

The Public and Publics

Spring 2016

CUNY Graduate Center

Draft syllabus

Course meets: Thursdays from 2 to 4 pm
Room 5383

Instructors:

Setha Low (slow@gc.cuny.edu) ; Department of Environmental Psychology, Room 6203.16

Office hours: by appointment on Thursdays and Fridays

Amy Chazkel (amychazkel@gmail.com), Department of History, Office: Room 5405

Office hours: Thursdays from 11 am to 1pm and by appointment.

Course numbers:

ANTH 81500; EES 79903; IDS 81630; PSYCH 80103; and U ED 75200

Description: This interdisciplinary course examines the concept of the public, and the plural publics, as an analytical construct of particular importance in both scholarship and political life. Students will master the classic and more recent theoretical literature on space and place with respect to the designation of public and private. We will also go beyond the literature on shared resources and social spaces to think broadly about major approaches to the common, the communal, and the ordinary. We will critically examine such themes as: state versus private jurisdiction in regulating everyday life; feminist and black public spheres; the history and politics of public education; the privatization of urban public space; and political, social, and legal conflicts over copyright, intellectual property and public scholarship and art. We will pay special attention to a dimension of the study of public life of perennial political relevance as a question of global social justice: the privatization of formerly shared or commonly owned resources—the “enclosure of the commons”—as both a historical process and a present-day phenomenon. Readings will include a combination of theoretical inquiries and case studies drawn primarily, but not exclusively, from the North American, Latin American, and European contexts. Students from all disciplines and geographic specialties will be welcomed.

Futures Initiative: This course is being offered as part of the Futures Initiative: <http://futuresinitiative.org/about/>. The Futures Initiative advocates greater equity and innovation in higher education at every level of the university. Housed at the Graduate Center and reaching throughout the CUNY community, the Futures Initiative empowers the next generation of intellectual leaders with bold, public, and

engaged teaching and learning. With an emphasis on student-centered practices, the Futures Initiative redefines graduate preparation to include translation of specialized research into the best undergraduate teaching.

As one of the courses selected this year as a Futures Initiative, students in “The Public and Publics” will have available to them certain kinds of support, including:

- The opportunity to participate in a Spring Symposium, to be held this year on April 3.
- Access to the Futures Initiative website, a CBOX-based platform that allows anyone with an account to create discussion groups, customized websites, and more. This can be used for your graduate course as well as for any undergraduate courses you may teach, or for a personal/academic website.
- An embedded Graduate Fellow who can help make connections with the Futures Initiative's goals, prepare for the Symposium, and assist with technology related to the FI website.
- A standing invitation to all Futures Initiative events, such as the [University Worth Fighting For](#) series, which can help you to draw connections between your research and teaching.
- The chance to get involved in HASTAC, a network of 15,000 teachers and learners across the country, where you can blog, share announcements, and build community.
- Connection with the Futures Initiative Peer Mentors, undergraduate leaders at 13 CUNY schools who can help your students succeed in navigating the university.

Our course website: This course has its own page on the Futures Initiative WordPress website. Please make sure that you are signed up with a username and password on <http://futuresinitiative.org/>. The address for our page is <http://futuresinitiative.org/publicandpublics/>. Now, at the outset of the semester, our course page is a mere skeleton. Over the course of the semester we as a group will develop uses for the course page as a way of extending and expanding on our in-class discussions, sharing and storing information, collaborating on projects, and planning and organizing. Using the web page, we will work together to produce an extensive Annotated Bibliography related to the course. Other possible uses of the page include operating a blog for the course.

Required books: The following books will be required reading for this course. They are easily available at local or online booksellers, and they are also on closed reserve in our library. In addition to these books, please see the below, week-by-week schedule of the course topics and readings for additional reading assignments, which include articles and excerpts from books.

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2012).

Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (University of California Press, 2009)

Setha Low and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space*. (Routledge 2005)
Please note that we will be reading only sections of this book (Editors' Introduction, and the Blackmar, Harvey and Mitchell chapters).

Lynn Stahaeli and Don Mitchell, *The People's Property?: Power, Politics, and the Public* (Routledge, 2007).

Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (MIT Press, 1995).

Required Work:

I. Discussion Leader

At our second class meeting, each student will sign up for one week when he or she will be responsible for directing our class discussion for that day. That means that you will kick off the class with a brief commentary on our assigned readings for that week. This need not be lengthy or formal—10 minutes is sufficient—but should be a serious, carefully and thoughtfully prepared presentation. (In other words, please do not simply speak off the cuff; make sure to think in advance about and plan your comments.) Your introductory remarks should include some open-ended, analytical questions for your classmates to begin our discussion of the material, opening out to a broader discussion of the topic for that week and, ideally, tying these in with our previous readings. Of course, if you can bring in your own research or material that you are covering in other classes, so much the better; feel free to bring in images, artifact, suggestions for further readings, and so on. Throughout our class on the day you are the Discussion Leader, you will be responsible for picking up the conversation when there is a lull or redirecting it as needed. N.B.: The Discussion Leader is required to bring in a one-page handout on the day of the discussion that highlights some of the major points to be raised and any particular thoughts or suggestions for your fellow students. This can take any form you like and can either be written in prose or in outline or bullet-point form.

II. Final Paper

Your work in this course will culminate in a final paper of approximately 15-20 pages on a topic of your choice related to the theme of the class. We instructors will be glad to work with students to help them design a paper topic suited to their own broad interests and concerns.

Please note that this term paper assignment has three parts:

1. **annotated bibliography**, due on week 5 of the semester (March 2)
2. In class on week 8 (March 23) you should submit a **paper prospectus**: a short essay (approximately one to three pages in length, double-spaced with 12-point font) describing the expected topic of your paper, making at least a preliminary argument

about the scholarly importance of your chosen topic, and citing at least three scholarly works of history that you intend to use as sources; in addition to these three works, we strongly encourage you to submit a longer bibliography so that we can give you the best possible feedback and suggestions about where your paper is headed. If you are drawing on primary material/ field research data/ archival sources, please explain what those sources are and how you expect them to support your analysis.

3. The **final paper** itself is due on May 29 and may be submitted in our boxes (one copy to each instructor, please) as a hard copy or sent electronically to both of us as an email attachment. As the deadline draws nearer, we will distribute handouts that will help you with this essay and will provide complete instructions and guidelines for its submission. We will devote some time in the last three class sessions for each student to present his or her paper project to the class. Please note that at our class meeting on April 6th, you will need to select the day on which you are presenting (May 4, 11 or 18). On the day of your presentation, you will need to post your comments and/or a draft of your paper on our webpage for circulation to your classmates.

Conference:

As part of this course, we will hold a public conference related to the course's theme. The conference will take place at the Graduate Center throughout the day on March 30 (precise starting and ending time to be confirmed, but probably from 10 am to 6 pm), a day when we would normally have class. Please plan to attend as much of the conference as possible. We have already secured a confirmation from the distinguished geographer Don Mitchell, an author whose work we will be reading and an important scholar of the topic of the "public and publics," as a keynote speaker at the conference. The room is booked and the date set aside, but much of the planning will be in your hands. There will also be space for students in this class to present their work in progress on a volunteer basis, and also to participate as chair or commentator on various panels.

The following is a day-by-day **schedule** of topics we will cover in class and the corresponding readings assigned for each day.

All readings other than the five books listed above are either articles or book excerpts and are either freely available online (in the library's e-journals, for example) or will be distributed electronically to the class at least a week prior to the class on which we will discuss it.

Week 1, February 2

Introduction: Histories of commons, property, and public rights

Reading:

Peter Linebaugh, *Magna Carta Manifesto*

NOTE: Please come to the first class meeting having read the Linebaugh book.

Week 2, February 9

Rights-Based Publics, "Public Rights," and the Politics of Exclusion

Readings:

- Rebecca J. Scott. "Public Rights and Private Commerce: A Nineteenth-Century Creole Itinerary," *Current Anthropology* 48:2 (April 2007), 237-54.
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2012).

Week 3, February 16

History of Discursive Publics and the Rise of the Bourgeoisie

Readings:

- Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry Ortner eds. *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton University Press, 1994).
- John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1927), Chapters 1 ("The Search for the Public") and 4 ("The Eclipse of the Public").
- Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), "The Public and Private Realm," Section II, 22-78.
- Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 27-55.
- L. Dahlberg, 2003. The Habermasian Public Sphere: Taking Difference Seriously. *Theory and Society* 34: 111-136.
- Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." In C. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (MIT Press, 1992), pp. 518-536.

Week 4, February 23

Counterpublics

Readings:

- Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14:1 (2002): 49-90.
- Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24:2 (Winter 1998), 547-566.
- Michael Warner with Natasha Hurley, Luis Iglesias, Sonia di Lorento, Jeffrey Scraba, and Sandra Young, "A Soliloquy 'Lately Spoken at the African Theater': Race and the Public Sphere in New York City, 1821," in Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Zone Books, 2005), Chapter 7 (pp. 225-268).

- Rihan Yeh. 2012 "Two Publics in a Mexican Border City," *Cultural Anthropology* 27(4): 713-734.
- William Mazzarella, "The Myth of the Multitude, or, Who's Afraid of the Crowd?" *Critical Inquiry* 36:4 (Summer 2010), 697-727.
- OPTIONAL/ RECOMMENDED: Nancy Fraser, 1990. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26, 56-79.
- OPTIONAL/ RECOMMENDED: Sophie Watson, *City Publics: The (dis)Enchantments of Urban Encounters* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), Introduction and Chapter 7 ("Children's Publics").

Week 5, March 2

Public Art and Other Forms of Public Expression

Readings:

- Camilo Trumper "Ephemeral Histories: Public Art and Political Process, Chile 1970-1973" in S. Nagy et al., *Democracy in Chile: The Legacy of September 11, 1973*, (Sussex Academic Press, 2005).
- Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place* (MIT 1995). Chapters on Public History and Art interventions.
- Catherine Fennell. 2012, "The Museum of Resilience: Raising a Sympathetic Public in Postwelfare Chicago," *Cultural Anthropology* 27(4): 641-666.
- Kate Crehan. 2011. *Community Art: An Anthropological Perspective*. Chapters 4 and 6.

Week 6, March 9

Affect, Media, and Revolution

Readings:

- Mazzarella, William, *Censorium: Cinema and the Open Edge of Mass Publicity*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), selections
- Jeffrey S. Juris, 2012. *Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space and Emerging Logics of Aggregation*. *American Ethnologist* 39(2): 259-279.
- Christopher Kelty. 2005 "Geeks, Social Imaginaries, and Recursive Publics," *Cultural Anthropology* 20(2): 185-214.
- American Ethnologist*. 2012. Forum: Egypt's 2011 Revolt. *American Ethnologist* special issue 39(1):1-70.
- Charles Ambler, "Popular Films and Colonial Audiences: The Movies in Northern Rhodesia," *American Historical Review* (2001) 106(1): 81-105.

Week 7, March 16**Sound as Forming Publics**Readings:

Pardue, Derek (2011) "Place markers: Tracking spatiality in Brazilian Hip-Hop and Community Radio," *American Ethnologist* 38(1): 102-113.

Marina Peterson, *Sound and the City* (2010), Introduction and Chapters 1 and 4.

Daniel Bender, Duane Corpis, and Daniel J. Walkowitz, Editors' Introduction to "Sound Politics: Critically Listening to the Past," *Radical History Review*, issue 121 (January 2015).

Catherine Baker, "Symphony of Sirens: Uses and Problems of Sound in Teaching and Learning about Music and Politics," *Radical History Review*, issue 121 (January 2015): 197-208.

Roshanak Kheshti, "On the Threshold of the Political: The Sonic Performativity of Rooftop Chanting in Iran," *Radical History Review*, issue 121 (January 2015).

Week 8, March 23**Environment as Forming Publics**Readings:

Evan Friss, *The Cycling City* (University of Chicago Press, 2015). Chapters 1, 2, and 6.

Cindy Isinhour, Gary McDonough, and Melissa Checker, eds., *Sustainability in the Global City: Myth and Practice*. (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Selections

SELECTION OF SHORT READINGS (TBA), from unpublished book manuscript

Stéphane Tonnelat, "Making sustainability public: The Bayou Observation Deck in the Lower 9th Ward in New Orleans," *Metropolitiques* (2011)

<http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Making-sustainability-public-The.html>

Craig Calhoun, "The Privatization of Risk," *Public Culture* 18(12), (2006): 257-264.

Week 9, March 30 CONFERENCE**Week 10, April 6****Territory and Enclosure, Revisited: The Politics and Privatization of Public Space**

In class: sign up for final presentations

Readings:

Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. (Zone Books, 2010) Chapter 1.
Pps. 7-42.

Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (University of Chicago 2013). Introduction Pps
1-18.

Selected readings from the *Radical History Review*. Issues 108 and 109 (exact
readings TBA)

NO CLASS ON APRIL 13, SPRING RECESS (APRIL 10 – 18)

NO CLASS APRIL 20 (CLASSES FOLLOW A MONDAY SCHEDULE)

Week 11, April 27

Education as forming publics

Readings:

To be collectively researched and decided upon by the class.

Week 12, May 4

TOPICS AND READINGS TO BE DETERMINED IN DELIBERATION

Week 13, May 11

TOPICS AND READINGS TO BE DETERMINED IN DELIBERATION

Week 14, May 18

TOPICS AND READINGS TO BE DETERMINED IN DELIBERATION