(DIS)PLACED URBAN HISTORIES
Spring 2016

Fridays 2-4:45pm

IDSEM-UG 1826/NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Location: 1 Washington Place, Rm. 501

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Course Web Site: wp.nyu.edu/displacedurbanhistories

DESCRIPTION
According to the vacation rental site, Airbnb, Brooklyn’s “ultra-trendy” Williamsburg neighborhood is “New York City’s top spot for looking awesome” and can be credited with being one of the borough’s “first neighborhoods to create collector’s items out of defunct warehouses.” Until recently, such descriptions were assumed to be about the northern section of Williamsburg, where boutiques and chic restaurants, galleries, lofts, and artisanal markets abound. Now, as the New York Post notes, the formerly “scruffy” and “barren” South Williamsburg is also “growing up” as LEED-certified luxury construction and trendy restaurants materialize there as well. This language of encroaching gentrification, though relatively new to both North and South Williamsburg, has a longer history, having been applied to Manhattan’s Greenwich Village, East Village, and Soho neighborhoods decades before. Yet while twenty-somethings pour into South Williamsburg, many question their role in displacing long-term residents, small businesses, and local traditions with a homogenizing “hipster” culture. This course invites students to become historical activists whose objective is to learn who and what is being displaced by gentrification and what the historical processes are that have aided this change. Students will conduct archival and secondary research; produce collaborative oral histories with neighborhood residents and business owners; and meet with activists who are working to stem the tide of gentrification. The course will culminate in an on-line archive and a physical exhibit to be co-produced with neighborhood residents and displayed at El Museo de Los Sures in South Williamsburg.

Our goals for this course are to:

❖ Learn how to produce a strong, historical, evidence-based narrative by conducting both secondary research and primary document collection (i.e. oral histories)
❖ Gain analytical and historical authority in contributing to the discourse around “gentrification.”
❖ Work collaboratively and effectively to mount a history-based, museum-quality exhibition.
**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Readings are downloadable in PDF form from the course web site or in paper form in class.

**YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND GRADING**

1) **Class Participation:** Attendance, thoughtful reading, and active participation in class discussions are essential components of the seminar format. Please come to class prepared to contribute fully to discussions. You may find it especially helpful to take notes as you read and come to class with a few points and/or questions you would like to address. (15%)

2) **Journal (5x):** At five points during the semester you will be given an assigned task – fieldwork, transcription, reflection, etc. – that will take the form of a journal entry. Each entry should be 2-3pp long (except the transcript, which likely will be longer.) The journal will be graded as a whole, not per entry. (25%)

3) **Analytical, Research-Based On-Line Exhibit:** Using a web-based platform, you will demonstrate your ability to synthesize primary and secondary sources into a coherent and compelling analytical argument through an on-line exhibit. Your primary sources will consist of the oral history you conducted, any material culture you collected from your subject, and neighborhood fieldwork. Secondary research should make use of at least two of the texts read in class and at least two texts drawn from your own, independent research. (30%)

4) **Exhibit:** The final project for this course is a collaborative effort to assemble and mount a museum-quality exhibit built upon the oral histories and material you have collected about Los Sures and the ways in which gentrification has changed the neighborhood. (30%)

Generally, I will be grading you on how well you are able to articulate and synthesize the ideas shared in class, in your readings, and in our projects. I will also be watching for your ability to meet the goals I have outlined above. You may want to keep a few other pointers in mind to ensure that you meet the expectations of this course:

- **Do not turn in work late.** If you anticipate needing extra time for an assignment, you must contact me in advance with a good reason. If you do turn in late work without contacting me first, it not only must be accompanied by an appropriate, documented explanation, but you should expect your grade to reflect the tardiness of the assignment.

- **Be organized.** While it will be tempting to slack on some of the assignments during slow weeks, you will surely suffer during weeks when we have heavier reading and assignments due. Try to keep to the syllabus and work ahead if you are able.

- **Don't be late for class.** It’s distracting and it will have a negative impact on your grade. (Tardiness will result in a ½ absence.)
- **Don’t miss class.** More than 2 unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade for the course.
- **Respect the time and energy of our collaborators at Los Sures.** We are being given a very special opportunity to work with residents of South Williamsburg and learn together. Please give them the respect they deserve by **being on-time** for meetings and workshops, listening with compassion, and being a responsible collaborator.

**A Note on Incompletes**
Incompletes will not be granted unless you approach me with a serious, well-documented excuse (i.e. doctor’s note and the like.) If I do agree to a grade of incomplete, you will be expected to complete all of the necessary work by the date that I set.

**A Note on Academic Integrity**
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website for a full description of the academic integrity policy.
[http://gallatin.nyu.edu/gateways/faculty/plagiarism.html](http://gallatin.nyu.edu/gateways/faculty/plagiarism.html)

**A Note on Religious Holidays**
Students who anticipate being absent because of any religious observance should notify me in advance so we can make arrangements for any work that may be missed. This is in accordance with University Policy. Please let me know if you have any questions.

**A Note on Syllabus Changes**
You should consider the schedule below a work in progress. While I expect to keep to the assignments as listed, I may make changes from time to time to reflect the workload and timetable necessary to complete our final exhibit. However, I will notify you well in advance of any changes.

**Class Schedule**

**January 29: Introduction**
- **Watch in Class:** *South Park*, Season 17, Episode 3, “The City Part of Town”

**February 5: Theorizing Gentrification**
Peter Marcuse, “Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement: The Linkages in New York City,” pp. 333-347
(All in Lees, Loretta, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, The Gentrification Reader. Routledge, 2010.)

February 12: Gentrification Workshop at Los Sures – MEET AT 145 S. 3rd Street, Brooklyn


DW Gibson, Interview with Toussaint Wortham (Chapter 15) from The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification in the 21st Century (2015)

JOURNAL #1 DUE Monday, 2/15

February 19: The Gentrifier, Part I

➢ READ: Suleiman Osman, The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York, “Introduction” and “Inventing Brownstone Brooklyn” (pp. 3-16, 189-232)

February 26: The Gentrifier, Part 2


March 4: The Gentrifier, Part 3

➢ READ: Miriam Greenberg, Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World, Ch. 8, “New York City as a Symbol of Neoliberalism” and “Epilogue” (pp. 227-260)

Julian Brash, Bloomberg’s New York: Class and Governance in the Luxury City, Ch. 4 (pp. 100-129)

JOURNAL #2 DUE Monday, 3/7

March 11: Oral History Workshop at Los Sures, – MEET AT 145 S. 3rd Street, Brooklyn
➢ **READ:** TBD

**March 18:** NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

**March 25: Williamsburg, Past**


Juan Gonzalez, “Puerto Ricans: Citizens Yet Foreigners” (Ch. 4) and “Dominicans: From Duarte to the George Washington Bridge” (Ch. 7) from *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (2011 edition)

**JOURNAL #3 DUE Monday, 3/28**

**April 1: Williamsburg, Present**

➢ **READ:** Nicole Marwell, *Bargaining for Brooklyn: Community Organizations in the Entrepreneurial City*, Ch. 1, 2, pp. 1-94

Winifred Curran, “‘From the Frying Pan to the Oven’: Gentrification and the Experience of Industrial Displacement in Williamsburg, Brooklyn” (2007)

**April 8: The Politics of “Neighborhood History”**


➢ **REVIEW:** Buscada, The Soho Memory Project, MORUS

**April 15: ON-LINE EXHIBIT DUE**

**JOURNAL #4 DUE Monday, 4/18**

**April 22: Meet at El Museo de Los Sures, 120 S. 1st Street, Brooklyn**

➢ **BRING:** Your transcripts and whatever you would like to display in the final exhibit.

**April 29: Designing the Exhibit**

➢ **READ:** Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, Ch. 1, 6, pp. 1-22; 203-230

**May 6: Install exhibit/Opening Night**

**JOURNAL #5 DUE Monday, 5/9**