic and racial inequality but also with massive challenges unleashed by the COVID-19 crisis. This exhibition seeks photography and video work made over the past six years that creatively documents and interprets this changing cityscape and the disparate responses and experiences of New Yorkers, straddling the stories of the city before, during, and after the pandemic.

The selected work will encompass a variety of perspectives—as diverse as the city itself—and consider a range of picture making approaches. From the personal and intimate to the monumental and collective, the photographs in this exhibition will invite viewers to see the city they thought they knew through fresh perspectives.

Judith Joy Ross, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, Apr 24 – Aug 6, 2023,
<https://philamuseum.org/calendar/exhibition/judith-joy-ross>.

The work of Judith Joy Ross marks a watershed in the lineage of the photographic portrait. Her pictures—unpretentious, quietly penetrating, startling in their transparency—consistently achieve the capacity to glimpse the past, present, and perhaps even the future of the individuals who stand before her lens. Since the early 1980s, Ross has used a large-format, 8x10-inch view camera as a tool to capture the distilled essence of her brief encounters with a cross-section of the American people, with a focus on those in eastern Pennsylvania, where she was born and raised.

For Ross, whose stated purpose is “to notice what is going on with other people and to record it,” this has required a spontaneous and radical reformulation of the relationship between the photographer and the photographed. When successful, these encounters yield pictures that enable an acute emotional and psychological connection that resists sentimentality, upends prejudice, and traverses boundaries of time, place, and circumstance.

Featuring approximately 200 photographs, this exhibition charts Ross’s work through all her major projects as well as smaller series and individual images that have never been seen before. Together, these bodies of work explore what it means to be a citizen and a human being, forming a profound portrait of our age. The Philadelphia Museum of Art will be the only US venue for the exhibition, following its European tour in Madrid, Paris, and the Hague.