

**CULTURAL POLITICS OF URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN OAKLAND**  
US/SOCS 123-1, Fall 2017  
SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE

Dr. Robin Balliger

Friday, 1 – 3:45, Rm 18

Office hours: Friday 11:30 – 12:30, Faculty Office on the Mezzanine (please make a specific appointment and email me for meeting on additional days/times.)

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***Course Description***

This course addresses the role of arts and culture in processes of urban change in Oakland, California. Contemporary Oakland is a complex and contradictory city; it is heralded as one of the most ethnically diverse, radical, culturally ‘hip’ cities in the U.S., and at the same time, much of Oakland struggles with poverty, inequality, and high crime rates. This course focuses on Oakland in relation to urban studies and critical geography literature on “arts-led urban revitalization.” Topics include: historical context of industrialization and de-industrialization, role of community in the production of minority culture and politics, addressing relationships between art and community, the role of the arts in redevelopment and city branding, participation in cultural institutions and popular arts. Course material will include: historical and contemporary writing (including fiction and memoir), sociological analyses of urban change and community resistance, the “creative class” and arts-led urban revitalization strategies (along with displacement/gentrification), media representations of the city, field trips (e.g., Black Panther History Tour, Art Murrur, Oakland Museum, Day of the Dead in Fruitvale District). Course Satisfies: social science elective, Global Cultures req., critical studies elective, liberal arts elective, off campus requirement.

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NOTE: THIS COURSE SATISFIES THE “OFF CAMPUS” REQUIREMENT – FIELD TRIPS AND OFF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES ARE REQUIRED. SOME OF THESE WILL OCCUR DURING NORMAL CLASS TIME, BUT SOME WILL BE HELD FRIDAY EVENINGS OR WEEKENDS. BE SURE YOU CAN ACCOMMODATE THIS TYPE OF SCHEDULE! STUDENTS MAY NEED TO COVER SOME TRANSPORTATION COSTS ON BART/BUS.

***Learning Outcomes***

- Understand primary theories of urban transformation since the 1970s including deindustrialization, disinvestment/reinvestment, gentrification, role of the “creative class”
- Know key literature on the role of culture and the arts in processes of contemporary urban change, including cultural capital, arts-led revitalization, urban branding
- Understand the history of the City of Oakland as an urban domain shaped by transnational and regional cultural, political, and economic processes
- Understand race formation and minority communities by studying history of Oakland within broader patterns of U.S. migration, changing population demographics and residential patterns, discriminatory practices, and community organizing
- Experiential learning through off-campus activities; opportunities to engage in dialogue with local experts in history and the arts, exposure to local/contextualized artistic practices and spaces through field trips to key contemporary cultural sites

- Develop understandings of “community” as discursive strategy and important for social solidarity
- Introduction to social science methodologies and field research

***Required Text (1)***

Williams II, Harry Louis, Straight Outta East Oakland, Oakland: Soul Shaker Publishing, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-9789133-0-4 (NOTE – do not confuse this with Straight Outta East Oakland 2!) This book will also be available on Moodle.

Additional required readings will be posted on Moodle.

***Course Requirements***

All students need to use their SFAI email account to access Moodle and to ensure that you receive all communications from the professor.

1) Class Attendance and Participation - 25%

- attendance is required; attending every class is expected unless you are sick or have an emergency (documentation is required for a second absence, three absences will result in an F for the course)
- readings must be completed in advance of the scheduled discussion for that day
- an effective seminar requires your thoughtful and active participation

2) Midterm 20% -- Compilation of Weekly Reading Summaries.

Students will submit hard copy summaries of the course material every week, in class. These summaries must be 1 – 2 pages, doubled-spaced, and should synthesize the main points of the readings. Save an electronic copy for your midterm and final papers! (Do not submit ‘raw’ notes on the readings.) Your midterm grade will be based on turning in all five summaries on time (on the day of the class discussion), thoroughness, editing for grammar, etc. This project is due in my faculty mailbox on Friday, Oct. 13 (or hand it in at the Field Trip Friday night.)

3) Mural/Public Art Research, Writing, and Presentation – 15%

Each student will research a mural or public art piece in Oakland, of your choice. The piece needs to be accessible by bike or walking, within the central part of Oakland (not Montclair, East Oakland, or above 580). You will photograph and study the piece in its public setting, learn about the artist, write a description/analysis of the piece (1 page single-spaced), and do a class presentation on your piece. This project will be included in your final research paper.

4) Final Research Paper – 40%. For the final paper, you will compile all your writing and projects from the entire course: all weekly reading summaries, field trip notes, your mural/public art project, informational appendices (developed in class/groups), include a one-page introduction, and the entire project should be edited/revised for clarity and overall consistency. In addition to the first 5 summaries at midterm, you will include reading summaries for Oct. 20, Oct. 27, Nov. 10, and summaries based on your “field notes” from the Oakland Museum, Day of the Dead (description of event or option to make your own altar), Oakland Art Mural, and your individual public art/mural project.

Grades will be determined by the following numerical breakdown:

97-100	A+	73-76	C
93-96	A	70-72	C-

90-92	A-	67-69	D+
87-89	B+	63-66	D
83-86	B	60-62	D-
80-82	B-	<60	F
77-79	C+		

(See Additional SFAI Policies at End of Syllabus)

### Class Schedule

*Note: cell phones must be turned off and put away during class*

Sept 1 Introduction to the Course: Oakland... It's *Hella* Complicated  
(see perspectives below on Oakland radicalism, hipsters, and crime.)

Mahler, Jonathan, "Oakland, the Last Refuge of Radical America," *New York Times*, August 1, 2012

[www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/magazine/oakland-occupy-movement.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/magazine/oakland-occupy-movement.html?_r=0)

Also see: *NYT* "The 45 Places to Go in 2012" (Oakland is #5)

[https://localwiki.org/oakland/Unpopular\\_Articles\\_about\\_Oakland](https://localwiki.org/oakland/Unpopular_Articles_about_Oakland)

In 2016, Oakland was listed among the top ten "most dangerous cities in the U.S." Crime rates typically correlate with poverty and unemployment, but the Bay Area as a whole has low unemployment and is one of the wealthiest regions in the country. Poverty in Oakland is very high at 21%. See one article, below.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2016/10/01/most-dangerous-cities-america/91227778>

Sept 8 EARLY OAKLAND HISTORY THROUGH 1940s

Rhomberg, Chris, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland*, pp. 24-39; 50-60; 79-88; 96-119

Llamas, Ruben, *Eye from the Edge: A Memoir of West Oakland, California*, pp. 7-23

Tramble, Thomas and Wilma, *The Pullman Porters and West Oakland*, pp. 9-10 and 33-35.

(Class activity – BRING A LAPTOP IF POSSIBLE. Produce and discuss basic information on Oakland – population demographics, geography and neighborhoods, transportation, arts, recreation and parks, schools, economy, political districts/politicians, etc.)

- Sept 15 POST-WAR OAKLAND: 1940s THROUGH EARLY 1970s
- Self, Robert, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Post-War Oakland*, pp. 96-100; 135-176, 210-214
- Film Clips: *What We Want, What We Believe: The Black Panther Party Library; Cointelpro 101; Merritt College: Home of the Panthers?*
- Sept 22 BLACK PANTHER LEGACY TOUR w/ Billy X  
Be on time! Meet at MacArthur BART at 1 pm. We will end by 3:30 back at the BART station.
- Seale, Bobby, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, pp. 59-93.
- Hilliard, David, ed., *The Black Panther Party: Service to the People Programs*, pp. xi-xii, 3-4, 74-77, 10-13, 30-34
- Additional Recommended Reading:  
Dixon, Aaron, *My People Are Rising: Memoir of a Black Panther Party Captain*, pp. 84-99; Murch, Donna Jean, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*, Maps and pp. 191 - 204
- Sept 29 OAKLAND Late-1970s and 1980s: City Government, Drug Economy, Incarceration, and Cultural Responses
- Douzet, Frederick, *The Color of Power: Racial Coalitions and Political Power in Oakland*. Pp. 110-117.
- Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland*, pp. 183-194.
- Wacquant, Loic, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, pp. 43-57.
- Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Pp. 1 – 15.
- Williams, Harry Louis, *Straight Outta East Oakland* (READ at last half the book by this point; we will discuss next week)
- Film Clips: *The Mack, Space is the Place* (Sun Ra)  
East Bay Music / Hip Hop

Additional Reading:  
Gilmore, Ruth Wilson, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*  
Bourgois, Philippe, *In Search of Respect: Sellin Crack in El Barrio*

Oct 6 Narratives of Underclass Life in Oakland

Author and Guest Speaker: Harry Louis Williams II

Read ALL of *Straight Outta East Oakland* and come prepared with questions

Oct 13 MIDTERM: DUE IN MY FACULTY MAIL BOX OR TONIGHT  
NO CLASS MEETING AT 1 PM

Oct 13 **FRIDAY NIGHT 6 – 8: 30 - OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA FOR MUSEUM VISIT AND FRIDAY NIGHT EVENT - BRING YOUR STUDENT ID**

Arrive 6 pm (Lake Merritt BART station is very close), meet as a group at Oak St. Plaza, 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl.

Take notes and type these up later for your weekly writing assignment; turn in next Friday.

**\*\*\* Mid-semester grading period October 9 - 13 \*\*\***

Oct 20 1998 – 2010: Regional Effects of “Dotcom Boom,” Foreclosure Crisis, Occupy Oakland, Artist Responses

Solnit, Rebecca and Susan Schwatzenberg, *Hollow City: The Siege of San Francisco and the Crisis of American Urbanism*, Pp. 164-172

Douzet, Frederick, *The Color of Power: Racial Coalitions and Political Power in Oakland*. Pp. 156-162.

Reed, Ishmael, *Blues City: A Walk In Oakland*, pp. 19-28; 163-176

Miller, Jim and Kelly Mayhew, *Better to Reign in Hell: Inside the Raiders Fan Empire*, pp. 65-78

Taylor, Sunaura, “Scenes from Occupied Oakland,” *Occupy: Scenes from Occupied America*, pp 134-145

Gottesdiener, Laura, *A Dream Foreclosed: Black America and the Fight for a Place to Call Home*, Introduction, pp. 1-13

Video clips – “Boom: the Sound of Eviction,” Occupy Oakland film and art, Robert Reich “Inequality for All”

Additional Reading: Taibbi, Matt “Too Crooked to Fail,” *Rolling Stone*, March 29, 2012; Also see *Scenes from Occupied America, Beyond Zuccotti Park: Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space*; and [www.occupyoakland.org](http://www.occupyoakland.org)

Oct 27 2010 – Present: Arts, Revitalization, and Gentrification Debates I

Zukin, Sharon, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, pp. 1-6

Schulman, Sarah, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*, pp. 81-83

Born, Heatherly, *Contested Terrain: The Historical Impact of Urban Development on African Americans in South Prescott, West Oakland*, Masters Thesis, San Francisco Art Institute, 2011, pp. 52-61

Werner, Matt, *Oakland in Popular Memory*, Introduction, Chinaka Hodge, Ise Lyfe

Florida, Richard, *The Rise of the Creative Class... and how it's transforming work, leisure, community, and everyday life*, Ch. 1 and “Preface to The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited.”

Peck, Jamie, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2005, pp. 740-742

Additional Reading: Tracy, James, *Dispatches Against Displacement: Field Notes from San Francisco's Housing Wars*; Beitel, Karl, *Local Protest, Global Movements: Capital, Community, and State in San Francisco*; *The Griots of Oakland: Voices from the African American Oral History Project*

**OCT 29 SUNDAY - ATTEND DAY OF THE DEAD EVENT IN FRUITVALE DISTRICT, 10 – 4 pm**

Take notes / photos of altars and cultural event; be respectful and read about the event first.

Option #1 Do “field notes” and/or reading summary;

Option #2 make your own altar to – it can be flat (collage or drawing, etc.), or sculptural with photo-documentation (the altar can be personal but should also be related to the city of Oakland in some way) to include in your Final Research Project

Readings on indigenous populations, early Spanish settlers and contemporary commentary on Day of the Dead Public Event:

<https://localwiki.org/oakland/Ohlone>

[www.peraltahacienda.org/pages/main.php?pageid=69&pagecategory=3](http://www.peraltahacienda.org/pages/main.php?pageid=69&pagecategory=3)

Aya de Leon “Dear White People”

<https://ayadeleon.wordpress.com/2014/10/31/dear-white-peoplequeridos-gringos-you-want-our-culture-but-you-dont-want-us-stop-colonizing-the-day-of-the-dead/>

Nov 3            NO CLASS MEETING AT 1 PM  
SUBMIT 1-2 page write-up on Day of the Dead in my faculty mailbox this week (by Nov. 3)

**NOV 3            FRIDAY NIGHT 6-8:30 PM: ATTEND OAKLAND ART MURMUR / FIRST FRIDAY EVENT arrive at 6 pm.** Details to be announced.

Prior to Friday night:

Research Oakland Galleries and Artists on the website;

<http://oaklandartmurmur.org>

Also plan to spend some time at the adjacent street fair

Choose 2 or 3 galleries to attend, and then focus on one. Photograph pieces, take “field notes” on the gallery visit, describe the art works, the space, the audience, and speak with the artist if possible.

Nov 10            SUBMIT 1-2 page write-up on Art Murmur in my faculty mailbox this week or in class on Nov. 10.

Nov 10            2010 – Present: Arts, Revitalization, and Gentrification Debates II

Zukin, Sharon, *The Cultures of Cities*, pp. 1 - 11

Dávila, Arlene, *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race*, Chapter 4 “The Times-Squaring of El Barrio: On Mega-Projects, Spin, and ‘Community Consent’”

Drummond-Cole, Adrian and Darwin Bond-Graham, “Disneyfication of Downtown Oakland: Business Improvement Districts and the Battle for Public Space,” *Race, Poverty and the Environment*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2012.

Peterson, Marina, "Utopia/Dystopia: Art and Downtown Development in Los Angeles," *Global Downtowns*, pp. 209-233

Additional Reading: Levit, Zoe, "Gentrification is Making us Sick: Envisioning Healthy Development without Displacement," *Race, Poverty, and the Environment*, Vol. 20-1, 2015.

Nov 10 – Last Day to Withdraw with a "W"

Nov 17        NO CLASS MEETING  
CONDUCT INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH IN OAKLAND ON YOUR  
MURAL OR PUBLIC ART PIECE  
TAKE PHOTOS, WRITE DESCRIPTION/ANALYSIS

NOV 24        NO CLASS MEETING / SCHOOL HOLIDAY.  
(Not required, but consider attending the Sunrise Ceremony on Alcatraz)

Dec 1         IN-CLASS WORKSHOP AND BEGIN PRESENTATIONS  
DUE: 1 image and 1 page final text on your public art piece (also bring  
both on a flash drive)  
As a group – develop and organize your Biking/Walking Art Tour, edit  
text.

Present your Biking/Walking Art Tour of Oakland (and about 5 individual  
presentations)

Each Person will present 5 minutes (Show image of your Mural / Public  
Art Piece, discuss artist bio, description of the piece, personal perspective  
on the piece, site specificity, public value, etc.)

Dec 8         Last Day of Class and Final Presentations  
Continue presenting your Biking/Walking Art Tour of Oakland  
Final individual presentations: Each person will present 5 minutes (Show image of your  
Mural / Public Art Piece, discuss artist bio, description of the piece, personal perspective  
on the piece, site specificity, public value, etc.)

**\*\*MONDAY DEC. 11 BEFORE NOON – Final Project Due in my Faculty  
Mailbox\*\***

*Have a great break!*

## **SFAI Institutional Policies**

### **Disability Accommodations**

SFAI has a commitment to provide equal educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations; to provide equality of access for qualified students with disabilities; and to provide accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services that will specifically address those functional limitations of the disability which adversely affects equal educational opportunity. SFAI will assist qualified students with disabilities in securing such appropriate accommodations, auxiliary aids and services. The Disability Services Office at SFAI aims to promote self-awareness, self determination, and self-advocacy for students through our policies and procedures.

In the case of any complaint related to disability matters, a student may access the student grievance procedures; however, complaints regarding requests for accommodation are resolved pursuant to Section IV – Process for Requests for Accommodations: Eligibility, Determination and Appeal.

The Disability Services Office is located on the Chestnut Campus in the Student Affairs Office and can be reached at [disability@sfai.edu](mailto:disability@sfai.edu).

### **Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy**

The rights and responsibilities that accompany academic freedom are at the heart of the intellectual, artistic, and personal integrity of SFAI. At SFAI we value all aspects of the creative process, freedom of expression, risk-taking, and experimentation that adhere to the fundamental value of honesty in the making of one's academic and studio work and in relationship to others and their work. Misunderstanding of the appropriate academic conduct will not be accepted as an excuse for academic dishonesty. If a student is unclear about appropriate academic conduct in relationship to a particular situation, assignment, or requirement, the student should consult with the instructor of the course, Department Chair, Program Directors, or the Dean of Students.

### **Forms of Academic Misconduct**

#### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another's words, ideas, or information. At SFAI academic writing must follow conventions of documentation and citation (6.1; MLA Handbook, Joseph Gibaldi ch.2). Students are advised to seek out this guideline in the Academic Support Center, to ask faculty when they are in doubt about standards, and to recognize they are ultimately responsible for proper citation. In the studio, appropriation, subversion, and other means of challenging convention complicate attempts to codify forms of acknowledgment and are often defined by disciplinary histories and practices and are best examined, with the faculty, in relationship to the specific studio course.

#### **Cheating**

Cheating is the use or attempted use of unauthorized information including: looking at or using information from another person's paper/exam; buying or selling quizzes, exams, or papers; possessing, referring to, or employing opened textbooks, notes, or other devices during a quiz or exam. It is the responsibility of all students to consult with their faculty, in a timely fashion, concerning what types of study aids and materials are permissible in their specific course.

#### **Falsification and Fabrication**

Falsification and fabrication are the use of identical or substantially the same assignment to fulfill the requirements for two or more courses without the approval of the faculty involved, or the use of identical or substantially the same assignment from a previously completed course to fulfill requirements for another course without the approval of the instructor of the later course. Students are expected to create new work in specific response to each assignment, unless expressly authorized by their faculty to do otherwise.

**Unfair Academic Advantage**

Unfair academic advantage is interference—including theft, concealment, defacement or destruction of other students’ works, resources, or material—for the purpose of gaining an academic advantage.

**Noncompliance with Course Rules**

The violation of specific course rules as outlined in the syllabus by the faculty or otherwise provided to the student.