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 cliches? 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)

Films, Videos, Plays for Research and Reference:
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 - Introduction to Los Angeles
Monday January 11
Introductory Discussion

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)
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.
Wednesday January 27
   FIELD TRIP: Sidewalking - Bunker Hill and Downtown Los Angeles
Friday January 31: 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)

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.

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
Wednesday March 2
   Text found on Blackboard, or at:
http://www.en.utexas.edu/amlit/amlitprivate/scans/chandlerart.html
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)
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)
   Wanda Coleman, "Angel Baby Blues" (Ulin, 687-689).
   Wanda Coleman, "Jah in Packaging" (posted on Blackboard).
   Guests: Lynell George and Marisela Norte.

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