

HST 325: Undergraduate Seminar
Home Sweet Home: The Social and Political History of Housing in the Twentieth Century
United States

Instructor: Scarlett Rebman

snrebman@syr.edu

Class Meeting: Tuesday 3:45 to 6:30 pm

Classroom: 018 Eggers

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:30 and by appointment

Office: 132 Eggers

Course Description and Objectives:

Although many of us might take the roof over our head for granted, housing is a central feature of our existence. Where we grow up shapes our identity. Where we live often determines where we go to school, where and with whom we socialize, and where we shop. For many in the United States, owning a home in a desirable neighborhood constitutes the American Dream. Yet millions of Americans struggle to find affordable housing. Moreover, almost fifty years after the nation passed a fair housing law, we remain a racially and economically segregated country. This course will explore how the United States became a nation of homeowners—and why white Americans continue to own a disproportionate number of those homes. Because African Americans remain the most racially isolated minority group, we will focus on their efforts to attain housing.

We will consider the following questions:

How did homeownership become part of the American dream?

What role did federal policy play in creating and perpetuating segregation?

How have African Americans challenged residential segregation and discrimination?

Who benefits from residential segregation?

Why is residential segregation such a seemingly intractable problem? What are potential solutions?

How does housing shape Americans' cultural, social, and political identities?

This is a discussion based course. It will enable you to use evidence to form your *own* interpretation of history. By engaging with a variety of secondary sources and reflecting on these sources in short papers and essays, you will improve your analytical, communication, and writing skills in addition to building on your historical content knowledge.

Reading and Assigned Texts:

You will read an average of one hundred pages per week for this course. This is a rigorous pace, but if you commit yourself to the task, you will find the experience rewarding! In order to succeed, I urge you to set aside reading time throughout the week rather than attempting to cram all your reading into a few hours. Plan ahead!

The three required texts are available at the University Bookstore and through Two-Hour Course Reserve at the library. All other assigned readings are posted on Blackboard.

Required texts:

Gonda, Jeffrey D. *Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Massey, Douglas S., and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Williams, Rhonda Y. *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality*. Transgressing Boundaries. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Assignments and Course Requirements:

Participation (15% of final grade): Because this is a seminar-style course, your active participation in class discussions is absolutely vital in order for you to have a rewarding learning experience. We will have whole class discussions as well as small group activities. I value all perspectives as we engage with challenging material, and I expect you to contribute your thoughts every week.

Weekly Response Papers (25% of final grade): Each week, you will write a two page (Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced) reflection paper on the reading assignments. This is not a formal paper but more of a journal entry. You may use first person. What did you find most thought-provoking about the readings? If there are multiple readings assigned for a week, how do they connect to each other? What was confusing and/or challenging about the readings? Do you buy the arguments, or do you disagree?

You will share your reflection with your peers by posting your response paper under the "Response Paper" tab on the Blackboard page every Monday by 3:00 pm. You are expected to read your peers' papers before class on Tuesday and to be prepared to offer a thoughtful comment on at least one classmate's entry. This should *not* be on the quality of the student's writing but on the content of her ideas.

Response papers will be graded with a check plus, check, and check minus system.

Annotated Bibliography (15% of final grade): Due 3:00 pm on April 15. You will submit an annotated bibliography with at least ten entries. You must include **at least three** outside sources that were *not* assigned for class. Each annotation should include a two to three sentence summary of the topic and content of the reading and a one to two sentence summary of the argument. You should also include a two to three sentence explanation of why you selected the source, how it will be useful for your final paper, and how it relates to other material in your bibliography. Please come see me well in advance of the due date if you would like assistance in identifying your three outside sources.

Group Presentation (15% of Final Grade) and Final Paper (25% of Final Grade): After spring break, you will be assigned to a group of three to four students. Your task will be to prepare a housing briefing for a presidential candidate. In addition to summarizing important aspects of U.S. housing history, the group should make a housing policy recommendation that the candidate can adopt as part of his or her platform. Our

last class meeting will be a briefing session. Each group will have twenty minutes to deliver its brief. Each presentation must include at least one visual aid. This could be a PowerPoint or handout.

In order to prepare the brief, each group member will select a sub-topic on which to write an eight to ten page paper. Possible sub-topics include: affordable housing policy, housing laws, housing segregation, housing activism, or the culture of homeownership. You will prepare a short (one to two paragraph) paper proposal on your sub-topic, and I will either approve the topic or suggest an alternative one. This **proposal** is worth **5% of your final grade** and is due by 3:00 pm on April 8th.

Citations: For the response papers, quoted or paraphrased material may be referenced using a parenthetical citation that includes the author's last name and page number. For the final paper, you should use Chicago Style footnotes. We will have a workshop on how to do footnotes in the second half of the semester. Please see the section on Academic Integrity below.

Grading:

Participation: 15%
Weekly Response Papers: 25%
Paper Proposal: 5%
Annotated Bibliography: 15%
Group Presentation: 15%
Final Paper: 25%

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory. You must email me at least one hour before the start of class if you will be absent. Failure to email by this time will result in an automatic 1% deduction from your final grade. After two absences, you must submit documentation to explain any further absences. Failure to provide acceptable documentation will result in a 5% deduction from your final grade.

Late Assignment Policy: No late assignments will be accepted.

Academic Integrity:

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with Syracuse University's academic integrity policy, available at: <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>. *Plagiarism of any kind will be have severe repercussions.* If you are unsure whether you are citing information correctly, please meet with me before an assignment is due.

Disability Related Accommodations:

Making my classroom accessible to all learners is one of my highest priorities. Please meet with me to discuss individual learning needs. If you have a diagnosed disability that merits accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) by email at odssched@syr.edu or by phone at [\(315\) 443-4498](tel:3154434498) to schedule an appointment. Please provide a copy of your Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate.

Week 1 (1/19): Introduction to the Class

In-Class Movie: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Week 2 (1/26): The First Great Migration and the Creation of the Ghetto

Readings:

Massey and Denton, Pages 1-42

Ronald Takaki, "To the Promised Land: Blacks in the Urban North," Pages 340-369 from *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (BB)

Week 3 (2/2): Federal Policy, Part I: Promoting Homeownership

Readings:

Kenneth T. Jackson, "Race, Ethnicity, and Real Estate Appraisal The Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration." (BB)

David M. Freund, Chapters Three and Four, Pages 99 to 175 in *Colored Property* (BB)

Week 4 (2/9): Federal Policy, Part II: Public Housing

In-Class Documentary: "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth"

Readings:

Arnold R. Hirsch, "Containment on the Home Front Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War." (BB)

Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Cost of Good Intentions: The Ghettoization of Public Housing in the United States," Pages 219-230 from *Crabgrass Frontier* (BB)

Samuel Zipp, "Cold War Public Housing in the Age of Urban Renewal," Pages 253-298 in *Manhattan Projects* (BB)

Week 5 (2/16): Federal Policy, Part III: Urban Renewal and Highway Construction

Readings:

Arnold Hirsch, "A Neighborhood on a Hill: Hyde Park and the University of Chicago," Pages 135-170

Marcus Hunter, "Philadelphia's 'Mason-Dixon' Line," Pages 115-165 from *Black Citymakers* (BB)

Week 6 (2/23): The NAACP's Fight against Restrictive Covenants, Part I

Readings:

Gonda, *Unjust Deeds*, Pages 1-102

Week 7 (3/1): The NAACP's Fight against Restrictive Covenants, Part II

Readings:

Gonda, *Unjust Deeds*, Pages 103-222

Week 8 (3/8): The Culture of the Suburbs

Readings:

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, Pages 231-282 (BB)

Andrew Wiese, "The House I Live in": Race, Class, and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States," Pages 99-119 in *A New Suburban History* (BB)

Week 9: Spring Break, No class

Note: I highly suggest that you begin reading Williams, *The Politics of Housing*, over break

Week 10 (3/22): Housing and Political Identities: Public Housing, Part I

Readings:

Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*, Pages 1-152

Week 11 (3/29): Housing and Political Identities: Public Housing, Part II

Readings:

Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*, Pages 155-243

Week 12 (4/5): Housing and Political Identities: Homeowner's Rights, Part I

One to two paragraph paper proposal due by 3:00 pm on April 8th

Readings:

Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Pages 1-14 and 209-271 (BB)

Week 13 (4/12): Housing and Political Identities: Homeowner's Rights, Part II

One to two paragraph paper proposal due by 3:00 pm on April 15th

Readings:

Matthew D. Lassiter, " 'Socioeconomic Integration' " in the Suburbs: From Reactionary Populism to Class Fairness in Metropolitan Charlotte" Pages 120-143 in *A New Suburban History* (BB)

Lisa McGerr, "The Conservative Worldview" Pages 147-186 in *Suburban Warriors* (BB)

Week 14 (4/19): The Persistence of Segregation after 1968

Readings:

Massey and Denton, Pages 60-114 and 186-216

Samuels, Alana. "How to Decimate a City." *The Atlantic*, November 20, 2015 (BB)

Trifun, Natasha M. "Residential Segregation after the Fair Housing Act." *Human Rights* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 14–19. (BB)

Week 15: April 26

Optional Draft Deadline: 3:00 pm

No Class: Groups should meet to prepare their presentations

Week 16: May 3

Candidate Policy Forum and Pizza Party

Final Papers Due: Tuesday, May 10th, 2016 at 5:00 pm