Course Syllabus

Conflict Urbanism: InfraPolitics

Course Numbers:
ARCH A4890
CPLS GU4890

Friday 11.00-1.00pm, Ware Lounge, Avery Hall

TUTORIALS MEET@208 BUTLER 6-8PM, TUESDAYS

3 Credits

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TA, TBD

Office Hours by Appointment

Tutorial Assistance by Appointment

This is the third 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 year, we will focus on how infrastructure is a major force in shaping cities, as well as a medium through which the politics of urbanization is visible. Our work will take place through a theoretical lens and with comparative mapping across three cities and three continents – Mumbai, Johannesburg and Medellin.

Conflict Urbanism is a term that designates that cities are not only destroyed but also made (and remade) through conflict, and the organization of social difference.

Infra Politics is thus a way of thinking about with the infrastructure of environment, material culture, social structure, and ideas of order and design intersect to produce urban space across diverse historical contexts.

Conflict Urbanism: Infra Politics

This spring, the seminar will focus on infrastructure as a structuring principle of cities, highlighting the ways that urban spaces are physically shaped and ordered by a range
of governing interventions—from natural resource extraction, to urban planning, and the economics of real estate. The course focuses on exploring cities in the Global South whose historical emergence points to a range of social conflicts manifest in urban policy and design, that challenges the adequacy (and efficacy) of dominant paradigms of infrastructural development derived from the history of American and European cities.

For this work we will use three cities as our case studies. The cities have been chosen because they offer important ways to think about how infrastructure organizes social life, and its ongoing political effects. By exploring different histories of how space is governed, segregated, or utilized as a key economic resource, we want students to think about the significance of space and spatial regulation in structuring social relations.

The case studies are organized around a set of keywords: informality (Mumbai), apartheid (Johannesburg), and populism (Medellin)—that are entry points for thinking about the infrastructure of inequality. Each of the case studies uses a critical event as a point of entry for asking how how land, capital, government, and the social relations of daily life structure, and are in turn structured by spatial order.

Visualizing and mapping thus form key techniques for linking urban history with contemporary urbanism, and for thinking about the materiality of spatial politics.

**Meeting Times:** Please note that seminar meets on Fridays. Tutorials are scheduled weekly Tuesdays 6-8PM. On occasion we will have a speaker on Tuesday in which case Tutorials will meet Friday.

**Methods and Course Requirements:** Our work will be, by necessity, multidisciplinary across history, architecture, urban planning, politics, law, literature and anthropology 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. Each student is responsible for completing a minimum of four tutorials, and an optional maximum of eight tutorials. 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 8 mapping tutorials as well as weekly readings in order to complete the assignment for the semester, which involve the creation of online 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. maps created, d. written text. Students will present the results of their work in a seminar on a selected date based on which city they choose to research and map. 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 and compare the city they have selected.

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, especially in creating data or analytic layers of maps, but students will be evaluated on their individual contribution to the work.

**Grading Breakdown - Graduate**

*Technical skill is not factored into the grade*

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

**Grading Breakdown - Undergraduate**

*Technical skill is not factored into the grade*

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

**Academic integrity**

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars’ work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.
In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Plagiarism or dishonesty and unethical behavior is unacceptable and you will face punitive measures. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Barnard, or Columbia.

Classroom Etiquette constitutes best practices of your academic and social lives: be considerate in class; listen well; interact with respect and compassion; turn off your phone; and turn off your computing devices.

Disability-Related Accommodations:

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with Disability Services (DS). Faculty must be notified of registered students’ accommodations before exam or other accommodations will be provided. Students who have (or think they may have) a disability are invited to contact Disability Services for a confidential discussion. Emails: http://barnard.edu/disabilityservices (Links to an external site.) OR disability@columbia.edu.

Weekly Plan

Week 1

September 8 Introduction: The Public/Political Life of Infrastructure

Reading:


Look at these three websites and bring questions, observations to the first class about them:

1. http://www.urbanobservatory.org (Links to an external site.)
2. http://www.atlasofurbanexpansion.org/ (Links to an external site.)

The Atlas of Urban Expansion collects and analyzes data on the quantity and quality of urban expansion in a stratified global sample of 200 cities.
The Urban Age project explores how the physical, and social are interconnected in cities. “The Urban Age project charts the diverse spatial, social, economic and political dynamics of global cities in different regions of the world.”

Recommended reading:


Burdett Ricky, The Endless City: The Urban Age Project, Phaidon Press, 2007 (on reserve)

Richard Plunz, City Riffs, Urbanism, Ecology, Place, Columbia Books on Architecture, Lars Muller Publishers, 2017 (on reserve)

Week 2

September 12  Tutorial 1 - Intro QGIS

September 15  Conflict Urbanism: Infra Politics


Mouffe, Chantal, “The End of Politics and the Challenge of Right-Wing Populism” in Panizza, ed., Populism and the Mirror of Democracy, pp. 50-71

James Scott, IntraPolitics and Mobilizations: An Afterward

https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-etudes-americaines-2012-1-page-112.htm

Recommended:

Jan-Werner Müller, What is Populism


Week 3

September 19   Tutorial 2 - Georeferencing Mumbai

September 22   Mumbai - The Infrastructure of Informality

Prashant Kidambi, *Making of an Indian Metropolis* [excerpts]

On the Bombay Improvement Trust, see:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd8CpjR0lak (Links to an external site.)


Recommended:

Miriam Dossal, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities* [Chapters 2, 3, 6 from *Theatre of Conflict, City of Hope*]  See PDF

Gyan Prakash, *Mumbai Fables*. See PDF

Week 4

September 26   Tutorial 3 - Annotating Mumbai

September 29   Mumbai - The Infrastructure of Informality


Saskia Sassen, “The Return of Primitive Accumulation”

http://saskiasassen.com/PDFs/SS_return_of_primitive_accumulation.pdf (Links to an external site.)

Recommended:
Adiga, Arvind, *Last Man in Tower*  
(Links to an external site.)

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**Week 5**

**October 3 Tutorial 4 - Webscraping Johannesburg**

**October 06 Urbanisation as Infrastructure**

Reading:


Recommended:

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang “The Railway Journey: The Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space” pp. 1-69


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**Week 6**

**October 10 Tutorial 5 - Analyzing Johannesburg**

**October 13 Johannesburg and The Infrastructure of Apartheid**

Reading:


Harrison, Phil, Gotz, Graeme, Todes, Alison and Wray, Chris eds. “Changing Space, Changing City: Johannesburg after apartheid,” Witz University Press, 2014, pp 42-83

Recommended Reading:

blank, Architecture, apartheid and after, Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavic, Editors, NAi Publishers, 1998


Week 7

October 17 Tutorial 6 Analyzing Medellín

October 20 Johannesburg and The Infrastructure of Apartheid

Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Week 8

October 24 Tutorial 7 Webmapping Medellín
October 27  Medellín: The Infrastructure of Populism

Reading:


Doyle, Caroline, “Explaining Patterns of Urban Violence in Medellin, Colombia”, Laws, 2016

Highly recommended:


Recommended Reading:


Week 9

October 31  Tutorial 8 - HTML

November 03  Medellín: Transitional justice, post-conflict, and contemporary

Guest Speaker

Readings:

Rettberg, Angelika, “Victims of the Colombian armed conflict: the birth of a political actor”, manuscript.

Drummond, Holli, Dizgun, John, Keeling, David J., “Medellín: a city reborn?”, Focus on Geography, Winter 2012

Recommended readings:


Castro, Lorenzo, Echeverri, Alejandro, “Bogotá and Medellín, architecture and politics”, Architectural Design, April 2011


**Project Proposals Due** (This counts as Mid-Term paper for undergraduates)

**Week 10**

**November 10** Student Presentations: Mumbai

**Week 11**

**November 17** Student Presentations: Johannesburg

**November 24 – Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 12**

**December 01** Student Presentations: Medellin

**Week 13**

**December 08** Final Review