

**Geography 156**  
**Metropolitan Los Angeles: Nature in the City**  
**Summer, 2009**  
**UCLA**

Instructor: Nicholas Bauch

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Lecture meeting times: T & R, 9:00-11:00; 169 Humanities

Office hours: T & R, 11:15-12:15

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Course Description and Objectives

One of the core contributions of geographical study is to understand, explain, and describe how the thoughts and actions of human groups interact with the biophysical processes of the earth's surface. Contrary to popular belief, the Los Angeles metropolitan region is one of the best places to study this basic interaction. Topics of environmental justice, natural disasters, nature-as-healer, and representations of nature are all part of the geography and history of nature in L.A. Through lectures and readings we will lay the groundwork for a way of seeing Los Angeles that will challenge our understandings of the natural world, what it means to us, and how we might act as global citizens in a global city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in light of this new understanding of nature in the city. Aside from the lectures and readings, most of the work for this course will involve going out into the city, reporting back on what you've discovered, and telling us about your version of "nature in the city."

Requirements

*Attendance.* Attendance is required at every lecture AND the field trip on Tuesday, August 11 from 8:30-2:00. Please re-arrange your calendars for this date. I will take attendance at every meeting. You are allowed to miss one lecture (but not the field trip). I make no distinction between an "excused" and an "unexcused" absence. So, if you know you will be gone, or if you think you might be sick, etc, I suggest that you save your one absence for that day.

*Readings.* For most lectures there is a reading assignment. You are required to have that article and/or book chapter read before that class period starts. There are three unannounced pop quizzes throughout the course on the reading for that day. Readings will be available on the class web page.

*Complementary Projects*

Choose any two of the project ideas listed below. The first one is due on Tuesday, August 18 at the beginning of class. The second one is due on Tuesday, September 1 at the beginning of class. More detailed instructions will be distributed for each project. If you have another idea for a complementary project please contact the instructor. The write-up for each complementary project must be between 1,000-1,200 words, and must use in-text citations that cite scholarly sources.

### *Final Project*

Working in pairs, students create and follow a thematic tour route of the L.A. metropolitan region. When combined, the stops on the tour contribute to our understanding of nature in L.A. Students identify a theme for the tour based on ideas from lecture and readings. Examples could range from “pets,” to “water,” to “parks,” to “smog testing stations,” to “farmer’s markets,” or anything that is relevant. Think creatively! Two products are required:

- 1) An interactive online map. Students use Google maps to pinpoint and textually narrate the tour. There must be at least six tour stops related to your theme covering at least three neighborhoods. The geographical and historical relevance of each stop is narrated in the Google map bubble window. These narrations require library and Internet research. They must be at least 300 words each, and each must use a combination of scholarly and popular sources, to be cited within each bubble. The URL link to the Google map must be emailed to the instructor no later than Thursday, September 10.
- 2) A Pecha Kucha style presentation in the last two days of class. This presentation format will be described and demonstrated. Before the presentation the pair of students goes out into the city and follows their own pre-made tour route on bicycle, bus, foot, or car. The pair photographs each stop profusely, clearly, and artistically. These original images are fodder for the presentation. Your power point files must be emailed to the instructor by Sunday, September 6.

### Points Breakdown (250 total)

Final Project – 100

Complementary project # 1 – 50

Complementary project # 2 – 50

Three reading pop quizzes – 10 each

Participation/attendance – 20 (each absence over the free one is minus 10 points)

### Complementary Project Options

- Los Angeles Urban Rangers – Field Trip – Malibu Public Beach Safari
- Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design / Field Trip / Port of Long Beach
- Los Angeles Times – Online Environment Section Analysis
- Sunset Boulevard bus trip between Westwood and Downtown and back
- Westwood Walkabout with architect Rick Miller
- Visit to the Los Angeles Zoo and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

# Lecture Schedule

## **Tuesday, August 4**

Introduction to Los Angeles and the format of the course

## **Thursday, August 6**

Topic: What is nature?

Reading: Price, Jenny. 2006. Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in L.A. *The Believer*, April.

## **Tuesday, August 11**

Tour of the L.A. River with Jenny Price

Meet at UCLA at 8:30, return at 2:00

Readings: Fletcher, David. 2008. Flood Control Freakology: Los Angeles River watershed. In *The Infrastructural City: Networked ecologies in Los Angeles*, edited by K. Varnelis. Barcelona: Actar.

And

Roraback, Dick. 1985-86. Series of articles about a trip up the Los Angeles River. *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 20 - Jan. 30.

## **Thursday, August 13**

Topic: Mudslides & Architecture

Reading: McPhee, John. 2005. Los Angeles Against the Mountains. In *Land of Sunshine: An environmental history of metropolitan Los Angeles*, edited by W. Deverell and G. Hise. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

## **Tuesday, August 18**

Topic: Doing Fieldwork

Reading: Calvino, Italo. 1972. *Invisible Cities*. Translated by W. Weaver. New York: Harcourt.

And

Baker, Molly. 2009. A Focus on Storytelling. *The Wall Street Journal*, April 20, R7.

And

Tuan, Yi-Fu. 2001. Life as a Field Trip. *The Geographical Review* 91:41-45.

## **Thursday, August 20**

Viewing of "Chinatown," directed by Roman Polanski, 1974. USA. 131 min.

Reading: Fulton, William. 1997. *The Reluctant Metropolis: The politics of urban growth in Los Angeles*. Point Arena, CA: Solano Press. Chapter 4: "Redefining Chinatown."

### **Tuesday, August 25**

Topic: The “L.A. School” & Public Space

Readings: Davidson, Ronald, and J. Nicholas Entrikin. 2006. The Los Angeles Coast as a Public Space. *The Geographical Review* 95 (4):578-593.

And

Soja, E.W. 1986. Taking Los Angeles Apart: Some fragments of a critical human geography. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 4:255-272.

### **Thursday, August 27**

Topic: Transportation

Readings: Banham, Reyner. 1971. *Los Angeles: The architecture of four ecologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 11: “Autopia.”

And

Gottlieb, Robert. 2007. *Reinventing Los Angeles: Nature and community in the global city*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapter 5: “Cars and Freeways in the City.”

Discussion: What is the solution for L.A.’s transportation problem?

### **Tuesday, September 1**

Topic: Urban Animals

Reading: Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1984. *Dominance and Affection: The making of pets*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 6: “Animal Pets: Cruelty and affection.”

And

Anderson, Kay. 1995. Culture and Nature at the Adelaide Zoo: At the frontiers of 'human' geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20 (3):275-294.

### **Thursday, September 3**

Topic: Los Angeles and Natural Disasters

Reading: Davis, Mike. 1995. Los Angeles After the Storm: The dialectic of ordinary disaster. *Antipode* 27 (3):221-241.

## **Final Presentations**

### **Tuesday, September 8**

Pecha Kucha # 1

### **Thursday, September 10**

Pecha Kucha # 2

## Nature in L.A. Bibliography

- Ascher, Kate. 2005. *The Works: Anatomy of a city*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Banham, Reyner. 1971. *Los Angeles: The architecture of four ecologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Barlett, Peggy F., ed. 2005. *Urban place: Reconnecting with the natural world*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Castaneda, Antonia I. 1998. Serpent in the Garden. In *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush*, edited by R. Gutierrez and R. J. Orsi. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cooper, Erwin. 1968. *Aqueduct Empire: A guide to water in California: Its turbulent history and its management today*. Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark.
- Cosgrove, Denis, and Geoff Petts, eds. 1990. *Water, Engineering and Landscape: Water control and landscape transformation in the modern period*. New York: Belhaven Press.
- Cronon, William, ed. 1996. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Davidson, Ronald, and J. Nicholas Entrikin. 2006. The Los Angeles Coast as a Public Space. *The Geographical Review* 95 (4):578-593.
- Davis, Mike. 1998. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the imagination of disaster*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Dear, Michael, and Steven Flusty. 1998. Postmodern Urbanism. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88 (1):50-72.
- Dear, Michael, and Dallas Dishman, eds. 2001. *From Chicago to L.A.: Making sense of urban theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Deverell, William, and Greg Hise, eds. 2005. *Land of Sunshine: An environmental history of metropolitan Los Angeles*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Didion, Joan. 2000. *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. New York: Modern Library.
- Fine, David. 2004. *Imagining Los Angeles: A city in fiction*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- FitzSimmons, Margaret. 1989. The Matter of Nature. *Antipode* 21 (2):106-120.
- Fox, William L. 2007. *Making Time: Essays on the nature of Los Angeles*. Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard.
- Fulton, William. 1997. *The Reluctant Metropolis: The politics of urban growth in Los Angeles*. Point Arena, CA: Solano Press.
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- Gottlieb, Robert. 2005. *The Next Los Angeles: The struggle for a livable city*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
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- Gumprecht, Blake. 1999. *The Los Angeles River: Its life, death, and possible rebirth*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hackworth, Jason. 2007. *The Neoliberal City: Governance, ideology, and development in the American urbanism*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Heynen, Nikolas C., Maria Kaika, and E. Swyngedouw, eds. 2006. *In the Nature of Cities: Urban political ecology and the politics of urban metabolism*. New York: Routledge.
- Hise, Greg. 1997. *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the twentieth-century metropolis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Hundley, Norris. 1992. *The Great Thirst: Californians and water, 1770s-1990s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lees, Loretta. 2003. Urban Geography: 'New' urban geography and the ethnographic void. *Progress in Human Geography* 27 (1):107-113.
- Lejano, Raul P., and Hiroyuki Iseki. 2001. Environmental Justice: Spatial distribution of hazardous waste treatment, storage and disposal facilities in Los Angeles. *Journal of Urban Planning and Development* 127 (2):51-62.
- Linton, Joe. 2005. *Down by the Los Angeles River: Friends of the Los Angeles River's official guide*. Berkeley: Wilderness Press.
- McPhee, John A. 1989. *The Control of Nature*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- McWilliams, Carey. 1946. *Southern California Country: An island on the land*. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce.
- Morello-Frosch, Rachel, Manuel Pastor, and James L. Sadd. 2001. Environmental Justice and Southern California's "Riskscape": The distribution of air toxics exposures and health risks among diverse communities. *Urban Affairs Review* 36:551-578.
- Orsi, Jared. 2004. *Hazardous Metropolis: Flooding and urban ecology in Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
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- Piper, Karen L. 2006. *Left in the Dust: How race and politics created a human and environmental tragedy in L.A.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Price, Jenny. 2006. Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in L.A. *The Believer*, April.
- Pulido, Laura. 2000. Rethinking Environmental Racism: White privilege and urban development in southern California. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (1):12-40.
- Pulido, Laura, Steve Sidawi, and Robert O. Vos. 1996. An Archaeology of Environmental Racism in Los Angeles. *Urban Geography* 17 (5):419-439.
- Rieff, David. 1991. *Los Angeles: Capital of the Third World*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Sackman, Douglas. 2005. *Orange empire: California and the fruits of Eden*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
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- Scott, Allen J., and Edward W. Soja, eds. 1996. *The City: Los Angeles and urban theory at the end of the twentieth century*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
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- Ulin, David L., ed. 2002. *Writing Los Angeles: A literary anthology*. New York: Library of America.
- Valsson, Trausti. 2000. *City and Nature: An integrated whole*. Haskolautgafan: Iceland University Press.
- Westwick, Peter J. 2007. *Into the Black: JPL and the American Space Program*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Wieinas, David. 1995. *Sagebrush and Cappuccino: Confessions of an LA naturalist*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.