(DIS)PLACED URBAN HISTORIES
Spring 2017

Fridays 3:30-6:10pm

IDSEM-UG 1826/NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Location: 1 Washington Place, Rm. 601

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Course Web Site: http://wp.nyu.edu/melrose_spring_2017/

DESCRIPTION
Neighborhood change comes in many varieties. Mid-twentieth century urban renewal in U.S. cities brought bulldozers and tower-in-the-park housing developments to dozens of poor neighborhoods considered ripe for revision. Early-twenty-first century gentrification, meanwhile, has brought high-end commerce and affluence to areas once occupied by low-income and working class communities. In the Melrose section of the South Bronx, a series of changes have influenced the streetscapes and lives of residents. Rampant arson in the 1970s and 1980s destroyed acres of the neighborhood, for example, while migrants from Puerto Rico and immigrants from the Dominican Republic, West Africa, and Bangladesh, among others, settled in the remaining homes of Melrose to build new lives in a new city. Most recently, federal dollars have been earmarked for Melrose’s reconstruction and redevelopment. This course, offered in partnership with the Bronx-based community empowerment organization WHEDco, invites students to become activist historians whose objective is to learn what histories are at risk of being silenced or displaced as the South Bronx changes. 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 protect the interests of the current community of Melrose. The course will culminate in an on-line archive and a physical, history-based exhibit to be co-produced with neighborhood residents and displayed in a publicly accessible, outdoor park. Readings may include Jonathan Mahler’s Ladies and Gentlemen the Bronx is Burning and Jill Jonnes’s South Bronx Rising.

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 discourses around gentrification and urban planning policy.
❖ Work collaboratively and effectively to mount a history-based, public exhibit on both physical and digital platforms.
Embrace the opportunity to learn from people’s lived experience of displacement, rather than relying solely on theory and observation from afar.

**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 public exhibit built upon the oral histories and material you have collected about Melrose and the ways in which the neighborhood has changed over time. (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 WHEDco.** We are being given a very special opportunity to work with residents of Melrose 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]

**A Note on Personal Integrity**
Courses built on a model of community-engaged pedagogy and research, like this one, involve more stakeholders than just the professor (me) and students (you.) We will be working with real people whose real lives are shaped by the pressures of displacement due to gentrification, planning, migration and immigration, and other forces. While I, of course, expect you to present yourselves respectfully and with integrity, and honor the experiences and integrity of our collaborators in Melrose, I hope that you will have high standards for yourselves in this context as well.

**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 27: Introduction

➢ **WATCH IN CLASS:** The Fire Next Door, CBS Reports (First aired March 22, 1977)

   Transcript available here: http://billmoyers.com/content/the-fire-next-door/

February 3: Theorizing Place and Displacement


   Jeff Malpas, “Chapter 8: Place, Past and Person,” in Malpas, Jeff, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, 1999.


February 10: Narrating the South Bronx -- Workshop at WHEDco – MEET AT 50 E. 168th Street, Bronx


   “Interactive: Presidential Visits to The Bronx Throughout History” from DNA Info, May 27, 2015.

JOURNAL #1 DUE Monday, 2/13

February 17: Resisting the Narrative


**BEGIN CITI TRAINING**

**February 24: Planning for the South Bronx: Urban Renewal**


- **EXPLORE:** *The Urban Reviewer*, [http://www.urbanreviewer.org/](http://www.urbanreviewer.org/)

**March 3: Community Activism and Oral History – Workshop at Bronx Documentary Center, MEET AT 614 Courtlandt Avenue – Special Guest, Sady Sullivan, Oral History Consultant**

- **READ:** “Oral History Packet,” downloadable from our course web site

**JOURNAL #2 DUE Monday, 3/6**

**March 10: Digital Humanities Training – Special Guest: Zach Coble, Digital Scholarship Specialist, NYU Libraries**

- **REVIEW:** Omeka sites listed on our class web site for today’s class.

**CITI Training DUE BY TODAY**

**March 17: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK**

**March 24: Planning for the South Bronx: Melrose Urban Renewal Area, Melrose Commons, and Bronx Commons**

- **READ:** Tom Angotti, “Chapter 4: From Protest to Community Plan,” in *New York For Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate*, 2008

A selection of newspaper articles and posts about Bronx Commons.

**JOURNAL #3 DUE Monday, 3/27**

**March 31: Under Pressure: Development and Gentrification**


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

  A selection of articles from blogs, newspapers, and periodicals about real estate in the South Bronx.

**April 7: The Politics of Documenting Neighborhood Change**


  Cathy Stanton, "Hardball History: On the Edge of Politics, Advocacy, and Activism" in NCPH, History@Work, March 25, 2015

**April 14: ON-LINE EXHIBIT DUE**

**JOURNAL #4 DUE Monday, 4/17**

**April 21: Finalizing Materials -- MEET AT WHEDco, 50 E. 168th Street, Bronx**

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

**April 28: Designing the Exhibit**

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

**May 5: Install exhibit/Opening Night**

**JOURNAL #5 DUE Monday, 5/8**