

# Suburbia: People, Place, and Politics

## POLI 333

Fall 2015

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:00 to 9:50 a.m.  
Maybank Hall, Room 111

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Office hours: M: 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.;  
F: 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. & By appointment

### Course Description

The purpose of this course is to examine in some detail the most common residential setting in the United States: the suburb. As many scholars argue, to subsume suburbs under some presumed more interesting, important, and central “city” is problematic if suburbs represent the most prevalent form of American residence. Recognizing and building upon understandings of American cities, this course examines the history, contemporary life and politics of American metropolitan areas, focusing on suburbs but not losing sight of the broader metropolitan—and urban—context. Students in this course will review histories of US suburbs in order to understand not simply their origins but also the debates about the forces driving suburbanization in America. We will examine twentieth-century accounts of suburban life, taking into account differences by gender, race, and ethnicity. Finally, we will examine the politics of suburbs: from governance to contemporary culture and questions of environmental sustainability.

### Objectives

Students successfully completing *Suburbanization: People, Place, and Politics* will be able to do three things: (1) *outline* the historical development of suburbia in the United States and *explain* the role of government policy and American culture in this process; (2) connect the historical development of suburbs to contemporary conditions, illustrating both recurring patterns as well as points of divergence; and (3) articulate an informed argument about what the future of suburbia may look like.

## Course Philosophy

The most important outcome of this course is the learning that students achieve. The course is designed as an introduction to the theories of suburbanization for upper-level undergraduate students. The course is scaled to learning at two levels, and writing and discussion are the primary method by which students will communicate their learning within these levels. At its basic-level, the course introduces students to *foundational and factual knowledge* about suburbs (e.g., historical development). At a more advanced level, it asks students to *think conceptually* about the role suburbs have played in the American imagination, both as a utopian ideal and a problematic reality. The course challenges students to recognize how the suburbs have been shaped by the choices people make about where they live and work, but that suburbia itself has also shaped those choices. The course requires that students *comprehend* how the foundational knowledge and theoretical frameworks interrelate to form a useful body of knowledge.

## Course Texts

There are three required books for this course, and additional required readings are available on the course OAKS site, sorted by class session.

The following required books are available in the campus bookstore:

Teaford, Jon C. 2008. *The American Suburb: The Basics*. NY: Routledge.

Nicolaides, Becky M. and Andrew Wiese, eds. 2006. *The Suburb Reader*. NY: Routledge.

Waldie, D.J. 2005 [1996]. *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*. NY: W.W. Norton.

## Course Overview

**28, 31 August** – What is suburbia?

**2, 4 September** – Suburbia as Cultural Expression

**7, 9, 11 September** – The Role of Public Policy

**14, 16, 18 September** – The Role of Technology and Industry

**21 September** – Family

**\*\*\*NOTE: Extra Credit Opportunity: Special Lecture on Race and Urban Planning. 9/21 at 3:00 p.m. in Admissions Auditorium.**

**23 September** – Gender

**25 September** – Class

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: Short paper #1 is due in dropbox by midnight on 27 September (Sunday).**

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: *There is no class on 28 September (Monday).***

**30 September** – Race and the Construction of Suburbia

**2 October** – Special presentation by Dr. Steven Hoelscher

**5, 7, 9 October** – Diverse Suburbia

**12, 14, 16 October** – Cultural Richness or Bland Wasteland (?)

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: Field trip on 12 October from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.**

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: *There is no class on 19 October for Fall Break (Monday).***

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: Short paper #2 is due in dropbox by midnight on 21 October (Wednesday).**

**21, 23 October** – Job centers and retail/commercial use

**26, 28, 30 October** – Contemporary Politics of Suburbia

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: *Extra Credit Opportunity: Geography Lecture. 10/1 at 3:00 p.m. in Admissions Auditorium.***

**2, 4, 6 November** – Government 1

**9, 11, 13 November** – Government 2

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: *25 November – NO CLASS; Thanksgiving Break***

**16, 18, 20 November** – Environment and Sustainability

**30 November; 2, 4 December** – The Future of Suburbia

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: Field trip on 7 December from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.**

**\*\*\*\*\*NOTE: Short paper #3 is due in dropbox by midnight on 7 December (Monday, last day of classes).**

## Assignments & Evaluation

**Short Paper #1** – What do you understand to be the historical purpose of the American suburb? What roles have private and public policy played in the historical development of the suburbs? This question asks you to synthesize the opening readings and distill an argument about the purpose of suburbs. In this argument, it is expected that you will consider how the policies of private industry and government, morality, culture, and the human desire for meaning have shaped the suburb. Your answer should not be more than seven pages. Short paper #1 counts towards **20% of your grade**. You will be evaluated on organization, grammar, spelling, and presentation (e.g., appropriate margins, spacing, and fonts) in addition to appropriately and coherently addressing the assignment. See Rubric #1: “Evaluating short paper #1” for the specific guidelines that I will use to evaluate your work.

NOTE: Short paper #1 is due on **27 September** *on dropbox* by midnight. There are no exceptions. If you fail to turn in your short paper #1 on **27 September** *on dropbox*, you will lose 6 points (out of 100) for each day late.

**Short Paper #2** – Is suburbia diverse? If it is, explain whether or not this diversity is problematic and how it came about. If it’s not, explain why you think that’s the case. This question is asking you to build on your previous review of the history of suburbia, explaining whether or not you see contemporary suburbia as diverse and connected to past trends. You must argue whether you see fundamental connections between diversity as a suburban characteristic (or the lack thereof) and the history of suburbs—that is, how has history shaped the present, or hasn’t it? If you don’t see any connections, why do you think that’s the case? It is expected that you will also argue a position regarding whether or not diversity in suburbia is ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ Your answer should not be more than seven pages. Short paper #2 counts towards **20% of your grade**. See Rubric #2: “Evaluating short paper #2” for the specific guidelines that I will use to evaluate your work.

NOTE: Short paper #2 is due on **21 October** *on dropbox* by midnight. There are no exceptions. If you fail to turn in your short paper #2 on **21 October** *on dropbox* by midnight, you will lose 6 points (out of 100) for each day late.

**Short Paper #3** – Is there a future for the American suburb? What does it look like, if yes and why? If you think that there is no future for the suburb—in effect an argument that everyone will live and work in the city—what reasons do you offer for that

conclusion? This question is asking you to articulate an informed vision for the future of suburbia based in the literature we have read and your own interpretations and synthesis of that literature. Your answer should not be more than seven pages. Short paper #3 counts towards **20% of your grade**. See Rubric #3: “Evaluating short paper #3” for the specific guidelines that I will use to evaluate your work.

NOTE: Short paper #3 is due on **7 December on dropbox** by midnight. There are no exceptions. If you fail to turn in your short paper #3 on **7 December on dropbox** by midnight, you will lose 6 points (out of 100) for each day late.

**Concept / Media presentations and discussion** – To connect course material with the world beyond the classroom, another component of the course is finding and discussing news or other real-world items that illustrate concepts, ideas, or issues from the assigned reading. Each class session, one student will be asked to define a concept from the reading, find a media source that illustrates that concept, and explain the concept to the class and how the media piece illustrates it. You are required to submit a short, one paragraph definition of the concept and one paragraph explanation for how the media source illustrates the concept. This should be submitted to me via email (send to KeenanK@cofc.edu) by noon the day before your presentation. You are also required to generate two to three discussion questions based both on your media source and concept, but also on the other content assigned for that day. Include these discussion questions on page 2 of your emailed document. We will address your questions in class.

The concept / media presentations count towards **20% of your grade**. See Rubric #4: “Evaluating Concept and Media Presentations” for the specific guidelines that I will use to evaluate your work.

SPECIAL NOTE: Failure to conduct your presentation on the date scheduled will result in a zero for that presentation. No make-ups will be issued.

**In-class participation** – The in-class participation grade will be determined by your attendance at each class, your engagement during the class discussions, and your responses to questions and other students’ comments. Sleeping or putting one’s head down during the course will adversely affect the grade. Lateness—both at the beginning of the course and after the break—as well as early departures, will adversely affect the grade. The participation grade will also be determined by your willingness to speak up and share thoughts, questions, and concerns during the course. In class participation counts as **20% of your grade**. See Rubric #5: “Evaluating Students’ In-class participation” for the specific guidelines that I will use to evaluate your participation.

**Your final grade for the course will be calculated using the following undergraduate grade distribution (percentage of total score of all assignments).**

A+ = 97.5 – 100 %	B+ = 87.5 – 89.9	C+ = 77.5 – 79.9	F = 0.0 – 59.9
A = 92.5 – 97.4	B = 82.5 – 87.4	C = 70 – 77.4	
A- = 90 – 92.4	B- = 80 – 82.4	D = 60 – 69.9	

## General Policies and Procedures

- **Statement on Academic Integrity:** Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The F is permanent. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the *Student Handbook* at <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>.

- **Student Email:** Students are required to have a College of Charleston email account and to check it at least once per day. All notices regarding the course will be sent to the College of Charleston account.

- **Faculty Email:** The professor uses KeenanK@cofc.edu and will check it at least once per day during the week. Immediate responses via email should not be expected, but can generally be expected within a 24-hour period.
- **Cell phones and pagers** may be left on, but they must be turned to silent mode.
- **Texting in class** while lecture is in progress or while people are participating is rude. It also hinders your learning. Please do not do it.
- **Chatting online, or checking facebook** while lecture is in progress or while people are participating is rude. It also hinders your learning. Please do not do it.
- **Special needs or concerns:** Any students who have special learning needs or concerns are urged to speak with me during the first week of the semester if accommodations are needed. The Center for Disability Services provides a comprehensive list of accessibility resources available at the College on the following website: <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/>.
- **Mutual respect for differing questions and ideas:** The College is a place for open inquiry and exchange of ideas. All members of the College should treat all other members of the College and members of society with mutual respect and appreciation.

## Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

*All selections are presented in the order in which you should read them.*

*Readings from Nicolaidis and Wiese, The Suburb Reader indicated by “N&W.”*

### **Part 1: History and Meanings of Suburbia (Place)**

#### **28, 31 August – What is suburbia?**

- Friday: Teaford Preface, pgs. ix-xvi
- Monday: Teaford Chapter 1 “Creating Suburbia” pgs. 1 – 41.

## **2, 4 September – Suburbia as Cultural Expression**

- Wednesday: N&W ~ Essay 1-2 Fishman “Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia (1987)” pg. 33
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Document 1-1 Ralph Waldo Emerson Expresses A Romantic Vision of Nature, 1836 pg. 15
- Friday: N&W ~ Document 1-2 A Suburban Perspective on New York City, 1854 pg. 16
- Friday: N&W ~ Document 1-3 British Horticulturalist J.C. Loudon Lays the Foundation for a Suburban Ideal pg. 16
- Friday: N&W ~ Document 2-9 The American Home, Safeguard of American Liberties

## **7, 9, 11 September – History of Suburbia: The Role of Public Policy**

- Monday: Jackson, K. 1985. Chapter 11 “Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream: How Washington Changed the American Housing Market” In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York, Oxford University Press: 190-218. Available on OAKS.
- Monday: N&W ~ Document 8-6 White House Panel of Experts Depicts the Ideal Home, 1932
- Wednesday: Jackson, K. 1985. Chapter 12 “The Cost of Good Intentions: The Ghettoization of Public Housing in the U.S.” In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York, Oxford University Press: 190-218. Available on OAKS.
- Friday: O’Mara, Margaret Pugh. 2006. Uncovering the city in the suburb: cold war politics, scientific elites, and high-tech spaces. In *The New Suburban History*, Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 57-79. Available on OAKS.

## **14, 16, 18 September – History of Suburbia: The role of Technology and Industry**

- Monday: N&W ~ Essay 3-1 “The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery, 1815-1860” pg. 85
- Wednesday: Walker and Lewis “Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier: Industry and the Spread of North American Cities, 1850 – 1950” available on OAKS
- Friday: N&W ~ Document 7-5 “The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Sells Suburbia to Industrialists, 1927” pg. 203

## **21 September (Monday) – Family**

- N&W ~ Essay 3-2 “Moralism and the Model Home” pg. 92

- N&W ~ Document 2-2 Beecher and Beecher Stowe “A Christian House” pg. 50
- N&W ~ Document 2-4 “A Doctor Explains the Virtues of Suburbia for children, 1910” pg. 51
- N&W ~ Document 10-2 Whyte describes the “Organization Man” in Suburbia, pg. 295

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: Extra Credit Opportunity: Special Lecture on Race and Urban Planning. 9/21 at 3:00 p.m. in Admissions Auditorium.**

### **23 September (Wednesday) – Gender**

- N&W ~ Document 2-1 Beecher Outlines the Proper Role for Women pg. 47
- N&W ~ Essay 2-2 Marsh “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870 to 1910” pg. 63
- N&W ~ Document 1-5 Friedan “The Feminine Mystique” pg. 300
- N&W ~ Document 10-6 “The Trapped Suburban Mother” pg. 303

### **25 September (Friday) – Class**

- Jackson, K. 1985. Chapter 1 “Suburbs as Slums” In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York, Oxford University Press: 12 to 19. Available on OAKS.
- N&W ~ Essay 7-1 “My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965” pg. 210
- N&W ~ Document 6-4 Suburban Life Profiles Kenilworth, an Exclusive Suburb of Chicago, 1907 pg. 172
- N&W ~ Document 6-5 Sears, Roebuck and Co. Advertises Suburban Home Ownership, 1926 pg. 175

**NOTE: Short paper #1 is due in dropbox by midnight on 27 September.**

**NOTE: There is no class on 28 September (Monday).**

## **Part 2: Diversity and Exclusion in the Suburbs (People)**

### **30 September (Monday) – Race and the Construction of Suburbia**

- Essay 11-1 Lipsitz “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” pg. 341

- Document 11-7 Atlanta Housing Council Proposes “Negro Expansion Areas,” 1947 pg. 333
- Document 11-8 Whites React to Fears of Black Encroachment in West Atlanta, 1950s pg. 336
- Document 11-3 “The New York Times Reports on Racial Exclusion at Levittown, 1949” pg. 327
- N&W ~ Essay 7-2 Wiese “Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century” pg. 216

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: Extra Credit Opportunity: Geography Lecture. 10/1 at 3:00 p.m. in Admissions Auditorium.**

## **2 October (Friday)**

- Special presentation by Dr. Steven Hoelscher

## **5, 7, 9 October — Diverse Suburbia**

- Monday: Teaford, Chapter 2 “Diverse Suburbia”
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Document 14-3 A Report Documents Ethnic Diversity in Atlanta’s Suburbs, 1999 pg. 415
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Document 7-6 Mary Helen Ponce Recollects Life in a Mexican-American Suburb, 1993 pg. 203
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Essay 14-1 Fong “The first Suburban Chinatown: The Remaking of Monterey Park, California” pg. 427
- Friday: Gans Chapter 2 “The Levittowners – And Why They Came” pgs. 22-43. Available on Blackboard.

## **12, 14, 16 October – Cultural Richness or Bland Wasteland (?)**

- Monday: N&W ~ Document 14-5 Caldwell Links Teen Alienation to the Environment of New Suburbia, 1999 pg. 419
- Monday: N&W ~ Document 14-4 Donna Gaines Surveys Suburbia’s “Teenage Wasteland,” 1991, pg. 416
- Wednesday: Waldie *Holy Land* – Pages 1 to 90.
- Friday: Waldie *Holy Land* – Pages 91 to 185.

**12 October (Tuesday) – Field Trip from 10 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.**

**Note: There is no class on 19 October for fall break.**

**NOTE: Short paper #2 is due in dropbox by midnight on 21 October.**

### **Part 3: Contemporary Issues and the Future (Politics)**

#### **21, 23 October – Job centers and retail/commercial use**

- Monday: Teaford Chapter 3 “Commercial Suburbia” pgs. 87 – 122
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Essay 12-1 Muller “The Outer City” pgs. 362 – 67

#### **26, 28, 30 October – Contemporary Politics of Suburbia**

- Monday: N&W ~ Essay 12-1 “The Outer City: The Geographical Consequences of the Urbanization of the Suburbs.” Pg. 352
- Monday: N&W ~ Document 12-5 Jonathan Kozol Describes Inequality in Urban and Suburban Schools, 1991 pg. 358
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Essay 13-2 “Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right” pg. 397
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Essay 13-3 “Suburban Strategies: The Volatile Center in Postwar American Politics”
- Friday: Peck “Neoliberal Suburbanism” available on OAKS.

#### **2, 4, 6 November – Government Part 1**

- Monday: Teaford Chapter 4 “Governing Suburbia” pgs. 123 to 159
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Document 15-1 Davidoff and Gold attack “Exclusionary Zoning”
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Document 15-2 The New Jersey Supreme Court Rejects Exclusionary Zoning
- Friday: N&W ~ Essay 15-1 McKenzie “Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government” pg. 455
- Friday: N&W ~ Document 15-8 Blakely criticizes “Fortress America”

#### **9, 11, 13 November – Government Part 2**

- Monday: Teaford Chapter 5 “Housing Suburbia” pg. 159 to 186

- Wednesday and Friday: Teaford Chapter 6 “Planning Suburbia” pgs. 187 to 216

**16, 18, 20 November – Environment and Sustainability**

- Monday: N&W ~ Essay 9-2 Rome “The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism” pg. 281
- Monday: N&W ~ Document 16-3 Hayden “What is Sprawl?” pg. 477
- Monday: N&W ~ Document 16-4 Inner-Suburb Mayor Proposes “Sprawl Warning” pg. 477
- Wednesday: Williamson, Thad, David Imbroscio, and Gar Alperovitz. 2005. “The Challenge of Urban Sprawl” in *Cities and Society*. Malden, Blackwell.
- Wednesday: N&W ~ 16-10 Urban Scholar Robert Bruegman Critiques the “Antisprawl” Movement, 2000
- Friday: Walker and Fortman. 2003. “Whose landscape? A political ecology of the ‘exurban’ Sierra.” Available on OAKS.

**NOTE: No class on 23 (Monday), 25 (Wednesday) November.**

**30 November; 2, 4 December – Suburbs and the Future**

- Monday: Hayden Chapter 11 “The Importance of Older Suburbs.” Available on OAKS.
- Wednesday: N&W ~ Document 16-10 Bruegmann Critiques Antisprawl Movement
- Friday: N&W ~ Document 16-12 McGrath Offers a Coda for the Suburban Dream

**7 December (Monday) – Field Trip from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.**

**NOTE: Short paper #3 is due on 7 December by midnight on dropbox.**