

# HTS 6117 – Urban Studies: US Cities and Suburbs Since 1945

Fall 2026

## Instructor Information

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**Instructor:** Daniel Amsterdam

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## General Course Information

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### Description

The fast-paced transformation of metropolitan space in the U.S. since World War II has had a wide array of repercussions, from heightening various forms of inequality and exacerbating environmental crises to underpinning pivotal cultural and political shifts, including on a national scale. By examining a combination of foundational and recent scholarship, this graduate seminar will give students a broad understanding of the history of U.S. cities and suburbs since the end of World War II, how historians have written about that past, and how scholars have used those stories to shed light on broader patterns.

The course is suitable for graduate students across the Institute who are interested in urban issues and/or exploring the historical roots of pressing challenges facing the U.S. today.

### Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Describe and analyze major patterns in metropolitan US history since 1945;
- 2) Describe and analyze how historians have used the localized study of metropolitan America to shed light on national trends;
- 3) Consistently and fairly evaluate sophisticated scholarly work focused on US cities and suburbs;
- 4) Produce coherent, well-argued written work related to course readings and additional readings related to a topic of their choosing;

- 5) Use what they have learned in preparing for a comprehensive examination field in US history in the case of doctoral students to whom that applies;
- 6) Use what they have learned in the course toward their chosen field for students who do not plan to intensively study US history moving forward.

### **Required Course Materials**

*All books are available electronically through the Georgia Tech Library. You do not need to purchase any of the following readings. In the case of some of the longer books below, students will be responsible for reading and presenting on specific chapters such that the entire class will collectively read the book in its entirety even though each student will not be asked to read every page.*

Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (ISBN: 0691121869)

Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality* (ISBN: 0195306511)

Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (ISBN: 022621284X)

Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (ISBN: 0521804906)

Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (ISBN: 0691173540)

Mathew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (ISBN: 0691133891)

Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (ISBN: 9780691157238)

Tracy Neumann, *Remaking the Rustbelt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America* (ISBN: 9780812224382)

Claire Dunning, *Non-Profit Neighborhoods: An Urban History of Inequality and the American State* (ISBN: 9780226819891)

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (ISBN: 978146966388)

Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (ISBN: 1469659182)

Becky Nicolaides, *The New Suburbia: How Diversity Remade Suburban Life in Los Angeles after 1945* (ISBN: 0197578306)

## **Grading Policy:**

### Scale for Final Grades

90-100 – A  
80-89.99 – B  
70-79.99 – C  
60-69.99 – D  
59.99 and Below – F

*Final grades will not be “rounded up.” In other words, to receive an A in the course, you must earn an actual, final average of 90.00 or above. A final average of 89.95, for instance, will be a B.*

### Assignments

Class Participation (25% of final grade)  
Weekly Reading Questionnaires (20% of final grade)  
Formal Book Review Exercise (15% of final grade)  
Final Paper (25% of final grade)  
Final Presentation (15% of final grade)

## **Description of Graded Components**

### Class Participation (25%)

*Students are expected to be engaged contributors to all class discussions. Working in groups, students will also help lead class discussions at least once during the semester. You are expected to attend all classes but may miss one no questions asked without impacting your class participation grade. Additional absences will not impact your class participation grade in the case of documented illnesses, documented medical or family emergencies, or Institute excused absences.*

### Weekly Reading Questionnaires (20%)

*I will provide you with a brief questionnaire that you must submit each Monday by 3:15 pm. The main purpose of this exercise is to show me that you have done the reading well and to alert me to any questions about the reading that you might have.*

### Formal Book Review Exercise (15%)

*Each student will write a professional-grade review of one of the books that we read as a class. After receiving feedback on their review from the instructor, they will re-write it and resubmit it for additional evaluation. The goal of this exercise is to give students the experience of writing a professional-style review and to clarify the instructor’s expectations for the quality of writing in students’ final papers. Students will be assigned the book that they will review soon after the start*

*of the semester. Students do not need to hand in a weekly reading questionnaire for the book that they are assigned to review.*

#### **Final Paper (25%)**

*This assignment is designed to allow students to explore a topic of interest in greater depth. Students will read two additional books that they choose in consultation with the instructor, pair them with a book that we have read as a class, and write a double-spaced, 12-15-page, argument-driven paper that evaluates all three books and their contributions to historical scholarship. Specific requirements related to this assignment will be distributed at an appropriate moment in the semester.*

#### **Final Presentation (15%)**

*Students will give a 10-15-minute oral presentation to the rest of the class based on their final paper. Specific requirements for this assignment will be distributed at an appropriate moment in the semester.*

## **Course Policies**

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### **Attendance and/or Participation**

See discussion of class participation and attendance under “Class Participation” above.

### **Academic Integrity**

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### **Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will

help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.