##### Land and Property

###### IDSEM-UG 1826/NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study

###### Spring 2019

###### Friday, 2:00-4:45pm

###### Location: 1 Washington Place, Rm. 527

###### Instructor: Rebecca Amato

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###### Course Web Site: <https://wp.nyu.edu/landandproperty2019/>

**Description**

New Yorkers talk about real estate the way most people talk about the weather. We know each others’ mortgage interest rates, rental costs, and amenities. We calculate our affective ties based on neighborhood-to-neighborhood subway travel and make lifelong commitments based on rent stabilization. How did we get to be this way? This course examines the long history of real estate and land use in New York through the lens of the Lower East Side/East Village. We will encounter the work of historians, geographers, sociologists, activists, environmentalists, and journalists to excavate the meaning of land and property in this dense and culturally rich urban neighborhood. As part of our classroom-based research, we will also collaborate with the Cooper Square Community Land Trust, a growing and revolutionary East Village institution, to investigate new ways to reconsider land not only as an exchangeable commodity, but as a social, cultural, and natural urban resource. Readings will include Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850*, Janet Abu-Lughod, *From Urban Village to East Village*, Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, Amy Starecheski, *Ours to Lose*, and Miranda Martinez, *Power at the Roots*.

**Our goals for this course are to:**

* Gain critical perspective on the multiple scholarly discourses around land and property, borrowing from the fields of history, geography, environmental studies, sociology, and anthropology.
* Trace the genealogy of Western concepts of property. We will do our best, as Foucault puts it, “to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion….identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us...to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.”
* Theorize and imagine new ways of thinking about land in a dense urban setting by learning from community-based organizations on the Lower East Side/East Village, such as the Cooper Square Community Land Trust, Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association, The Loisaida Center, the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space, and The Catholic Worker.

**Required Texts:**

Readings are downloadable in PDF form or via web links from the course web site.

**Your Responsibilities and Grading**

1. **Class Participation:** Attendance, thoughtful reading, and active participation in class discussions are essential components of the seminar format. Please come to class prepared to contribute fully to discussions. You may find it especially helpful to take notes as you read and come to class with a few points and/or questions you would like to address. **(15%)**
2. **Blog Posts (5x):** At your own pace and discretion, you are required to submit at least five blog posts during the semester. You may choose which of the 10 eligible weeks of the semester you will submit a post. Each post will respond to the readings for that week and cover such elements as argument, assessment of argument, relevance to the present, and relevance to other assigned readings. More information on this assignment will be shared separately. All blog posts will be made to the class web site and should be between 500 and 750 words. The posts will be graded per per submission, i.e. 5% each for 5 posts **(25%)**
3. **Research Paper and Presentation:** At the start of the semester you will be assigned a topic related to land use or property proposals that are currently being debated in the Lower East Side/East Village neighborhoods. You will be responsible for researching the history of the site or sites or policy in question, the existing and ongoing debates about the proposal, the larger questions the proposal recalls in relation to New York City land use and property history and/or the longer histories/philosophies we will study in class. This paper will require you to conduct on-line and archival research, attend community meetings, and read relevant secondary texts. You may also wish to interview people related to the proposal. The majority of your grade for this assignment will be derived from the quality of your paper, but a percentage will depend on your in-class presentation as well. More on this assignment will be shared separately, but expect the paper to be between 12 and 15 pp in length and the presentation to be about 10-12 minutes. **(35% for paper, 25% for presentation)**

Generally, I will be grading you on how well you are able to articulate and synthesize the ideas shared in class, in your readings, and in our projects. I will also be watching for your ability to meet the goals I have outlined above. You may want to keep a few other pointers in mind to ensure that you meet the expectations of this course:

* **Do not turn in work late.** If you anticipate needing extra time for an assignment, you must contact me in advance with a good reason. If you do turn in late work without contacting me first, it not only must be accompanied by an appropriate, documented explanation, but you should expect your grade to reflect the tardiness of the assignment.
* **Be organized.** While it will be tempting to slack on some of the assignments during slow weeks, you will surely suffer during weeks when we have heavier reading and assignments due. Try to keep to the syllabus and work ahead if you are able.
* **Don’t be late for class.** It’s distracting and it will have a negative impact on your grade. (Tardiness will result in a ½ absence.)
* **Don’t miss class.** More than 2 unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade for the course. Excused absences must be accompanied by a doctor’s note, email *to me* from your adviser or class adviser, or face-to-face meeting with me in my office.
* **Respect the time, energy, and space of our neighbors and our community collaborators.** This course will involve meeting with community organizations and residents of the Lower East Side/East Village. From time to time, some of our neighbors may join us in our class discussions. Please give everyone the respect they deserve by **being on-time** for class meetings and off-site visits, listening with compassion, and being a responsible participant in this process

**A Note on Incompletes**

Incompletes will not be granted unless you approach me with a serious, well-documented excuse (i.e. doctor’s note and the like.) If I do agree to a grade of incomplete, you will be expected to complete all of the necessary work by the date that I set.

**A Note on Academic Integrity**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University.  Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating.  Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website for a full description of the academic integrity policy. [https://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policies1/academic-integrity.html]

**A Note on Personal Integrity**

Courses built on a model of community-engaged pedagogy and research, like this one, involve more stakeholders than just the professor (me) and students (you.) We will be working with real people whose real lives are shaped by the pressures of displacement due to gentrification, migration and immigration, and other forces. While I, of course, expect you to present yourselves respectfully and with integrity, and honor the experiences and integrity of our collaborators on the Lower East Side, I hope that you will have high standards for yourselves in this context as well.

**A Note on Religious Holidays**

Students who anticipate being absent because of any religious observance should notify me in advance so we can make arrangements for any work that may be missed. This is in accordance with University Policy. Please let me know if you have any questions.

**A Note on Syllabus Changes**

You should consider the schedule below a work in progress. While I expect to keep to the assignments as listed, I may make changes from time to time to reflect the workload. However, I will notify you well in advance of any changes.

**Class Schedule**

**February 1: Introduction**

*Tompkins Square Park: Operation Class War on the Lower East Side* (Paper Tiger TV, 1992)

**February 8: Nature**

Eric W. Sanderson, Chapters 4 & 5, *Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York City* (2009)

[*Journal of Jasper Danckaerts*](https://www.loc.gov/item/13013556/), pp. 35-37; pp. 64-68 (1679-1680)

**February 15: The Divine** (**Meet at Maryhouse/The Catholic Worker, 36 E. 1st Street)**

Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-3 (<http://www.ishwar.com/judaism/holy_torah/book01/>)

Church Fathers. St. Augustine, Excerpt from *Tractate 6 (John 1:32-33)* (sometime around 400 AD) and St. Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Clergy,* Book 1, Chapter 28 (sometime around 391 AD)

Confucius, *The Analects*, Book XVI, 16.1 and 16.2 (sometime between 475–221 BC)

Chief Seattle’s 1854 Speech (Henry A. Smith version) (http://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Reading%20the%20Region/Texts%20by%20and%20about%20Natives/Texts/7.html)

**February 22: Ownership**

Andro Linklater, Chapters 1 & 2, *Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land* (2013)

Peter Schagen, Letter Reporting the Purchase of Manhattan, November 4, 1626

Sir William Blackstone, Book 2, Chapter 1, “On Property, in General,” *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, (1765-1769)

**March 1: Value**

John Locke, “Chapter 5: Property” from *Second Treatise on Government* (1690)

Henry George, “Seventh Part: Justice of the Remedy,” *Progress and Poverty* (1879)

**March 8: Personhood**

Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property” (1993)

**March 15: The Commons**

Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons., *Science* (December 1968)

David Bollier, “Chapter 2: The Tyranny of the ‘Tragedy’ Myth” & “Chapter 9: Many Galaxies of Commons,” *Think Like a Commoner: A Short Introduction to the Life of the Commons* (2014)

George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, “Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism,” *Community Development Journal,* Vol. 49, No. S1, January 2014, pp. i92–i105.

**March 22: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK**

**March 29: Property in New York**

Elizabeth Blackmar, Chapter 1 & Conclusion,, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (1989)

Lawrence Veiller & Robert DeForest, eds. pp. 7-13; pp. 367-382, *The Tenement House Problem.* (1903)

Keith D. Revell, “Regulating the Landscape: Real Estate Values, City Planning, and the 1916 Zoning Ordinance.” In David Ward and Oliver Zunz, *The Landscape of Modernity: New York City, 1900-1940.* (1997)

**April 5: Property on the Lower East Side (Meet at Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space, 155 Avenue C)**

Amy Starecheski, Chapter 2, “Who Deserves Housing? The Battle for East Thirteenth Street,” *Ours to Lose: When Squatters Became Homeowners in New York City* (2016)

Neil Smith, “New City, New Frontier: the Lower East Side as wild, wild West.” In Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (1992)

Janet Abu-Lughod, “Defending the Cross-Subsidy Plan: The Tortoise Wins Again,” In Janet Abu-Lughod, ed., *From Urban Village to East Village: The Battle for New York’s Lower East Side* (1994)

**April 12: Cooper Square CLT (Meet at Cooper Square MHA offices, 59 E 4th St, Third Floor)**

Tom Angotti and Cecilia Jagu, “Community Land Trusts and Low-Income Multi-Family Rental Housing: The Case of Cooper Square, New York City.” Lincoln Institute of Land Policy (July 2007)

Karen A. Gray, “Community Land Trusts in the United States.” *Journal of Community Practice*, Vol. 16(1), 2008.

**April 19: Resistance (Meet at The Loisaida Center, 710 E. 9th Street)**

Bill Weinberg "¡Viva Loisaida Libre!" and Bernadette Mayer "The Garden (for Adam Purple)" in Peter Lamborn Wilson and Bill Weinberg, eds. *Avant-Gardening: Ecological Struggle in The City & The World* (1999)

Nandini Bagchee, Ch. 3, “The Communitarian Estates of Loisaida (1967-2001) in *Counter Institution: Activist Estates of the Lower East Side* (2018)

**April 26:**  Presentations

**May 3:** Presentations

**May 10:** Conclusions