

Professor Rich Keiser	Fall 2000
Willis 417, x-4122	Office Hours

AMERICAN STUDIES 396

POLITICAL SCIENCE 367

American Studies 396 will explore the people, the environment, and the values associated with American suburbs, particularly in the post-WWII era. We will pose questions about the social, political, economic, psychological, gender, and racial implications of suburbia. We will consider why, given the ubiquitous criticisms of suburbia, so many Americans continue to strive to live there. Over the course of the term, we will analyze the evolving patterns of suburban life from a variety of perspectives: history, political science, literature, film, journalism, sociology, architecture, and material culture.

This course also has an explicit agenda of building formal research skills and is intended to be a preparatory course for the comprehensive exercise process in American Studies.

A seminar is a collaborative enterprise. In a seminar, students take important responsibility for producing stimulating discussions and presenting the results of their research and thinking. The success of the course (and whether it is a fun learning experience) will depend both on your willingness to complete the reading and viewing assignments on time and your eagerness to participate. Read actively, consider keeping a journal of your impressions, record ideas you aren't prepared to evaluate yet but want to think about further. To insure that you come to class having connected with the authors and ready to contribute your thoughts on the issues raised, one third of the class will be required to prepare a one page, double spaced set of talking points for most classes. This will be two or three paragraphs (not an outline) that develop two or three ideas from the readings and viewings that you think are interesting, irritating, worthy of further research, or represent a connection to previous topics. Bring one copy to class for yourself and send me one copy by e-mail by nine am of the class day.

Grading: Class participation (50%) will be the most crucial aspect of your grade in this 300-level seminar. If you are someone who does not typically feel comfortable speaking in class, then you should send me e-mails with your thoughts about the readings, preferably before they are discussed in class. We may have quizzes which will also provide an opportunity to measure preparedness for class and thoughtfulness about the material. Failure to attend class makes participation rather difficult. The prospectus (25%) will be graded and there is an expectation of improvement with each draft. Students are urged to meet with their advisors and with me to discuss the prospectus. A comprehensive final examination will comprise the remainder of the course grade (25%). Read ahead on the syllabus and plan accordingly for athletic events, holidays, and conflicts with other classes.

Office Hours will be announced during the first week of classes. My office is 417 Willis and my phone is 4122. I am glad to take calls at home but please do not call after 9 pm.

Exercise in Prospectus Writing

Sept. 12: S. Van Evera, "Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories: A User's Guide," and "What are Case Studies?"

Historical Development of Suburbia

Sept. 14: K. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, chs. 1-6.

For Class Discussion: The author is discussing changes that can accurately be called revolutionary. What are the agents (causes) of change? Is change the result of individual and democratic decisions (following Tocqueville or an economic invisible hand), cultural predispositions (rooted where?), governmental decisions, entrepreneurial profit-making activity, technological changes, or some other non-constant?

Sept. 17: Film "The City" 7 pm.

Sept. 19: Jackson, chs. 7-13; and "The Common Good: Public or Private." In R. Baxandall and E. Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (ch. 6); and "Postwar Housing Politics: The McCarthy Hearings on Housing." In R. Baxandall and E. Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (ch. 8).

For Class Discussion: Reconsider the questions of September 28. Are some of these causal variables independent while others are intervening and still others are antecedent? Specify! Would analysis be facilitated if we decided that there were multiple cases within what Jackson calls suburbanization (hence separate dependent variables, each with a separate explanatory story)? What two or three large sets of cases (or classifications) of suburbanization, that together encompass Jackson's entire portrayal, would you create? For example, instead of studying the topic of governance, one might choose to separate the study of governance in direct democracies, republics, and dictatorships thereby creating three cases or types. Remember, don't use the independent variables to define or delineate the cases to be explained (which is your dependent variable) -- that is tautological (i.e., don't suggest that there are certain suburbs created by technological advance and others created due to governmental policy unless technology and policy are not independent variables).

Sept. 21: Jackson, chs. 14-16;

J. Garreau, *Edge City*, Intro, chs. 1-2

S. Chawkins, "Homes Sprouting and Farms Dying" (latimes.com/news/state/reports/suburbs)

Do these two authors seem to agree or disagree about the nature of suburbia in the late 20th century? How does this/these suburbia portrayal(s) differ from the post-World War II portrayal?

Community/anomie, identity/conformity (note interdisciplinary approach)

Sept. 22: Avalon (Film showing at 4 pm).

Sept. 26: P. Roth, "Eli, the Fanatic," *Goodbye Columbus*

Sept. 28: "David Riesman" *Time*, Sept. 27, 1954;

W. McClay, *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America*, chs. 7-8;

L. Stevens, "Are Suburbs Harmful to Your Mental Health?" (nytsyn.com/live/Depression).

Reminder: All students are required to meet with the professor, in office hours (or at The Contented Cow), to discuss their comps prospectus prior to October 12.

Oct.3: R. Putnam, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics*

J. M. Smith, "Online but not antisocial" *New York Times* (February 18, 2000);

E. Allison and J. Brennan, "The Malling of America: Conflict between consumption and community..." (unpublished paper, June 1994)

"Mall of America packet."

Political Coalitions and Personal Affinities

Oct. 5: R. Cook, "Suburbia: Land of Varied Faces and A Growing Political Force," *Congressional Quarterly* (May 24, 1997).

S. Garland, "The 'Burbs Fight Back," *Business Week* (June 2, 1997).

"Platform for the Twenty-First Century: The Suburban Agenda." In G. Scott Thomas, *The United States of Suburbia* (ch. 6).

Oct. 10: J. Barron, "A Suit of High-Priced, High-Tech Armor..." *New York Times* (August 6, 2000).

J. Garreau, "Phoenix: Shadow Government," *Edge City* (ch. 6).

E. McKenzie, "From Garden City to Privatopia," *Privatopia* (ch. 1).

E. McKenzie, "Trouble in Privatopia," *The Progressive* (October 1993).

A. Stark, "America, the Gated?" *Wilson Quarterly* (Winter 1998).

P. Goldberger, "It Takes a Village: The anti-sprawl doctors make a manifesto," *The New Yorker* (March 27, 2000).

Suburbs were a refuge for the family from the dysfunctional city

Oct. 12: Bring 3 copies of your typed prospectus to class. You will break into groups of 3 and use the entire class time to give each other constructive feedback about your work.

Oct. 17: **Revised version of prospectus is due by 10 am in my office**, 417 Willis.

Also read the following 5 brief newspaper clips.

D. Kelley, "As Suburbs Change, They Still Satisfy," *Los Angeles Times* (latimes.com/news/state/reports/suburbs).

A. Jarrell, "The Face of Teenage Sex Grows Younger," *New York Times* (April 3, 2000).

L. Mundy, "Sex and Sensibility," *Washington Post* (July 16, 2000).

B. Harris, "A Wake-Up Call for a Suburban Refuge," *Los Angeles Times* (Feb. 7, 1999).

M. Graham, C. Bahls, and R. Giordano, "Unease outside city limits: Drugs and gangs flourish," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 28, 1998).

<Frontline Video>

Oct. 19: B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, chs. 1, 2, 10, 12.

Oct. 20: Film "The Positively true Adventures of the Texas Cheerleader Murdering Mom"

Oct. 24: I. Levin, *The Stepford Wives*.

Oct. 25: Film: American Beauty

Oct. 26: Class time will be devoted to individual sessions with students revising the comps prospectus. Begin reading the Keating book.

Oct. 31: Class time will be devoted to individual sessions with students revising the comps prospectus. Begin reading the Keating book.

Nov. 1: **Final graded version of comps prospectus due by 4 pm @ Willis 417 office.**

Race and Suburban Development

Nov. 2: W. D. Keating, *The Suburban Racial Dilemma*, chs. 1-10.

Nov. 7: Keating, chs. 11-13.

Nov. 9: S. Thernstrom and A. Thernstrom, "Cities and Suburbs," *America in Black and White* (ch. 8). New York: Touchstone, 1997.

"Old Towns, New Families." In R. Baxandall and E. Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (ch. 15).

"New Immigrants." In R. Baxandall and E. Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (ch. 17).

A. O'Connor, "Learning to Look Past Race," (latimes.com/news/state/reports/suburbs)

Nov. 14: D. Dent, "The New Black Suburbs," *New York Times Magazine* (June 14, 1992).

D. Gordon, "'White Flight' Taking Off in Chicago Suburbs," *Chicago Reporter* 26:8 (December 1997).

W. Glaberson, "Beach Club Settles Suit on Race Bias," *New York Times* (April 4, 1992).