Suburban America
01.050.300.80 – Spring 2010
Department of American Studies – Rutgers University
Wednesday 6:00PM-9:05PM – Room 209 – Western Monmouth Higher Education Center

Instructor
Matthew B. Ferguson, M.C.R.P.
E-mail: ruferg@echo.rutgers.edu
(Subject Line: Suburban America)

Office Hours
Wednesday 5:30PM – 6:00PM & By Arrangement
Office Hours Location: WMHEC 204 or WMHEC 209

Required Texts

Crabgrass Frontier
By: Kenneth T. Jackson - ISBN: 9780195049831

Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for the Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb
By: David Kushner - ISBN: 9780802716194

Suburban Nation : The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream
By: Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Jeff Speck - ISBN: 9780865476066

Farewell, My Subaru : An Epic Adventure in Local Living
By: Doug Fine - ISBN: 9780812977899

Additional Readings on SAKAI site or provided by Instructor
Books are available through the Rutgers New Brunswick Online Bookstore and at online retailers such as BN.com, Amazon.com & Half.com

Course Overview
Suburban America examines the history, culture and problems associated with suburban development in North America beginning in the nineteenth century and leading up to present day. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the growing phenomenon of suburban sprawl and the emergence of consumerism, consumption and material culture. Expect to examine the suburban American landscape from a planning perspective including actual field exercises and to examine how suburban life is represented in print and media paying special attention to issues of race, class, gender, sexuality and socioeconomic status. The course will rely heavily on historic examples of suburban development such as Levittown and Radburn and may include one off-site field trip.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, students should be able to thoroughly read, comprehend and critically analyze primary and secondary sources. This critical analysis should result in the ability to construct well-articulated, text supported written or oral responses. In addition, student should be able to synthesize information from various sources or media to support specific ideas or arguments.

Finally, students should have a preliminary understanding of the historical roots, conceptual planning, actualized problems and future sustainability of Suburban development in America. In addition to becoming more familiar with the growing body of literature and media focusing on the truly American institution of the Suburb, students will be able to identify and analyze the connection between the physical/social construction of communities and idealized/actualized American identity.
Course Outline

Wednesday January 20 – **Course Introduction & Syllabus Review**

Wednesday January 27 – **The Origins of Suburban Development**
Screening/Media Excerpts: *In the Suburbs* (1957)
*Wonderland* (1997)

READING DUE: Jackson’s “Crabgrass Frontier” pgs 3-72
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due IN CLASS for Instant Feedback**

Wednesday February 3 – **Railroads, Trolleys and the Suburban Elite**
Screening/Media Excerpts: *Pleasantville* (1998)

READING DUE: Jackson’s “Crabgrass Frontier” pgs 73-156
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 3:00PM on Sunday 1/31**

Wednesday February 10 – **White Picket Fences & The American Dream**
Screening/Media Excerpts: *American Dream* (1990)

READING DUE: Jackson’s “Crabgrass Frontier” pgs 157-218
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 3:00PM on Sunday 2/7**

Wednesday February 17 – **The Consumer Society & Consumption Culture**
Screening/Media Excerpts: “Leave it to Beaver” (TV 1957-1963)
“The Wonder Years” (TV 1988-1993)

READING DUE: Jackson’s “Crabgrass Frontier” pgs 219-305
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 3:00PM on Sunday 2/14**

Wednesday February 24 – **Gender & Sexuality in the Suburbs**
Screening/Media Excerpts: “Desperate Housewives” (TV 2004-)
“Weeds” (TV 2005-)

READING DUE: Kushner’s “Levittown” pgs xi-71
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 3:00PM on Sunday 2/21**

Wednesday March 3 – **Suburbs & Subcultures**
Screening/Media Excerpts: *Suburbia* (1984)
*The Lifestyle* (1999)

READING DUE: Kushner’s “Levittown” pgs 72-144
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 3:00PM on Sunday 2/28**

Wednesday March 10 – **The Racial Divide**

READING DUE: Kushner’s “Levittown” pgs 145-203
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 3:00PM on Sunday 3/7**

Wednesday March 17 – **NO CLASS! HAPPY SPRING BREAK!**
Wednesday March 24 – **NO CLASS DUE TO EXTENDED CLASS PERIODS!**

**Midterm Due by 11:30 PM on Friday March 26 via SAKAI**

Wednesday March 31 – **Gangs, Guns & Violence in Suburban America**
Screening/Media Excerpts: Bowling for Columbine (2002)

READING DUE: “Suburban Nation” pgs ix-57
Excerpt from Monti’s “Wannabe” on SAKAI

**Critical Analysis Assignment Due by 3:00 PM on Sunday 3/28**

Wednesday April 7 – **Sprawl**
Screening/Media Excerpts: Blue Velvet (1986)
Little Children (2006)

READING DUE: “Suburban Nation” pgs 59-151
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due by 3:00 PM on Sunday 4/4**

Wednesday April 14 – **The Dysfunctional Family**
Screening/Media Excerpts: American Beauty (1999)

READING DUE: “Suburban Nation” pgs 153-243
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due by 3:00 PM on Sunday 4/11**

Wednesday April 21 – **Sustainability & Local Living**
Screening/Media Excerpts: The End of Suburbia (2004)
An Inconvenient Truth (2006)

READING DUE: Fine’s “Farewell My Subaru” pgs 3-103
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due by 3:00 PM on Sunday 4/18**

Wednesday April 28 – **The Future of Suburbs?**
Screening/Media Excerpts: Sprawling from Grace (2008)

READING DUE: Fine’s “Farewell My Subaru” pgs 106-207
**Critical Analysis Assignment Due by 3:00 PM on Sunday 4/25**

Friday May 7 - **FINAL EXAM DUE VIA SAKAI BY 11:30 PM**

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<th>Grading Components</th>
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<td>Weekly CA Assignments</td>
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<td>Midterm Paper Assignment</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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**Attendance**
You are expected to attend all classes but attendance will not be recorded. You are responsible for all material and media presented in class, as well as all assigned readings. Your success in this class will be directly related to your attendance and participation in class.

When reviewing student grades from previous semesters, students who ACTIVELY attended class regularly did significantly better than those who did not.

If you must miss class for an extended period of time, please communicate with me ASAP so that we can figure out how to handle your particular situation.

**Critical Analysis Assignments**
The weekly critical analysis assignments will ask students to read and analyze the primary and secondary sources assigned for the course. The intent of these assignments is to prepare students for meaningful and articulate class discussions as well as assist in developing the skills of critical analysis and thorough reading necessary for future course work and research. The assignments will be broken down into four parts:

1. **Outline** – This section will ask students to outline the assigned reading by identifying the main themes and ideas of each chapter/reading. There is no set format for this section but the use of organized bullet points with page numbers is suggested. Ultimately, these outlines will be helpful when constructing arguments for the midterm and final exam. (No Word Count Minimum)

2. **Critical Analysis** – This section will ask students to respond to one or two main ideas or topics using the assigned readings as evidence for the stated point. These topics will be less guiding as the semester goes on. Depending on the assigned reading, it may ask for a supported opinion, reaction or synthesis with current events. **Note: I am looking for analysis NOT summary.** When referring to a specific quote or section, feel free to just note the page number. Ex: (Jackson 23) This analysis should be clear and thoughtful. Responding to one quote or talking at length about an unrelated personal experience will not suffice for this assignment. (Word Count: 300-500)

3. **Your Questions/Thoughts** – This section allows for you to express any outstanding questions or thoughts on the readings allowing your Instructor to respond in the upcoming class. (No Word Count Minimum)

The critical analysis assignments are due each week via SAKAI by 3:00PM on the Sunday PRIOR to class. **NOTE: You are writing about the readings due for the UPCOMING class!** The assignments should be submitted IN LINE meaning that you will have to cut and paste your work into the appropriate text box. My suggestion is that you compose your assignment in a Word document, SAVE it and cut/paste when ready to submit. This will spare you from any catastrophic SAKAI meltdowns. Assignments will be accepted LATE until 3:00PM on Monday for partial credit. I would recommend that you get into a pattern of submitting these assignments early in order to achieve the highest quality academic product. Assignments will be graded on a 1-5 scale with a 5 being reserved for only the most thoughtful reactions. Proper spelling and grammar are a reflection of your commitment to the assignment and are therefore factored into your grade for the assignment. **Note: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT YOUR ASSIGNMENT WAS SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED VIA SAKAI!**
**Midterm Assignment**
The midterm assignment will require students to construct a 3-6 page essay analyzing an actual Suburban community in comparison to the historical evidence and media experienced up to this point in the class. A full prompt will be distributed in class.

Students will need to submit this assignment through SAKAI no later than **11:30PM on Friday, March 26, 2010.** Essays will be accepted LATE until 11:30PM on Friday, April 2, 2010 at a penalty of half a letter grade off per day late. **Note: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT YOUR ASSIGNMENT WAS SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED VIA SAKAI!**

All formal written assignments should be double-spaced with one-inch margins using 12 pt. **Times New Roman font.** Please include a standard single-spaced heading on the first page of each assignment and your last name in the header of each page. Proper spelling and grammar are a reflection of your commitment to the assignment and are therefore factored into your grade for the assignment.

**Final Exam**
The final exam will be a “take home” exam to be completed in an essay format. The exam will require students to comprehensively review and synthesize course information from readings, lectures, and media. A full prompt will be distributed in class.

Students will need to submit this final exam through SAKAI no later than **11:30PM on Friday, May 7, 2010.** Exams WILL NOT be accepted late for any reason. **Note: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT YOUR ASSIGNMENT WAS SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED VIA SAKAI!**

All formal written assignments should be double-spaced with one-inch margins using 12 pt. **Times New Roman font.** Please include a standard single-spaced heading on the first page of each assignment and your last name in the header of each page. Proper spelling and grammar are a reflection of your commitment to the assignment and are therefore factored into your grade for the assignment.

**Class Conduct**
All students are expected to be on time to class. If for some reason, you need to arrive late or leave early, please do so with minimum disruption. Please place all cell phones on silent and refrain from text messaging. Since this course involves discussion, it is inevitable that differing opinions will be presented. The University as a whole supports the free and open exchange of ideas and this course will be no different. All students are expected to be respectful of any and all opinions shared in class.

**Emergencies**
In case of emergency, please check the University status page to see if the University is still operating. (http://wmhec.rutgers.edu) If for some reason I need to cancel class, I will e-mail you all (from SAKAI) by 2:00PM on the day of class to let you know.
Academic Integrity
Academic freedom is a fundamental right in any institution of higher learning. Honesty and integrity are necessary preconditions of this freedom. Academic integrity requires that all academic work be wholly the product of an identified individual or individuals. Joint efforts are legitimate only when the assistance of others is explicitly acknowledged. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the University community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses.

Maintenance of the standards of academic honesty and the successful administration of this policy depend on the mutual cooperation of faculty and students. Dissemination of the Academic Integrity Policy to all faculty, staff, and students will ensure that all members of the community are informed about academic integrity.

Faculty cooperation is essential for successful application of the procedures defined by the Academic Integrity Policy. Faculty members can help promote academic integrity by making clear on their syllabi their expectations concerning homework assignments, collaborative student efforts, research papers, examinations, and the like. Efforts should be made to detect and to prevent cheating and plagiarism in all academic assignments. If faculty members have evidence of academic dishonesty, they are expected to report such evidence promptly.

Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of the course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit.

This policy seeks to demonstrate the University's concern with academic dishonesty and to guarantee a fair procedure for resolving complaints of academic dishonesty.

WHEN IN DOUBT...ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR!

Personal Note: I’ve worked very hard to create assignments and tests that are both interactive and challenging for you as a student. In addition to being insulting to me, when you cheat...you are cheating yourself out of a learning experience. Be forewarned that I will not hesitate to report you for any violation of academic integrity. All assignments will be run through TurnItIn.com plagiarism detection software.

Violations of Academic Integrity
The various ways in which academic honesty can be violated are discussed below. The comments and examples within each section provide explanations and illustrative material, but do not necessarily exhaust the scope of these violations.

A. Cheating
Cheating is the use of inappropriate and unacknowledged materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The use of books, notes, calculators and conversation with others is restricted or forbidden in certain academic exercises. Their use in these cases constitutes cheating. Similarly, students must not request others (including commercial term paper companies) to conduct research or prepare any work for them, nor may they submit identical work or portions thereof for credit or honors more than once without prior approval of the instructor.
B. Fabrication
Fabrication is the falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. "Invented" information may not be used in any laboratory experiment or other academic exercise without authorization from the instructor. It is improper, for example, to analyze one sample in an experiment and covertly "invent" data based on that single experiment for several more required analyses. The student must also acknowledge reliance upon the actual source from which cited information was obtained. A writer should not, for example, reproduce a quotation from a book review and indicate that the quotation was obtained from the book itself.

C. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty
Students who knowingly or negligently allow their work to be used by other students or who otherwise aid others in academic dishonesty are violating academic integrity. Such students are as guilty of intellectual dishonesty as the student who receives the material even though they may not themselves benefit academically from that dishonesty.

D. Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source stored in print, electronic or other medium is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "to paraphrase Plato's comment..." and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc, need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged.

In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

E. Denying others access to information or material
It is a violation of academic integrity to deny others access to scholarly resources, or to deliberately impede the progress of another student or scholar. Examples of offenses of this type include: giving other students false or misleading information; making library material unavailable to others by stealing or defacing books or journals, or by deliberately misplacing or destroying reserve materials; or altering computer files that belong to another.

The Full Policy on Academic Integrity and additional information can be found on at the Office of Student Conduct Website (http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu)