

Arch 440m - Literature and the Urban Experience

Syllabus – 11 January 2016 (REV 8 APRIL 2016)

USC School of Architecture
Spring 2016
MW 10:00-11:50AM, HAR 102

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Los Angeles skyline



Owens River Valley basin

COURSE INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATION

What is Los Angeles? This has been a key question for a city that both exhilarates and confounds. Commonly derided as a landscape without history, Los Angeles is (as all cities are) part of a trajectory where past and future collapse into the present. How can we make sense of a place so defined by tropes and clichés? One way is to examine what these visions say about the city as it exists today.

In this class, literature will be the lens through which we come to know Los Angeles. This is an exciting time to be in L.A., given the development of public transportation and pedestrian corridors, as well as L.A.'s sense of itself as a more connected, coherent city - less a loose collection of communities than a true metropolis. This is not a new idea; it goes back to the Los Angeles of 100 years ago. How did L.A., then, lose and regain sight of itself? What is the meaning of its circular evolution?

To get at some answers, we will use *Writing Los Angeles: A Literary Anthology*, a collection of writings from Southern California that spans 100 years. Here, many of the city's signature texts and authors (Joan Didion, Wanda Coleman, Raymond Chandler, Walter Mosley) address the city from differing viewpoints. We will read these texts with a kind of double vision, looking at them both with respect to what they meant in their own time and what they mean now. In addition, we will apply a historiographer's perspective to talk about which texts have survived and which haven't, and what this means for us vis-à-vis the city's legibility.

We will also read *Sidewalking: Coming to Terms with Los Angeles*, a companion of sorts to *Writing Los Angeles* that makes a critical argument about the city L.A. seems primed to become. In the middle ground between the stories and the streets of the city, we will discover something not just about this landscape, but also about its soul.

Finally, we will read Nina Revoyr's novel *The Age of Dreaming*, watch some seminal films that take place in Los Angeles, and feature a number of guests who will widen our conversation to encompass many of the hidden corners, geographical and otherwise, of Los Angeles.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Writing is a significant component of the course. You will be asked to write brief weekly response papers to the assigned readings, as well as to work on a final paper for the class. For the midterm, you will be required to turn in an introduction and outline for this paper, and to work with instructors and in class with your classmates to discuss and develop your idea. In addition, class participation is absolutely essential, and will be a big part of your involvement in the class.

In the past, students have had difficulty completing their papers on time, and have asked for an Incomplete (IN). University policy is to grant an IN only when there is a serious medical situation or family emergency. The School of Architecture vigorously requires all faculty to enforce this policy. An IN will therefore not be issued unless it is arranged with us well in advance of the last day of class.

On reserve in the Architecture library are 35 pages from McMahan, Day and Funk's *Literature and the Writing Process*. This material includes guidelines on how to locate and correct common errors in writing. We strongly recommend that you consult this text before you turn in any written work. You may also (and are strongly encouraged to) go to the USC Writing Center for consultation(s) on your paper before you hand it in.

COURSE GRADING

Weekly Response Papers (15, out of 17 total assigned)	45%
Introduction and Outline	15%
Final Paper	30%
Class Participation	10%

DIVERSITY

This course meets university diversity requirements; as such it addresses the ways race, gender, ethnicity, and class have been the basis for conflict as well as oppression, and the social and cultural consequences of this oppression. It will also consider the ways in which race, gender, and class have represented social and cultural resources in Los Angeles and other cities, and how people have attempted to confront oppression through transformations to the built environment.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that original work executed by a single individual will be submitted (unless otherwise allowed by an instructor), and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to us as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30AM - 5:00PM, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Required Books:

- Cain, James M. *Mildred Pierce*. (New York: Vintage, 2011)
- Didion, Joan. *Play It As It Lays*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 2nd edition, 2005)
- Revoyr, Nina. *The Age of Dreaming*. (Akashic Books, 2008)
- Ulin, David. *Sidewalking: Coming to Terms With Los Angeles*. (University of California Press, 2015)
- Ulin, David, ed. *Writing Los Angeles: A Literary Anthology*. (Library of America, 2002)



Joan Didion, photographed 1972 in Australia for *E!e*

Films, Videos, Plays for Research and Reference:

- Amores Perros*. Dir. Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, 2000.

Barton Fink. Dir. Joel Coen, 1991.
Beyond the Valley of the Dolls. Dir. Russ Meyer, 1970.
Body Double. Dir. Brian De Palma, 1984.
Chinatown. Dir. Roman Polanski, 1974.
Collateral. Dir. Michael Mann, 2004.
Dogtown and Z-Boys. Dir. Stacy Peralta, 2001.
Double Indemnity. Dir. Billy Wilder, 1944.
Dragnet episode, "The LSD Story," 1967.
Five Summer Stories. Dir. Greg MacGillivray, 1972.
Gidget. Dir. Paul Wendkos, 1959. (Leo Carrillo State Beach)
Gone in 60 Seconds. Dir. H.B. Halicki, 1974.
Her. Dir. Spike Jonze, 2013.
Introduction to Feedback. Dir. Charles and Ray Eames, 1960. (atmospheric feedback)
Los Angeles Plays Itself. Dir. Thom Andersen, 2003.
*Neverland: The Rise and Fall of the Symbionese Liberation Army, aka Guerrilla: The Taking of
Patty Hearst*. Dir. Robert Stone, 2004.
One Pair of Eyes: Reyner Banham Loves L.A. Dir. Julian Cooper, 1972.
Outer Limits episode, "The Duplicate Man," 1964.
Riot on the Sunset Strip. Dir. Arthur Dreifuss, 1967.
Safe. Dir. Todd Haynes, 1995.
Shampoo. Dir. Hal Ashby, 1975.
Short Cuts. Dir. Robert Altman, 1993. (Griffith Park)
The Day of the Locust. Dir. John Schlesinger, 1975.
The Endless Summer. Dir. Bruce Brown, 1966.
The Long Goodbye. Dir. Robert Altman, 1973.
The Trail of the Lonesome Pine. Dir. Henry Hathaway, 1936. The first feature film to be shot
outdoors in Technicolor. Shot in Big Bear, Chatsworth, San Bernardino National
Forest. California landscape stands in for that of the Appalachian Trail.
The Untouchables. Dir. Brian De Palma, 1987.
This American Life episode, "Lost Buildings," 2003. Ira Glass, Chris Ware, Tim Samuelson.
Twilight. Dir. Anna Deavere Smith, 1992.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 - Introduction to Los Angeles

Monday January 11

Introductory Discussion

FILM: *One Pair of Eyes: Reyner Banham Loves L.A.* (Dir. Julian Cooper, 1972). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIZONbC-YDo>

Wednesday January 13 (Reading Response #1)

David Ulin. Introduction to *Writing Los Angeles: A Literary Anthology*

Helen Hunt Jackson. "Echoes in the City of the Angels" (Ulin, 1-19).

David Ulin. *Sidewalking*, Chapter 1.

Week 2 - Nineteenth Century Southern California and the Traveler's Narrative

Monday January 18 (University Holiday: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

Wednesday January 20 (Reading Response #2)

H. L. Mencken. "Sister Aimée," Ulin, 63-66.

Edmund Wilson. "The City of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels," Ulin, 91-107.

David Ulin. *Sidewalking*, Chapter 2.

Week 3 - Spectacle and the View from the East Coast

Monday January 25 (Reading Response #3)

- Vachel Lindsay. "California and America," Ulin, 47-50.
- Louis Adamic. From *Laughing in the Jungle*, Ulin, 51-54.
- Stewart Edward White. From *The Rules of the Game*, Ulin, 26-39.

Wednesday January 27

- FIELD TRIP: Sidewalking - Bunker Hill and Downtown Los Angeles
- Aldous Huxley. "Los Angeles. A Rhapsody," Ulin, 55-62.
- James M. Cain. "Paradise," Ulin, 108-130.

Friday January 30: Last Day to register and add classes or drop without W

Week 4 - Insiders and Outsiders

Monday February 1

- David Ulin. *Sidewalking*, Chapter 3.
- Film: *Falling Down*

Wednesday February 3 (Reading Response #4)

- Raymond Chandler. "Red Wind," Ulin, 170-217.

Week 5 - 1939

Monday February 8 (Reading Response #5)

- William Deverell. *Whitewashed Adobe*, Chapter 5.
- Guest: William Deverell.

Wednesday February 10 (Reading Response #6)

- John Fante. From *Ask the Dust*, Ulin, 218-224.
- Nathanael West. From *The Day of the Locust*, Ulin, 225-230.

Week 6 - Class and Mobility in the Prewar City I

Monday February 15 (University Holiday: President's Day)

Wednesday February 17

- FILM: *Double Indemnity*. Screenplay Raymond Chandler and Billy Wilder.

Week 7 - Class and Mobility in the Prewar City II, Water and Power

Monday February 22

- James M. Cain. *Mildred Pierce*, p. 1-150

Wednesday February 24 (Reading Response #7)

- James M. Cain. *Mildred Pierce*, p. 151-298

Week 8 - Noir in Text and Film

Monday February 29

- FILM: *Chinatown*. Dir. Roman Polanski, 1974. Screenplay Robert Towne.

Wednesday March 2

- Raymond Chandler. "The Simple Art of Murder," 1950.
- Text found on Blackboard, or at:
<http://www.en.utexas.edu/amlit/amlitprivate/scans/chandlerart.html> .
- Robert Towne. *Preface and Postscript to Chinatown*, Ulin, 667-683.

Friday March 4

Last Day to drop or withdraw from class without a mark of W

Week 9 – The Hidden City

Monday March 7 (Reading Response #8)

Sam Sweet. *All Night Menu*. Text found on Blackboard.

Guest: Sam Sweet.

Wednesday March 9

Loris Lora, *Everything Eventually Connects*.

Guest: Loris Lora

Week 10 - March 13-20 - SPRING RECESS

Assigned Reading: Nina Revoyr. *The Age of Dreaming*.

Week 11 – Hollywood and other LA Formgivers

Monday March 21 (Reading Response #9)

Nina Revoyr. *The Age of Dreaming*.

Wednesday March 23

Chester Himes. From *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (Ulin 293-298).

Carlos Bulosan. From *America Is in the Heart* (Ulin 299-305).

Carey McWilliams. From *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land and North from Mexico: Blood on the Pavements* (Ulin 306-335).

Friday March 25, 5PM

Abstract due via email.

Week 12 - "High" Culture and "Low" in the Postwar City; Watts and the Rights to the City

Monday March 28 (Reading Response #11)

Thomas Pynchon, "A Journey Into The Mind of Watts," originally published in 1966 in the *New York Times*.

Wanda Coleman, "Angel Baby Blues" (Ulin, 687-689).

Wanda Coleman, "The Riot Inside Me" (posted on Blackboard). For audio of WC reading it, go to <http://blogs.kcrw.com/whichwayla/2012/04/wanda-coleman-reads-the-riot-inside-me-soon-ja-after-the-rampage> .

Wanda Coleman, "Jah in Packaging" (posted on Blackboard).

For David Ulin's remembrance of WC in LAT:

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/nov/23/entertainment/la-et-jc-remembering-wanda-coleman-20131123>

Guests: Lynell George and Marisela Norte.

Wednesday March 30 (Reading Response #10 – REVISED DUE DATE)

Tom Wolfe, "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby" (Ulin, 438-464).

Jules Siegel, "Goodbye Surfing, Hello God!" (Ulin, 465-483).

Guest: Victor Jones.

Week 13- Environment and Artifice

Monday April 4 (Reading Response #12)

Jan Morris, "Los Angeles: The Know-How City" (Ulin, 596-613).

John Gregory Dunne, "Eureka!" (Ulin, 622-640).

Ulin, *Sidewalking*, Chapter 4

Wednesday April 6 (Reading Response #13)

Joan Didion. *Play It As It Lays*.

Week 14 - Autopia and Dystopia

Monday April 11 (Reading Response #14)

John McPhee, from "The Control of Nature" (Ulin, 750-765).

Lawrence Weschler, "L.A. Glows" (Ulin, 666-676).

Wednesday April 13

Reyner Banham, from Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies (Ulin, 535-557).

Cees Nooteboom, "Autopia" (Ulin, 570-581).

VIDEO - VIEW PRIOR TO CLASS: Rodney King video from South LA Riots (1991).

Introduction and outline due.

Friday April 8: Last Day to drop or withdraw from class with a mark of W

Week 15 - Didion

Monday April 18 (Reading Response #15)

Joan Didion, "Los Angeles Notebook," "The Getty," "Quiet Days in Malibu" and "Fire Season," (Ulin, 484-509).

Ulin, *Sidewalking*, Chapter 5.

Wednesday April 20 (Reading Response #16)

Ulin. *Sidewalking*, Chapter 6.

FIELD TRIP: Sidewalking - Miracle Mile.

Week 16 - From 1992 to the Contemporary City

Monday April 25 (Reading Response #17)

Mike Davis, from *City of Quartz* (Ulin, 766-777).

D.J. Waldie, from *Holy Land* (Ulin, 865-869).

Ulin, *Sidewalking*, Chapter 7.

Wednesday April 27

PLAY: Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight*.

Concluding Discussion.

FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, MAY 6, BY 12 NOON IN FRONT OFFICE, WATT HALL SECOND FLOOR, WITH DIGITAL MS WORD VERSION DUE AT SAME TIME VIA EMAIL TO DAVID ULIN.

OTHER IMPORTANT CALENDAR DATES

Friday, April 29	Last day of classes
Saturday-Tuesday, April 30- May 3	Study days
Wednesday-Wednesday, May 4-11	Final exams
Friday, May 13	Commencement