

***El Muro que Migra
(MM-The Wall that Migrates)***

A Virtual and Urban and Art Installation
on Migration in Westlake and Tijuana

Instructors: Maite Zubiaurre & Gustavo Leclerc

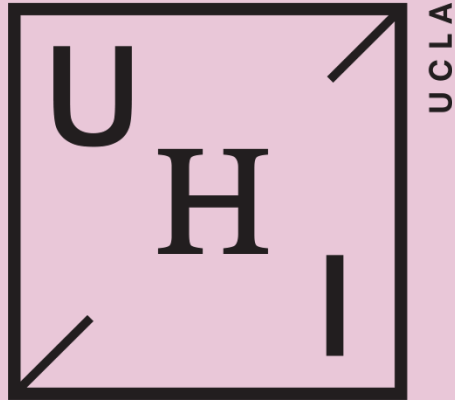
Collaborators: Dignicraft, Gaspar Rivera-
Salgado, and UCLA Labor Center

Description

The third and final quarter of the Urban Humanities core curriculum will focus on the Westlake neighborhood in Los Angeles and the border city of Tijuana, Mexico, where students will develop situated, collaborative, interdisciplinary, multi-modal research that is meant to provide engaged, scholarly, and creative projects around the theme of spatial justice and immigration in the context of Westlake and Tijuana. Students will be tasked with creating a virtual and urban art installation that highlights the links that tie Tijuana and Westlake (LA) as two paradigmatic sites that dialogue with each other and whose identity is indelibly marked by migration. We will look at Westlake and Tijuana as places that function as both a gateway and a destination point to the US in general and Los Angeles in particular. In close collaboration with the Tijuana-based multi-media collective Dignicraft (José Luis Figueroa, Omar Foglio, and Paola Rodríguez) and UCLA Labor Center Project Director Gaspar Rivera Salgado, students will look closely into the social, political, cultural, and spatial dynamics of documented and undocumented immigrants in both places. A fieldtrip to Tijuana will be an important part of the research process. The fieldtrip is scheduled for Saturday, May 7th and Sunday May 8th.



Students will create a 40x6 feet "wall that migrates" divided into four panels (El Muro que Migra-MM) in reaction against walls that prevent the free movement of people. MM is an oversized visual manifesto that moves, a portable contraption and "migrating wall" that questions the very existence of "fixed" punitive walls and invites creative thought around migration and the totalitarian hurdles it encounters.



***Whitewashing the Beach: Reconstructing the Past
to Claim Alternative Futures***

Instructors: Dana Cuff & Todd Presner

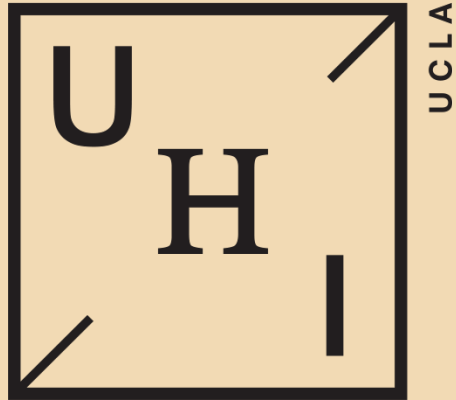
Description

Cities contain invisible, repressed, and lightly inscribed palimpsests of their situated cultural, racial, and political histories. We know from texts like Dolores Hayden's *Power of Place* as well as Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives*, that histories of Black and Indigenous people and people of color have been erased, in countless ways, from collective view. For both Hayden and Hartman, recovering those histories through careful research and making them visible or even public and material, is part of redressing the harm of spatial injustices. The challenge is how to do this, especially when the archives are incomplete and silent, and when new narrative and aesthetic forms need to be imagined.

In Southern California's geography, the coastline has been a highly contested space, whitewashed over the past century by removing people of color, particularly Black bodies, property, and narratives. Leisure, recreation, and cooler temperatures were segregated by racialized claims often grounded in violence. The injustices were meted out by government organizations, institutions, and individuals until only a few neighborhoods of color remained in proximity to the beach. Urban development projects were built with the intention of dispossession, demolishing existing communities, creating a diaspora of Black, Brown, and Asian businesses and households and eliminating their propertied wealth.

The capstone begins with a simultaneous exploration of evidence in the form of historic photographs, and of relevant theory and history. Photos of Bruce's Beach, The Inkwell, or the Belmar Neighborhood show the physical spaces, landscapes, buildings, and pleasures of Black beachgoers and residents. Through persistence and historical documentation, both public markers (as with the Belmar Park art project) and reparations (as for the Bruce family) are now in the news. This capstone builds upon this timely acknowledgement of historic harm, seeking ways of supporting claims of reparation, documenting landscapes of memory, and imagining means to expand public awareness of these historical narratives. Archival research, fieldwork, and interviews will help build upon emerging narratives that document the history of whitewashing and may help us reclaim a fuller history of the beach. Smaller teams within the capstone group, working with community partners, will focus on specific stories, spaces, and images to advance racial and spatial justice along the Los Angeles beachfront.

Utilizing urban humanist practices of thick mapping and engaged scholarship, the capstone will lead to experimentation with physical, experiential markings in the public sphere. The work will contribute to ongoing work by community-based institutions.



Exposing Freeway Inequities

Instructor: Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris

Description

Often celebrated as an extraordinary accomplishment of modernity and transportation planning, the American freeway has recently come under scrutiny for the disproportionately negative effects it has on certain populations. Transportation and planning authorities have often routed major freeways through minority neighborhoods, ignoring alternative routes through adjacent areas inhabited by wealthier, primarily white residents. Traces of environmental degradation and social injustice are still visible today, many of which have prompted civic movements across the country demanding that cities tear down existing expressways.

The Exposing Freeway Inequities Capstone Project will critically examine the history of freeways in minority neighborhoods to identify physical, social, economic, environmental, and political impacts. Students will conduct in-depth qualitative research to describe the circumstances around freeway construction in Southern California and connect it to outcomes. For their research project, students will be asked to employ Urban Humanities research methods learned during the Fall and Winter quarters, such as Thick Mapping, Digital Storytelling, and Spatial Ethnography. The research will be translated into a critical counter-narrative case study, which exposes unknown or underrepresented histories of freeway impact.

The Capstone Project will be composed of two parts: qualitative research and creative interpretation. During the research phase, students will first conduct archival research and collect historical documents, including local newspaper articles, planning documents, professional studies, maps, census data and correspondence. In addition to the archival research, students will collect complementary oral histories from community members, civic leaders, and local experts. Students will also observe contemporary urban environments to identify (in)visible impacts of the freeway, which may include embodied practices, cultural artifacts and social narratives inscribed into space.

For the second part of the capstone, students will use the data to construct a thick map and rich historical timeline, with personal insights from community members, and a visual/spatial representation of the area. This layered history will create a counter-narrative that brings perspective to the impact of the freeway.

To accommodate to the circumstances created by COVID-19, fieldwork may incorporate physical visits and alternative engagement with the site that is remote and online. This hybrid methodology adjusts to the conditions of the pandemic, while simultaneously encouraging complementary forms of seeing, understanding, and communicating. The multidisciplinary approach seeks to expand definitions and functions of urban historical analysis and representation.