Course Syllabus

Conflict Urbanism: Puerto Rico Now

Course Numbers:
ARCH A4890  
CSER GU4002

Seminar: Friday 1-3pm, Hamilton 420  
Tutorials: Friday 11-1, Studio @ Butler as needed by students

3 Credits

Laura Kurgan, Associate Professor of Architecture
lk33@columbia.edu  
Office Hours: Friday 11am - 1pm, at CSR, Schermerhorn Hall Extension #654

Frances Negron-Muntaner, Professor of English
fn2103@columbia.edu  
Office Hours: Fridays 3-5 pm 422 Hamilton, or by appointment

TA, Anna Stokes
aks2232@columbia.edu  
Office Hours:
- Thursdays 10am – 12pm, at CSR, Schermerhorn Hall Extension #654 weekly until April 4th
- Fridays 1-3pm, at CSR, Schermerhorn Hall Extension #654 weekly on April 12th, April 19th and April 26th

Professor Office Hours by Appointment  
Tutorial Assistance by Appointment

This is the fourth in a series of multidisciplinary Mellon seminars on the topic of Conflict Urbanism, as part of a multi-university initiative in Architecture, Urbanism and the Humanities. This spring, we will focus on the role of natural and economic disaster in terms of the spatial restructuring of Puerto Rico today.
**Conflict Urbanism: Puerto Rico Now** Our seminar will examine the ways in which hurricanes, debt, and migration are major forces which produce and shape spatial inequalities in contemporary Puerto Rico. We will approach Puerto Rico as a network of conflicting forces, demands, and discourses (economic, spatial, political, environmental, historical, memorial, mediatic, aesthetic), and compare the Puerto Rican context with other intensive politicized spaces. What does Puerto Rico have in common with New Orleans Post Katrina? With the Dominican Republic or Singapore? Prior to Hurricane Maria, what did San Juan have in common with Detroit or Miami? To do our work we will draw on and work with diverse sources of information including data about population displacement, urban destruction housing values and foreclosures, and reports and analysis of “expert’ bodies such as FEMA, Puerto Rico’s government, and the United Nations. We will consider how local and global organizing is challenging spatial inequalities, and will reformat this information in a way that exposes some alternate images of Puerto Rico prior to these disasters and present some new post-disaster visions of it. Our seminar involves thinking and action from some very new perspectives which engage multiple methods of learning and engagements.

**Methods and Course Requirements:** Our work will be, by necessity, multidisciplinary across history, economics, architecture, politics, law, literature, and visual culture as related to the topic of Conflict Urbanism. Our work will also be multi-media. Students will create a web-based map as well as written reflections, incorporating analogue as well as digital media. We will use a flipped classroom method in the technical workshops where students will develop mapping and visual storytelling skills. No previous technical skills are necessary for registration; students will not be graded on technical expertise, but on the quality of their individual work. Professors will set individual guidelines for each student based on their disciplinary expertise.

**Midterm, Final, and Presentations:** Students in the class are expected to complete a minimum of 4 and maximum of 6 mapping tutorials as well as weekly readings in order to complete the assignment for the semester, which involve the creation of maps. The midterm evaluation will be in the form of a written project proposal where students will have an opportunity to get feedback on their a. The project idea, b. methodology, c. a data collection or analysis plan. Near the end of the semester, students will present the results of their work and specific plans for their final projects. These presentations are an integral component of the course as they give students an opportunity to share their findings and explain the decisions they made both in data collection and presentation. This is also an opportunity for students give and receive feedback before the final project is submitted. The final project will be submitted after the presentations, and be a combination of writing and maps in which students share qualitative and quantitative information about their chosen neighborhood.
Note: Students will not be graded on their technical proficiency with the tools, but their work in the seminar as a whole. Teamwork and collaboration will be encouraged, but students will be evaluated on their individual contribution to the work.

Course assignment will be provided on the first day of class.

Grading Breakdown - Graduate

*Technological skill is not factored into the grade*

- 10% Participation
- 20% Tutorials (completion)
- 20% Presentation
- 50% Final project

Grading Breakdown - Undergraduate

*Technological skill is not factored into the grade*

- 10% Participation
- 20% Tutorials (completion)
- 15% Midterm
- 15% Presentation
- 40% Final project

Weekly Plan

January 25

1. Introduction, Professors Kurgan and Negrón-Muntaner
February 01

1. **Puerto Rico, the “world’s oldest colony”: An Introduction (FN-M)**

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:

Alfredo Lopez, *Doña Licha’s island* (1987)


**Tutorial 1:** Introduction to QGIS

February 8

1. **Conflict Urbanism and Representing Conflict (LK) FNM away**

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Simone, A. M. “People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg.”
*Public Culture, Volume 16, Number 3, Fall 2004, pp. 407-429*

**Tutorial 2:** Making Spatial Data

**February 15**

1. **Space and Inequality in the Twentieth Century (FN-M)**

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading/Viewing:


**Tutorial 3:** Satellite Imagery

**February 22**

1. **Case Study: New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina (LK)**
Required Reading:

Campanella, Richard, “Hurricane Katrina and the Geographies of Catastrophe, in Geographies of New Orleans, University of New Orleans Press, 2006 pp 385-405


Recommended Reading:

Eds. Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, There is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster: Race, Class and Hurrican Katrina, Routtledge, 2006.


Tutorial 4: Web Mapping 01

March 01


Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:

Caribbean Debt Syllabus, unit 17, https://caribbeansyllabus.wordpress.com/caribbean-syllabus/
Tutorial 5: Web Mapping 02

March 08

1. Case Study Detroit: Debt and the Housing Crisis in the USA.

Required Reading:


Required Links:

https://makeloveland.com/company (Links to an external site.)
McKenzie, Jessica, Detroit’s Foreclosure Crisis and the Need for 'Information Justice,' (Links to an external site.)
Mar 8, 2017 (Links to an external site.)

Interboro Architects: Improve your Lot

Recommended Reading:

Easterling, Keller, Subtraction, Critical Spatial Practice 4, Sternberg Press, 2014


March 15

1. Visitor in Class: Hector Tarrido: will show his work on Electricity in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria and its Aftermath (2016-present)

NOTE: Project Proposals due for all, this counts as MIDTERM for Undergraduates.

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


March 22 - SPRING BREAK

Mar 29

2. Guest to Seminar: Martin Guzman.

Required Reading: TBD
**Tutorial 6:** Final Project Publishing 11-1pm: Studio @Butler

**NOTE THIS TUTORIAL IS MANDATORY** Studio @Butler 11am – 1pm.
Laura Kurgan’s office hours will be 3-5pm in 200 Buel after class.

April 05

10. **Guest to Seminar: Pablo Guardiola Co-Director Beta Local**
   see: [http://betalocal.org/](http://betalocal.org/) *(Links to an external site.)*

   Required Reading: TBD

April 12. No class: replaced on April 13.

April 13

11/12 Student Presentations 11am – 2.30, Buell 200

April 19. No class: replaced on April 20.

April 20

13/14 Student Presentations 11am – 2.30, Buell 200

April 26. No class: replaced on April 20.

May 3 - 11:59pm

Final Projects Published via Github

Wrap Up Panel Discussion: Date TBD
Conflict Urbanism: Puerto Rico Now

Tutorial Module Descriptions

The following tutorials are designed to introduce students to techniques of spatial research and critical cartographic practices. Through a combination of in class instruction and tutorial exercises completed at home students will develop basic fluencies with open source mapping tools. With support from module instructors, students will apply these newly acquired skills to topics and questions of interest through their final projects for the seminar.

All students must attend the Final Project Publishing session (March 8), and must complete at least three of the remaining six modules. See below for descriptions of each. All modules are designed for students with no prior experience with the topics covered. Students will be evaluated on their completion of the required exercises.

Please note: students who have prior experience with GIS or webmaps are encouraged to use this requirement to develop aspects of their final project and should speak with the course instructors about equivalent deliverables.

1. Introduction to QGIS

February 1, 11am-1pm

Exercise due February 8

This module will allow students to: develop basic familiarity with QGIS and its functions; gain fluency with foundational GIS concepts; understand GIS spatial data types and the kinds of analysis that are possible with each.

2. Making Spatial Data

February 8, 11am-1pm

Exercise due February 15

This module will introduce students to methods for creating spatial data. The exercise and workshop will cover how to give geographic coordinates (georeference) scanned
maps using QGIS, as well as how to digitize (trace) features from this scanned map to create new shapefiles. In addition, the module will introduce students to basic methods of geocoding locations from addresses. These are two key ways of creating spatial data from printed sources, as well as from text fields.

3. **Satellite Imagery**

**February 15, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due February 22

This module will cover methods for obtaining high resolution satellite imagery (via the Google Static Maps API) as well as low resolution satellite imagery from the Landsat Program. The workshop and exercise will cover the difference between these two types of remotely sensed data as well as methods for creating false color composites and simple land classification schemes.

4. **Web Mapping 01**

**February 22, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due March 1

In this two part module will introduce webmaps using Mapbox GL JS ([Links to an external site.]). This tutorial will introduce basic setup for making a webmap including basic elements of development for a web browser.

5. **Web Mapping 02**

**March 1, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due March 8

In part two of the web mapping module students will learn how to create custom basemaps (tilesets) using external data. Students will be introduced to methods for creating custom tilesets with vector as well as raster data (satellite imagery).

**Final Project Publishing Tutorial**

**March 29, 11am-1pm**
In this required module students will learn how to compose a document using markdown, a very simple markup language, and how to publish this document as a webpage using Jekyll and github pages. All students are required to attend this session and to use this format for the submission of their final projects.