

**Death at the Borderlands- Forensic Empathy,
Ethics, and Art**

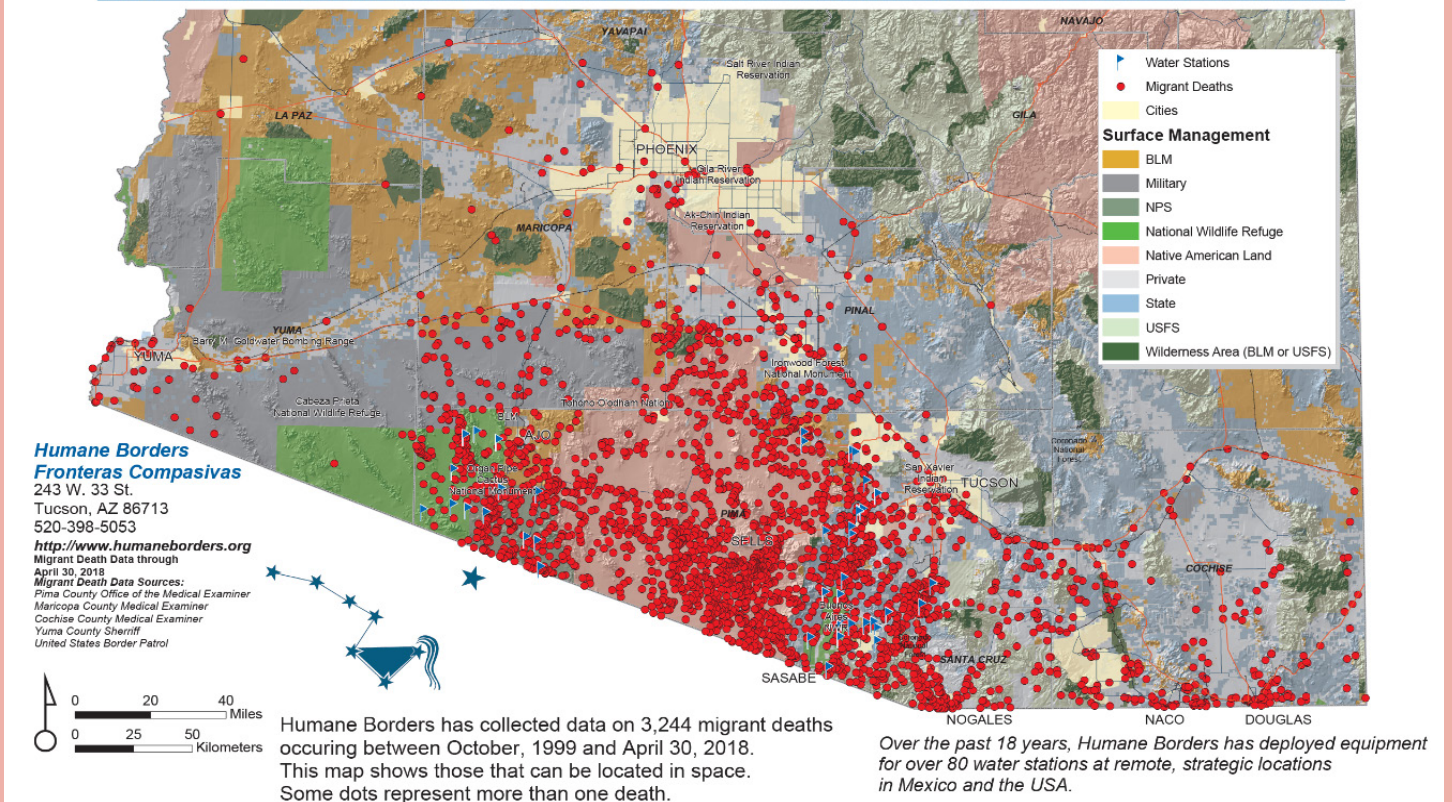
UHI Capstone Spring 2021

Instructor: Maite Zubiaurre

Department: Spanish and German Letters, Digital
Humanities, UCLA

Number of UHI Participants: 3

1999 - 2018 RECORDED MIGRANT DEATHS AND HUMANE BORDERS WATER STATIONS



Description

Pain travels fast: when a migrant dies in a remote rural area at the border (such as the Arizona desert), cities and megalopolises that attract so many migrants (Los Angeles, Chicago, NY) mourn. Migration and its consequences heavily impact the metropolitan human landscape and are urban phenomena. And so is art and installations that seek to portray migration and struggle and (state) violence in the borderlands.

Border art is rich and varied in its manifestations. Art that works with death and dead bodies is less so. Mexican artist Teresa Margolles comes to mind, but there is nothing comparable to Margolles's art on the victims of institutionalized violence that tackles migrant death. The goal of this capstone is very specific: to design an awareness-raising urban art installation on migrant death at the US-Mexico borderlands. What is at stake here is not "aesthetics," but "aesth-ethics:" in fact, fundamental questions about the ethical responsibility of (forensic) art making will be at the center of our reflections.

Designing an art installation in the era of COVID

We will work remotely, and meet online. We will design and "build" an urban art installation and the rationale behind it on our computers, but with the idea that eventually, and when COVID permits, the installation will happen on "real" ground. I will provide materials and sources on border death and (forensic) artistic practices, and share the knowledge I have been able to amass as the founding researcher of *Forensic Empathy*, a collaborative, interdisciplinary endeavor in progress that includes a scholarly monograph, two documentaries, and a digital map.

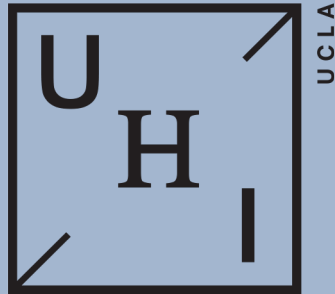


El muro que da/The Wall that Gives—Artistic Installation, Filomena Cruz, Venice, CA (<https://beautifulhollywood.com/2018/08/19/el-muro-que-da-and-the-gang-that-took-over/>)

And I will also provide a wall, a 90x5.5 feet wall in Venice, CA, that can serve as a canvas for border death art, if we so wish. More about all this when we meet. For the moment, it suffices to say that total freedom (only reined in by all-important ethical considerations) will be our *modus operandi*. Freedom to feel, think, create, and even un-create.

Actors

You, foremost, as graduate student participants of the Capstone; myself (Maite Zubiaurre) and Filomena Cruz (<https://filomenacruz.com/>), my alter ego as a visual artist and activist; Cristina Vázquez, our research assistant and UHI alumna (<https://www.spanport.ucla.edu/person/cristina-g-vazquez/>); and José Luis Figueroa, Omar Foglio, Ana Paola Rodríguez, members of the Tijuana art and Emmy-awarded film collective *Dignicraft* (<https://www.dignicraft.org/>) as our "fronterizo" collaborators.



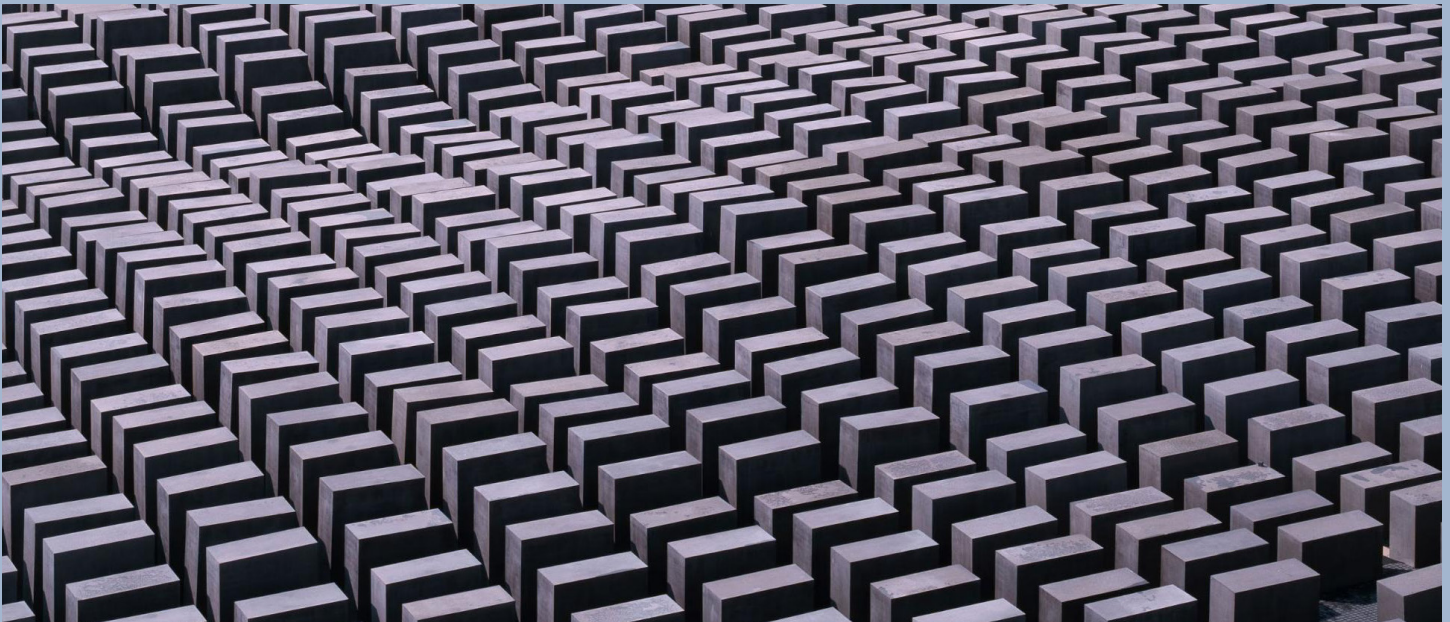
**The Ethics and Aesthetics of Memorials in the
Digital Age**

UHI Capstone Spring 2021

Instructor: Todd Presner

Department: Digital Humanities, European Languages
and Transcultural Studies, UCLA

Number of UHI Participants: 3



Peter Eisenman's Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (physical memorial)

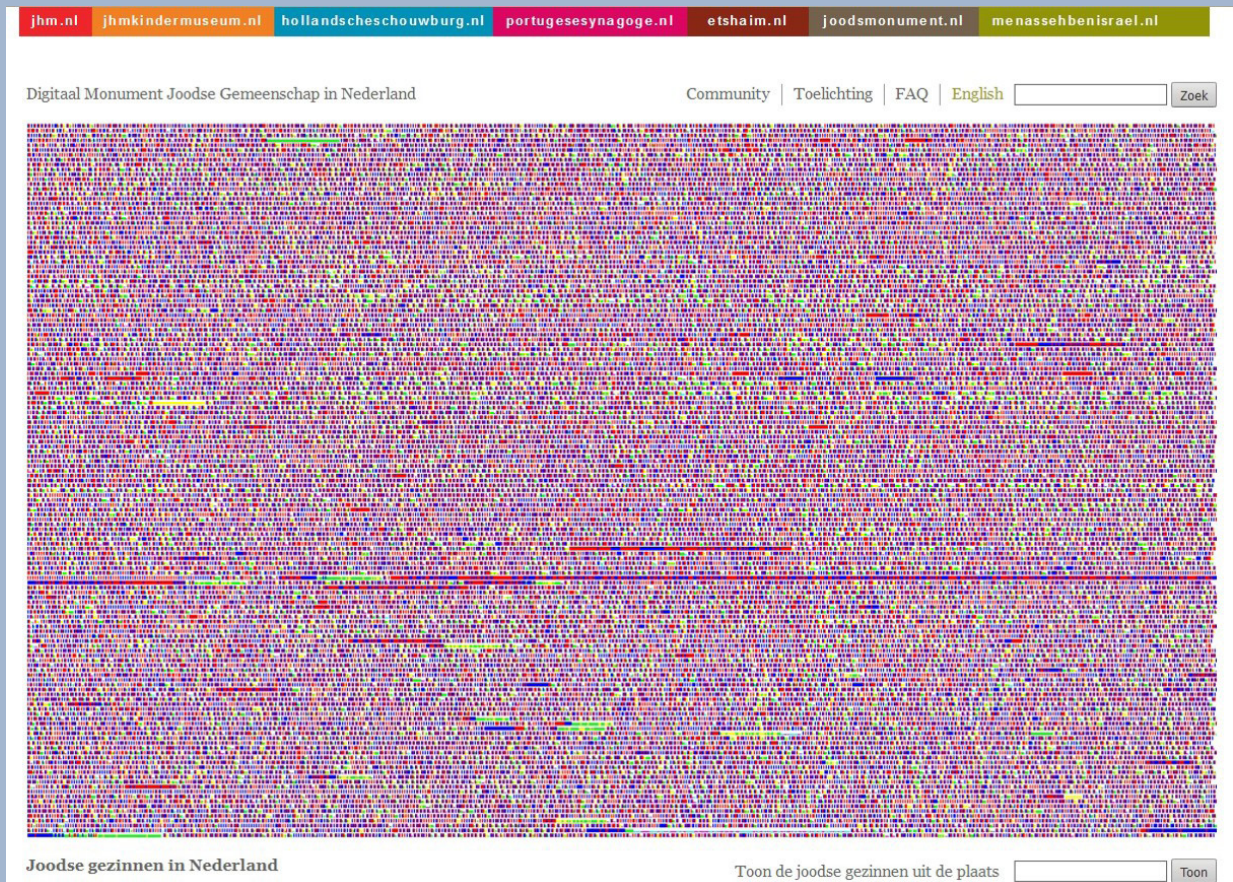
Description

The purpose of this capstone is to explore -- through design thinking -- the limits and possibilities of physical and digital memorials that commemorate events of human atrocity. Databases and data visualizations present compelling (but not unproblematic) ways of "seeing" and interacting at a macro-level, but how can they also individualize and humanize victims? At the same time, physical memorials struggle with how to represent the totality of an event (in terms of the number of victims, scope, complexity), sometimes relying on abstract symbolism to capture the scale of an event. How can we imagine both ethical and aesthetic forms of representation that humanize individuals and also represent the "whole" of an event?

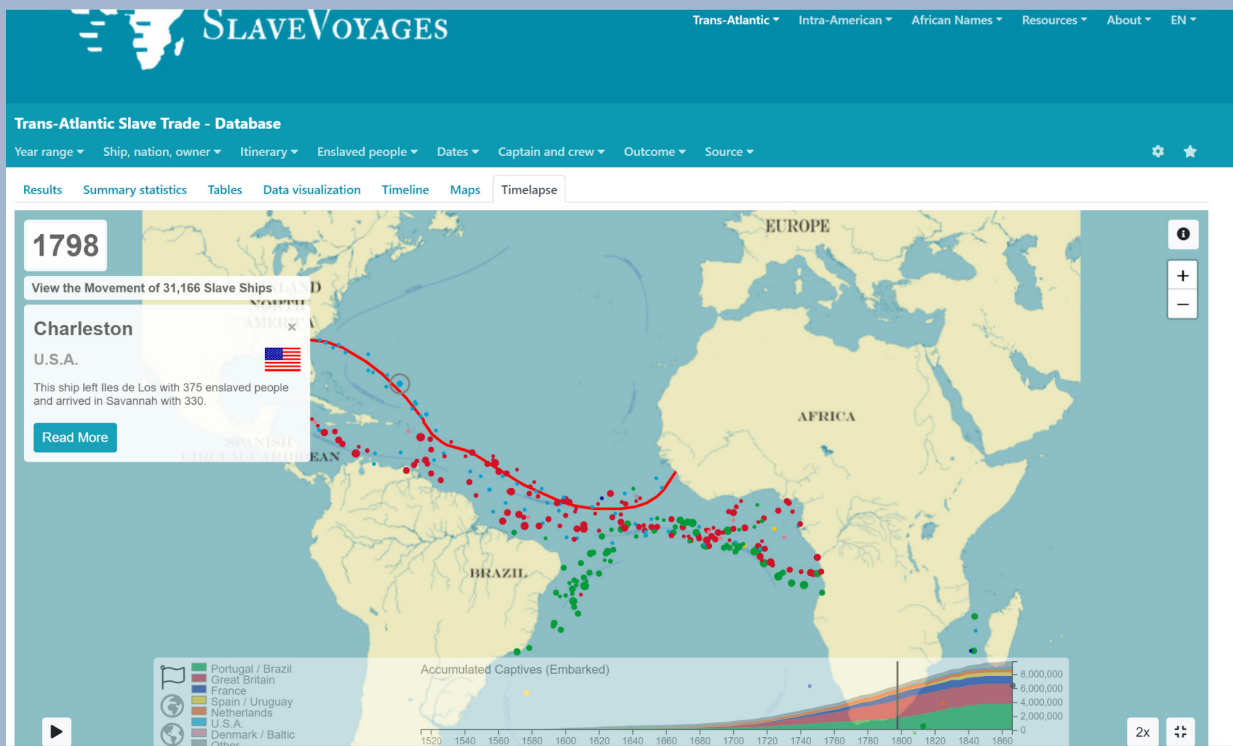
The class will explore the design of "generous interfaces" using a number of specific case studies: Foremost, we will look at various memorials to the Holocaust (including the Dutch Digital Monument to 100,000+ Jews, Eisenman's Berlin memorial, Libeskind's memorial spaces and museums as well as the Shoah Foundation's corpus of 55,000 testimonies). Beyond "search", what could a generous interface enable in terms of memorialization? We will also look at the data of the [Slave Voyages](#) project, which documents more than 36,000 slave voyages, with over 10 million slaves, over 350+ years. How can digital forms of representation help us comprehend the scale and scope of such an event, especially when witness testimonies are absent?

The deliverables for the class will be the development of a set of principles and a series of speculative designs for both digital and physical interfaces for visualizing and memorializing events of mass atrocity.

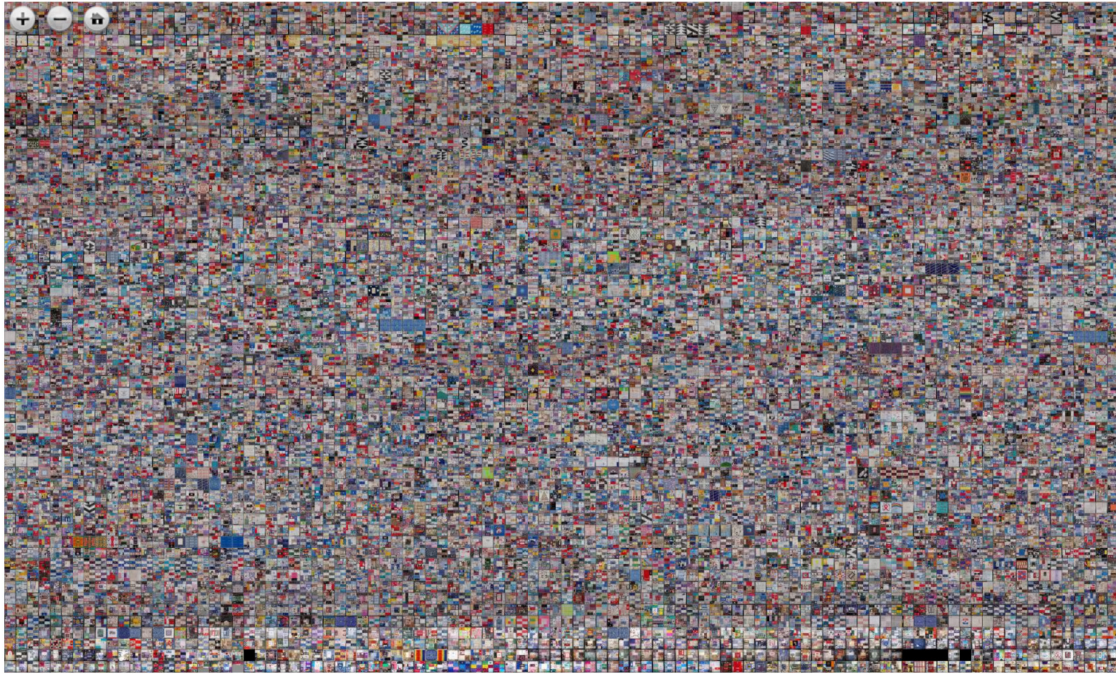
More Examples



Dutch Digital Memorial to 100,000 murdered Jews



Slave Voyage time lapse visualization of 31,166 slave ships



100,000+ names on 48,000 panels for AIDS memorial

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USC Shoah Foundation

Visual History Archive Online

Viewing Screen

Erika Jacoby

From the collection of USC Shoah Foundation

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Segments

- Biographical Profile
- Indexing Terms in Testimony
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Segment#: 42 +
camp selections
Poland 1944
Malvina Salamonovits - mothers

Segment#: 43 +
grandparents
loved ones' separations
Malvina Salamonovits - mothers

Segment#: 44 +
camp intake procedures

Video Tape: 2 of 5

Show Map

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Next Result

Previous Result

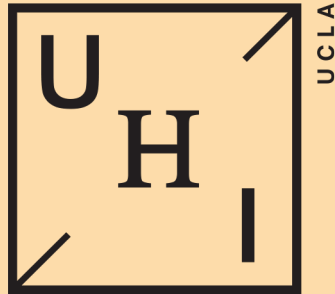
Back to Search Results

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Print Testimony

The interface for watching individual survivor testimonies of the USC Shoah Foundation (one testimony of 55,000+ video-recorded testimonies)



**Urban Biodiversity: Narrative and
Infrastructure**

UHI Capstone Spring 2021

Instructor: Ursula K. Heise

Department: Department of English and at the Institute
of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA

Number of UHI Participants: 3

Description

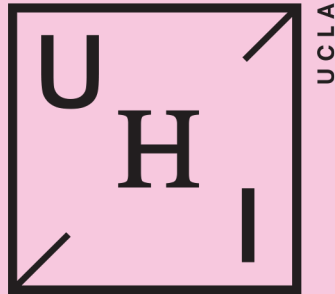
Studies of urban ecology in general and urban diversity in particular have grown explosively over the last two decades. Scientific research has documented not only that large cities are havens rather than wastelands of biodiversity, but also that they serve as conservation refuges for some species and speed up evolutionary change for others. From environments that are designed by and for humans only, cities have come to be recognized as multispecies habitats for a wide range of animal and plant species.

But it is still rare for the multispecies metropolis to be studied from cultural and design perspectives. This capstone seminar will focus on how urban biodiversity is perceived by different cultural communities: Which animal and plant species are particular communities aware of, and which ones do they not know about? Cultural taxonomies sometimes diverge from scientific taxonomies: Categories such as wild vs. domestic, beautiful vs. ugly, attractive vs. frightening, edible vs. inedible, or poisonous vs. non-poisonous tend to play a central role in the way different cultures divide up the spectrum of species. What role do such cultural taxonomies play in structuring urban populations' interactions with their environments? Which species do individual communities like and want to have present in the urban context, which ones would they rather not have around, and which ones are they indifferent toward? To what extent does this profile of preferences map onto what ecologists postulate as desirable? How should differences between the various preference profiles be socially and politically negotiated? What narrative templates structure the textual and visual stories different communities tell about urban plants and animals?

Seminar participants will be invited to pursue these questions with regard to a particular species or group of species and to focus especially on that species' interactions with built infrastructures, from bridges, power lines, and waste disposal sites to walls, roofs, and parks.

- Can the city be redesigned to offer better habitat for more species?
- What cultural perceptions and design principles should govern this process?

Seminar participants will be able to present the results of their research in a variety of formats and media, from research papers to videos and architectural models.



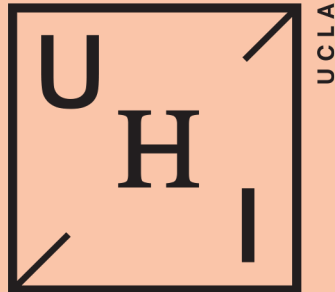
HEAT IN THE CITY
UHI Capstone Spring 2021

Instructor: Bharat Jayram Venkat
Department: Institute for Society & Genetics,
Department of History, UCLA

Number of UHI Participants: 3

Description

As the climate changes, the world's cities in particular are getting hotter – what's been described as the "urban heat island effect." Yet, not all parts of the city are heating up equally. Heat overlays longer histories of inequality. Taking two cities--Los Angeles and Chennai--this capstone will try to understand how exposure to heat is connected to forms of race, class, caste, and gender-based inequalities, as well as how we might gain a better understanding of the ways in which people experience and respond to increasing temperatures. Topics might include: redlining, thermal comfort, racialization, colonial science & medicine, comparative architectural histories, the biological effects of urban life.



**Expanded Public Space for Different Social
Groups in Westlake**

UHI Capstone Spring 2021

Instructors: Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, Co-Instructor
Gustavo Leclerc, Co-Instructor

Department: Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA
Architecture

Number of UHI Participants: 12

Description

The Expanded Public Space of Westlake Capstone Project will explore the changing dynamics of what constitutes public space in the Westlake/MacArthur Park area (WMA). WMA is a neighborhood in central Los Angeles with a complex social and cultural history currently undergoing unprecedented social and spatial changes. It has the second-highest density in LA County (after adjacent Koreatown), with a heavily working-class Latino population. In the last decade, WMA has experienced an exponential increase in the unhoused population, an explosion of immigrant-based informal economies, housing vulnerability, and the aggressive forces of gentrification. The public spaces of WMA are the stages where these urban conditions are made most evident. The COVID19 pandemic exposed the already existing socio-economic inequalities and profoundly affected the neighborhood's public spaces.

The nature and meaning of what constitutes Public Space are being reconstituted and reimagined as we speak, partly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The boundaries and uses of sidewalks, public parks, streets, alleys, parking lots, etc., are constantly blurred, overlapped, and transgressed, creating a new type of malleable hybrid public space that contracts and expands on a temporal basis depending on the needs and circumstances of the moment. While some of these needs may be similar for all Westlake residents, other needs may be specific to different social groups (e.g. youth, older adults, female or male, unsheltered individuals, etc.)

Students will research the changing nature and malleability of the public spaces in the WMA neighborhood in small groups and will seek to first understand/document and then design/plan so as to satisfy the public space needs of particular user groups. Students will focus their investigations on conditions where the sidewalk, street, park, parking lot, alley, and wall expand and contract to accommodate competing and overlapping uses and functions. Conditions such as where the sidewalk bleeds into the street to accommodate the unhoused or establish outdoor eating areas for restaurants during COVID, the parking lot become a place for improvised informal economies on weekends, or an alternative place for playing soccer or skateboarding. Also, the public parks are now places for leisure and playing and also are the sites for sheltering the unhoused, for informal ambulatory economies, illicit activities such as drug dealing, political and religious expression, etc.

For their research project, students will be asked to employ some of the UH research methods learned during the Fall and Winter quarters, such as Thick Mapping, Digital Storytelling, Spatial Ethnography. The research will be translated into a series of speculative urban design ideas that respond to a new concept of public space, highly malleable, flexible, dynamic, temporal, and that expands and contracts in response to the intense challenges experienced by the WMA community.