

Suburbia: People, Place, and Politics

POLI 333

Fall 2017

Monday and Wednesday, 2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.
Maybank Hall, Room 111

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I have official hours M/W from 3:30 to 5 p.m. However, I am usually in my office most days; please email or phone me for an appointment. You are always welcome to drop by as well.

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. 1016. *The Suburb Reader, 2nd Edition*. NY: Routledge.

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

Course Overview

28 August – What is suburbia?

30 August – Suburbia as Cultural Expression

4 September – The Role of Public Policy

6 September – The Role of Technology and Industry

11 September – Family

13 September – Gender

18 September – Class

******NOTE: Short paper #1 is due in dropbox by midnight on 21 September.**

20 September – The Levittowners and Why They Came

25 September – Diverse Suburbia

27 September – Race and the Construction of Suburbia

******NOTE: Extra Credit Opportunity on 28 September (Thursday): Urban Studies Convocation, 3:00 p.m. in Stern Center Ballroom. Alondra Cano, City Councilor from Minneapolis, will offer the following lecture: "Social Movements in City Hall: How immigrants, Black Lives Matter, and water protectors are helping cities to rise and resist."**

2 October – Cultural Richness or Bland Wasteland (?) Part 1

4 October – Cultural Richness or Bland Wasteland (?) Part 2

9 October – Field Trip 1

11 October – Field Trip 2

******NOTE: 16 October – NO CLASS; Fall Break**

18 October – The Geography of Nowhere & Alienation

******NOTE: Short paper #2 is due in dropbox by midnight on 19 October.**

23 October – Job Centers and retail/commercial space

******NOTE: Extra Credit Opportunity on 24 October (Tuesday): Geography Lecture by Chris Jordan, 7:00 p.m. in Sottile Theater.**

25 October – Contemporary Inequality

30 October – Contemporary Politics of Suburbia

*******NOTE: No class on 1 November; Keenan at SCAPA Conference**

6 November – Suburbia and Capitalism

8 November – Government Part 1

13 November – Government Part 2

15 November – Government Part 3

20 November – Environment and Sustainability – Part 1

******NOTE: No class on 22 November; Thanksgiving Break**

27 November – Environment and Sustainability – Part 2

29 November – Suburbs and the Future

4 December – Coda; We are meeting in Education Center, Room 108.

******NOTE: Field trip on 8 December from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

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

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 **21 September** *on dropbox* by midnight. There are no exceptions. If you fail to turn in your short paper #1 on **21 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 **19 October** *on dropbox* by midnight. There are no exceptions. If you fail to turn in your short paper #2 on **19 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 suspected, 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 XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. 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 student eligible for and needing accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class or as soon as the student has been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be arranged.
- **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, 2nd Edition, are indicated by "N&W."

Part 1: History and Meanings of Suburbia (Place)

28 August (Monday) – What is suburbia?

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

30 August (Wednesday) – Suburbia as Cultural Expression

- N&W ~ Essay 1-2 Fishman “Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia (1987)”
- N&W ~ Essay 1-3 Archer “Colonial Suburbs in South Asia, 1700-1850, and the Spaces of Modernity”
- N&W ~ Document 1-1 Ralph Waldo Emerson Expresses A Romantic Vision of Nature, 1836
- N&W ~ Document 1-2 A Suburban Perspective on New York City, 1854 pg. 16
- N&W ~ Document 1-3 British Horticulturalist J.C. Loudon Lays the Foundation for a Suburban Ideal
- N&W ~ Document 2-9 The American Home, Safeguard of American Liberties

4 September (Monday) – History of Suburbia: The Role of Public Policy

- 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.
- N&W ~ Document 8-6 White House Panel of Experts Depicts the Ideal Home, 1932
- 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.
- 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.

6 September (Wednesday) – History of Suburbia: The role of Technology and Industry

- N&W ~ Essay 3-1 “The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery, 1815-1860
- Walker and Lewis “Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier: Industry and the Spread of North American Cities, 1850 – 1950” available on OAKS

- N&W ~ Document 3-7 “Architectural Pattern Book Introduces the Latest Domestic Technologies”
- N&W ~ Document 6-5 “Sears, Roebuck and Co. Advertises Suburban Home Ownership”
- N&W ~ Document 7-2 “The Working Man’s Reward”
- N&W ~ Document 7-5 “The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Sells Suburbia to Industrialists, 1927” pg. 203

11 September (Monday) – Family

- N&W ~ Document 2-2 Beecher and Beecher Stowe “A Christian House”
- N&W ~ Document 2-3 “Design and Floor Plan of a Suburban Cottage Home”
- N&W ~ Document 2-4 “A Doctor Explains the Virtues of Suburbia for children, 1910”
- N&W ~ Document 2-7 “A Suburban Couple Finds Delight in the Challenge of a Leaky Roof”
- N&W ~ Document 10-4 Whyte describes the “Organization Man” in Suburbia
- N&W ~ Essay 3-2 “Moralism and the Model Home”
- N&W ~ Essay 10-1 “Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film and Television”

13 September (Wednesday) – Gender

- N&W ~ Document 2-1 Beecher Outlines the Proper Role for Women
- N&W ~ Essay 2-1 “Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America”
- N&W ~ Essay 2-2 Marsh “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870 to 1910” pg. 63
- N&W ~ Document 9-5 “A Levittown Housewife Describes How She Keeps House”
- N&W ~ Document 10-8 Friedan “The Feminine Mystique”
- N&W ~ Document 10-9 “The Trapped Suburban Mother”
- N&W ~ Document 10-11 “Mad Magazine Satirizes Suburbia”

18 September (Monday) – 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”
- N&W ~ Document 7-4 “Byington Profiles the Industrial Suburb of Homestead, Penn.”
- N&W ~ Document 7-8 “Photo Gallery: Working-Class Suburbia”
- N&W ~ Essay 9-2 “A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America”
- N&W ~ Document 6-5 Sears, Roebuck and Co. Advertises Suburban Home Ownership, 1926 pg. 175
- N&W ~ Document 6-4 Suburban Life Profiles Kenilworth, an Exclusive Suburb of Chicago, 1907
- N&W ~ Document 12-4 The Kerner Commission Predicts Two Societies

NOTE: Short paper #1 is due in dropbox by midnight on 21 September.

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

20 September (Wednesday) — The Levittowners and Why they Came

- N&W ~ Document 9-1 “Image Gallery: The Postwar Housing Crisis”
- N&W ~ Document 9-3 “Image Gallery: Advertisements for Postwar Suburbs”
- N&W ~ Document 9-4 “Photo Gallery: Postwar Suburbia”
- Gans Chapter 2 “The Levittowners – And Why They Came” pgs. 22-43. Available on OAKS.
- N&W ~ Essay 9-1 “Building the American Way: Public Subsidy, Private Space”

25 September (Monday) – Diverse Suburbia

- Teaford, Chapter 2 “Diverse Suburbia”
- N&W ~ Document 14-6 A Report Documents Ethnic Diversity in Atlanta’s Suburbs, 1999 pg. 415
- N&W ~ Document 7-6 Mary Helen Ponce Recollects Life in a Mexican-American Suburb, 1993 pg. 203

- N&W ~ Document 14-3 “Gays and Lesbians Revise the Image of Suburbia (or Not)”
- N&W ~ Document 14-7 “Suburban Asian Malls Eclipse Urban Chinatowns”
- N&W ~ Essay 14-1 “The Changes Next Door to the Diazes”

27 September (Wednesday) – Race and the Construction of Suburbia

- Essay 11-1 Lipsitz “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” pg. 341
- Document 11-8 Atlanta Housing Council Proposes “Negro Expansion Areas,” 1947
- Document 11-9 Whites React to Fears of Black Encroachment in West Atlanta, 1950s
- N&W ~ Document 16-8 “The Shooting of Treyvon Martin Revives Debate Over Gated Communities”
- N&W ~ Document 16-13 “Violence in the Suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, Sparks a National Crisis”
- Document 11-3 “The New York Times Reports on Racial Exclusion at Levittown, 1949”
- N&W ~ Essay 7-2 Wiese “Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century”
- N&W ~ Document 14-4 “The New York Times Magazine Spotlights Black Suburbanization”

2 October (Monday) – Cultural Richness or Bland Wasteland (?) – PART 1

- Waldie *Holy Land* – Pages 1 to 90.

4 October (Wednesday) – Cultural Richness or Bland Wasteland (?) – PART 2

- Waldie *Holy Land* – Pages 91 to 185.

Field Trip on 9 October (Monday)

Field Trip on 11 October (Wednesday)

No class on 16 October (Monday); Fall Break

18 October (Wednesday) – The Geography of Nowhere & Alienation

- Kuntlser's *Geography of Nowhere Chapters* 1 to 3, 8, 10. Available on OAKS.
- N&W ~ Document 14-14 "Donna Gains Surveys Suburbia's Teenage Wasteland"

NOTE: Short paper #2 is due in dropbox by midnight on 19 October.

Part 3: Contemporary Issues and the Future (Politics)

23 October (Monday) – Job centers and retail/commercial use

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

25 October (Wednesday) - Contemporary Inequality

- N&W ~ Document 15-5 "Photo Gallery: "Have" and "Have Not" Suburbia
- N&W ~ Document 15-6 "Inequality pervades contemporary suburbia"
- N&W ~ Document 15-7 "America's Top One Percent Lives in the Suburbs"
- N&W ~ Document 15-8 "Poverty Rises in Suburbia"
- N&W ~ Document 15-9 "Foreclosure Crisis Strikes Suburbia"

30 October (Monday) – Contemporary Politics of Suburbia

- N&W ~ Essay 13-1 "Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right"
- N&W ~ Document 13-8 "George Bush Wins with Critical Support of the Suburban Fringe"
- N&W ~ Essay 13-2 "Suburban Strategies: The Volatile Center in Postwar American Politics"
- N&W ~ Document 13-9 "Growth of Mature Suburbs Drives Democratic Success in the Age of Obama"
- N&W ~ Essay 13-3 "Suburban Liberalism and Racial Inequality in Metro Boston"

NOTE: No Class on 1 November (Wednesday); Keenan at SCAPA Conference

6 November (Monday) – Suburbia and Capitalism

- Peck “Neoliberal Suburbanism” available on OAKS.

8 November (Wednesday) – Government Part 1

- Teaford Chapter 4 “Governing Suburbia” pgs. 123 to 159
- N&W ~ Document 16-1 Davidoff and Gold attack “Exclusionary Zoning”
- N&W ~ Document 16-2 The New Jersey Supreme Court Rejects Exclusionary Zoning
- N&W ~ Essay 16-1 McKenzie “Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government”
- N&W ~ Essay 16-3 “Landscapes of Privilege”

13 November (Monday) – Government Part 2

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

15 November (Wednesday) – Government Part 3

- Teaford Chapter 6 “Planning Suburbia” pgs. 187 to 216

20 November (Monday) – Environment and Sustainability – Part 1

- N&W ~ Essay 9-2 Rome “The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism”
- N&W ~ Document 17-2 Hayden “What is Sprawl?” pg. 477
- N&W ~ Document 17-3 Inner-Suburb Mayor Proposes “Sprawl Warning” pg. 477
- Williamson, Thad, David Imbroscio, and Gar Alperovitz. 2005. “The Challenge of Urban Sprawl” in *Cities and Society*. Malden, Blackwell. Available on OAKS.
- N&W ~ 17-5 Urban Scholar Robert Bruegman Critiques the “Antisprawl” Movement, 2000.

NOTE: No class on 22 November (Wednesday); Happy Thanksgiving!

27 November (Monday) – Environment and Sustainability – Part 2

- Walker and Fortman. 2003. “Whose landscape? A political ecology of the ‘exurban’ Sierra.” Available on OAKS.

29 November (Wednesday) – Suburbs and the Future

- N&W ~ 17-7 Leigh Gallagher Foresees the End of Conventional Suburbia
- Hayden Chapter 11 “The Importance of Older Suburbs.” Available on OAKS.
- N&W ~ 17-14 “The Challenges of Retrofitting Levittown”

4 December (Monday) – last day; we are meeting in Education Center, Room 108

- N&W ~ Document 17-17 McGrath Offers a Coda for the Suburban Dream

8 December (Friday) – Final exam field Trip from 12 to 3:00 p.m.

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