# Learning from Los Angeles: The Image of History and the History of the Image

FA/Film 3375, SU-J3, May 28 – June 3

Time and Location: Otis College of Art and Design

Instructor: Ken Rogers

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Course consultation hours: N/A

Teaching Assistants:

**Course Description and Objectives**

*Learning from Los Angeles* is a study-abroad course that will explore the fantastic histories, myths, and contradictions of the first modern media city and the image it fashioned for itself. Through weekly readings and field trips, students will learn LA history by walking the urban fabric of the city itself to connect directly with the its rich and diverse cultural histories, from vernacular subcultures to media empires. As an experiential field course, *Learning from Los Angeles* will blend screenings, readings, and field trips designed around distinct thematic modules, through which rotating topics about the city and its cultural histories will be covered.

Los Angeles is the first and only modern city ever to have produced an extensive history of the image while promoting an image of its own history. As Los Angeles cultural critic Norman L. Klein has argued, Los Angeles is a city that has long thrived on the continual erasure and reinvention of its own myth. This course is committed to diving into this productive contradiction between image and history to unpack this complex and enigmatic place caught between a fantastic idea on the one hand and the lived materiality on the other. While exploring the gilded legends from the silent to the studio era, the course will simultaneously take a street view of Los Angeles and connect students with the many communities and cultural organizations committed to its unknown and forgotten histories such as the LA Urban Rangers; the LAPD (Los Angeles Poverty Department); The Center for Land Use Interpretation; and the LA River Revitalization Project.

Open to non-majors: yes\_\_\_X\_\_\_\_\_ no\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Grades**

Attendance and Participation 30%

Assignment #1 10%

Assignment #2 20%

Final Assignment: 40%

**Readings**

Andersen, Thom, Encke King, and Cinema Guild. 2014. *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. New York, NY : Cinema Guild,.

Banham, Reyner. 1971. *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies. --*. London: Penguin Press.

Brown, Denise Scott, Steven Izenour, and Robert Venturi. 1977 and 2017. *Learning from Las Vegas*. Facsimile edition. Cambridge, MA : The MIT Press.

Cvetkovich, Ann. 2011. *Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945-1980*. 1st edition. Los Angeles, Calif: ONE National Gay & Lesbian Arc.

Davis, Mike. 1999. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books.

———. 2006. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. New ed. London: Verso.

Drwila, Herman. 2012. Noir Shadows in the Land of Eternal Sunshine: A Study of Los Angeles Film Noir & Media Fictions. Studio for Southern

All reading will be found online in the course dropbox: <https://app.box.com/s/iprwmyh06fyj2q0g1o36>

**Important Course Information for Students**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information:

* Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures <http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=69>.
* Academic Integrity Website <http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity>.
* Accessibility/Disability Services: course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, learning and psychiatric disabilities [www.yorku.ca/cds](http://www.yorku.ca/cds).
* Accommodating Students with Disabilities (York Senate Policy) <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=68>.
* Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=94>.
* Religious Observance Accommodation <https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs>

and <http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/exam_accommodation.pdf> for Religious Accommodation Agreement Form – Final Examinations.

# Student Conduct <http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=82>.

**Schedule**

**June 2 Welcome Party, Otis College**

**WEEK 1**

**June 4: Navigating the City: Architecture and the Built Environment**

Neutra/Mid-century Modernism Vernacular Modernism

From Autopia to Dystopia: Suburban Sprawl and the LA Freeways

Downtown, Skid Row, and Gentrification

**June 6: Media Empires/Media Industries**

The Silent Era and the Rise of Hollywood

The Studio System

Film Exhibition History: The Egyptian, Grauman’s Theatre

The Recording Industry

Guest lectures/field trips: La Film Noir tour; Juan Devis, KCET, LA; Howard Barish, Kandoo films

**WEEK 2**

**June11: Ecologies and Environments**

Urban Oil, Agriculture, Aerospace

Water and Power

The Alameda Corridor: Ports, Trains, Rail

Banham: The Four Ecologies

Navigating the LA River

**June 13: Global LA**

Migrations and Displacements

Chaves Ravine

Pacific Rim Economy

Border Culture

Guest Lectures/Field Trips: Stephan Mohammed, RSA Films; Cathy Gudis, LA Historian; POLA/LB, Inglewood Oil Field; Rich Shelton, LA Kite Festival

**WEEK 3**

**June 18: Public Histories and Alternative Cultures**

The Tongva People

Queer LA

Migrant labor

Western Avenue: Redlining Inglewood

Echo Park Film Center

**June 20: Los Angeles’ Art and Cultural Institutions**

Public art, Murals

Media Art

Literature, Poetry, Performance

LA Museums, Art Galleries, an

Cuisine

Guest Lectures/Field Trips: Gower/Sunset Studios, (Netflix?); Tina Christenson Hollywood Foreign Press Association; Glen Philipps, Getty Research Institute; Watts Towers; Betto Arcos National Public Radio

**WEEK 4**

**June 25: Craptastic LA**

The Magic Castle

B-Movies

From Dingbats to “The Grove”

The Salton Sea

**June 27: The High Desert**

Salton Sea, Palm Springs Museum

Cenotaph, UFOs

Guest Lectures/Field Trips: Salton Sea, High Dessert Test Sites; Power station,

**June 29: Farewell Party, Otis College**