

**UP 225 – PLANNING IN BLACK COMMUNITIES:  
RACE AS PROPERTY IN UNITED STATES HISTORIES**

December of 1936, just a couple of weeks away from the eighth Christmas of the Great Depression, Deputy Marshal Crittenden of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department knocked on Mary Garner's door. Wielding a writ that Garner's landlord obtained, Deputy Crittenden had orders to evict Garner and her four children from their home in north Los Angeles. Two months earlier, her landlord more than doubled the rent, from \$12 to \$25 a month. Garner and her husband could pay \$12 but could not afford \$25, "not without," she told the Los Angeles Times, "sacrificing food." Repeating a choice phrase I learned from the Los Angeles Tenants Union during our more recent unemployment crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic, **Garner chose food, not rent.** In making that choice, Deputy Marshal Crittenden put her furniture and her family in the street. Infant in her lap, surrounded by her children, and, as the Times put it the following day, "sat on a sack of clean clothes in the street last night with no place to go."

The Nobel prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison offers us one of the most compelling reflections on the social texture of eviction. Left waiting in her story set on the tail end of the Great Depression, she writes in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*:

"There is a difference between being put out and being put outdoors. If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. The distinction was subtle but final. Outdoors was the end of something, an irrecoverable, physical fact, defining and complementing our metaphysical condition. Being a minority in both caste and class (and here gender), we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weakness and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment. Our peripheral existence, however, was something we had learned to deal with—probably because it was abstract. But the concreteness of being outdoors was another matter—like the difference between the concept of death and being, in fact, dead. **Dead doesn't change, and the outdoors is here to stay.**"

Because the outdoors is and was as serious as the fact of being dead, she gently maligned it as "the real terror of life."

The terror of the outdoors that Morrison invites us to confront is no fictional hyperbole. A couple of years after putting the Garner family into the outdoors, Deputy Crittenden's dead body gave up its warmth to it. George Farley, a tenant facing Crittenden's eviction squad, shot and killed him and his partner as they gathered Farley's possessions for their destination to the street. Farley, too, could not afford the rent. After an hour-long volley of bullets and tear gas fresh from the killing fields of the First World War, the Los Angeles Police Department captured Farley. Sitting in a jail cell awaiting a trial that would determine whether Farley would die by poison gas in the walls of San Quentin State Prison, a reporter asked him a predictable question to this sort

of seemingly spontaneous bloodletting we call murder. Why did he shoot the marshals? He answered, “Things just went through my mind—no money, no house and no truck to move my furniture.” Indeed, when George Farley could no longer afford the rent he faced the concreteness of the outdoors, and for that, other men met the irrevocable, physical fact of being dead.

In contemporary Los Angeles, tenants face increasing rent troubles, and for some 60,000 people who—like Mary Garner, her children, and the Farleys—cannot afford or refuse the rent, are now outdoors. Landlords leverage the outdoors with eviction, ensuring a steady stream of rent, no matter how heinous the conditions of shelter or interpersonal treatment. Black insurgents of the 60s and 70s resisted evictions, making many long hot summers on the domestic side of the Cold War. Black women, who face the eviction squad more than any *Other*, were vulnerable to predatory mortgage schemes, backed by the full faith and credit of the United States, to escape tenancy. The fact of extraction on both sides of the property coin—tenancy and ownership—point to a fundamental marginalizing political relation that makes Blackness and Indigeneity, **debt**.

The outdoors is made in other ways. The marginalized of New Orleans, too, were put outdoors, by the history of disaster making that we call Hurricane Katrina. We warehoused poor, surplus people in prisons when they had no “productive” place to go, and we criminalized them. You get the point? Vulnerability to these troubles (debt, uneven development, and incarceration) that put people in **the outdoors is a property of racial capitalism**; we make racial difference through property’s role in administering peoples’ vulnerability to it. Whiteness as property wouldn’t mean much if the people who possessed it regularly faced rent raises, evictions, nasty mortgages, floods, and the prison cell. One way of identifying these political relations of the outdoors is to search for land violence—physical, cultural, and bureaucratic—and solve its political and cultural economy. In other words, how is the violence cultivated by way of the governance of land, that is, by way of property. We must remember the likes of Mary Garner, George Farley, and the body of Deputy Crittenden to get at the property violence that works for racial capitalism. I believe we can redefine our policy debates about land and development by looking candidly at the history of the politics of **debt, the outdoors, and its body count**.

Racial capitalism, the political philosopher, Olufemi Taiwo remind us, is a system of distribution. Therefore, we end our course thinking of reparations anew, as a project of building more just systems of distribution. In the conceptual framework of this class, **we build just property**.

## **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

Professor Mark Vestal

Office: 5347 Public Affairs Building

Winter 2023 Office Hours: Monday 5pm-6:30pm (In person or Zoom) and Tuesdays 4pm – 5:30pm (Zoom only)

Schedule: <https://calendly.com/profvestal/15min>

## CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. Attend seminar, be engaged, and complete all required readings to the best of your capacity. Collective reading, notetaking, and study are encouraged. **(20%)**
2. In groups of **2 to 4 students (depending on final class size)**, choose a weekly reading for which your group will lead our discussion. Be prepared to guide discussion of the author's argument, intervention, and one example of an extent planning method/intervention (ex. grassroots tactics, policy, or research program) that addresses one or more of the problems or supplements one of more of the strengths identified by the author. You DO NOT need to give a presentation. Sign up for a reading [here](#). **(15%)**
3. Students who are not delivering a weekly book presentation are required to write a one-page reading response, **for a total of eight reading responses**. Reading responses, at a minimum, should recount the author's argument. I would also like to hear your thoughts on possible planning interventions related to the week's central issue. For example, what is planning's role in confronting (or not) mass incarceration, homelessness, gendered violence, and climate change in Black communities? How do we understand these social processes as part of the whole of the history of *Black land struggle* in the United States? **Responses are due Sunday by midnight. (15%)**
4. History-informed Planning final paper (2,500-word, 250-word abstract, and bibliography) **(50%)**
  - A) **Prompt:** Centering one of the course's weekly readings, historically contextualize and critique a contemporary planning intervention of your choosing, but of course, one that is relevant to building the autonomy of Black communities. You may use interventions that your group or another group presented, or choose a new one entirely. For example, a common policy prescription for racial inequalities in housing is some sort of "affordable housing." What is the history of affordable housing policy in terms of its **political, social, cultural, and economic context**? What issues does this history reveal? How does the contemporary planning intervention address, or not, the issues raised in the history you recovered? By "history," I do not simply mean the history of relevant laws and government institutions, I also mean social movements, everyday conflict, and popular culture.
  - B) **Due March 20, 2022 by 11:59pm.**

## BRUIN LEARN

Our class learning management system has been migrated to [Bruin Learn](#). Please check the site for resources, trainings, and support. You may need to accept an invitation to this course before

accessing the course webpage. Additionally, please ensure that you set the appropriate notification settings on the site to receive class related notifications.

## **CENTER FOR ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION**

If you are already registered with the Center for Accessible Education (CAE), please request your Letter of Accommodation in the Student Portal. If you are seeking registration with the CAE, please submit your request for accommodations via the CAE website. Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks to review the request. For more information, please visit the CAE website ([www.cae.ucla.edu](http://www.cae.ucla.edu)), visit the CAE at A255 Murphy Hall, or contact us by phone at (310) 825-1501.

## **REQUIRED BOOKS**

Connolly, N. D. B. 2014. *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* / N.D.B. Connolly. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Hinton, Elizabeth Kai. *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*.

Horowitz, Andy (Andrew Deutsch). 2020. *Katrina: a History, 1915-2015* / Andy Horowitz. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*.

Táíwò, Olúfẹ̀mi O. 2022. *Reconsidering Reparations: Worldmaking in the Case of Climate Crisis* / Olúfẹ̀mi O. Táíwò. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

## **WEEK 1. JAN 9: Policy History and Smuggling Black Radical Critiques into the Mainstream**

Course introduction, community agreements, setting intentions.

Read Kelly Lytle Hernandez, “Hobos in Heaven”; and Marques Vestal et al. “The Great Depression and World War II,” in *Making of a Crisis: Homelessness in Los Angeles*. (Link sent in email)

## **WEEK 2. JAN 16: Race and Tenancy in the Making of Black Urbanism**

MLK HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

University of California, Los Angeles  
Department of Urban Planning  
Mondays 2pm – 4:50pm

Winter 2023  
Professor Mark Vestal  
Public Affairs 2355

N. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, read chapters 1-4; and Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property.”

### **WEEK 3. JAN 23: Race and Tenancy cont.**

*A World More Concrete*, read chapters 5-8.

### **WEEK 4. JAN 30: Reading Urban Violence as Black Insurgency**

Hinton, Elizabeth Kai. *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*/ Elizabeth Hinton. First edition. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2021. (Read whole book)

### **WEEK 5. FEB 6: Land Debt as Predatory Inclusion**

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* / Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021, chapters 1-3. (Online through UCLA Library)

### **WEEK 6. FEB 13: Land Debt cont.**

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*, chapter 4-6 and conclusion.

### **WEEK 7. FEB 20: Race and Disaster**

PRESIDENT’S DAY – NO CLASS

Andy Horowitz, *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*, Part I.

### **WEEK 8. FEB 27: Race and Disaster cont.**

Andy Horowitz, *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*, Part II.

### **WEEK 9. MAR 6: Spatial Fixes**

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, chapters Intro, 1, 3, and 9. (Online)

### **WEEK 10. MAR 13: Redistribution**

Táiwò, Olúfemi O. *Reconsidering Reparations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2022.