

HUM 376: SAN FRANCISCO: BIOGRAPHY OF A CITY

Dr. Robert C. Thomas

This course is fully online via iLearn

Office: HUM 416

Office Hour: T/TH 12:00PM - 1:00 PM in HUM 416, or via Zoom, via email, via iLearn, or by appointment.

Email: theory@sfsu.edu | Office Phone: 415-338-1154

Course Website: <http://invisiblesf.com/>

This course meets the following requirements: Upper Division UD-C: Arts and/or Humanities, SF State Studies: Environmental Sustainability, GE Segment 3.

Additional costs: \$5.49 streaming rental for *Vertigo* and *Forbidden City, USA*.

This course studies the cultural life of the city from its days as a Spanish settlement named Yerba Buena to the present. This particular version of the course treats the historical and cultural life of the city as coextensive with modernity—modern capitalist development, including “progress” and its ideologies. Because the City of SF is bound up with modernity, it is something that is still happening, something that we are all participating in and working through. This is why my versions of the course have been subtitled *A History of the Present*.

This is a fun class where we learn about all the dirty stories from the 19th century, the gossip, and the unique characters of San Francisco. But we will also think seriously about place and exclusion, the genocide of native peoples, and the history of race in the city. We will also study gender and its constructions, sexuality, nature, commodification, technology, prostitution, trans history, image and spectacle as they relate to everyday life in modern SF. Significant cultural works, places, and events, will be studied in relation to the material history of the city.

What is San Francisco modernism? The term modernism is defined differently by different people. Since it's impossible to accurately represent entire periods of human history, for the purposes of this class, when we talk about modernism, we are primarily talking about a concept that seeks to think an entire series of cultural practices, techniques, and relations specific to the 19th century that inform and shed light on how we got to our present moment. Thus, our questions and concerns will be based on contemporary experiences. Our work, in that sense, remains grounded in often urgent problems of the present—for example, race, gender, sex, and class—in relation to their material history.

How do we read the unique forms of human expression, such as art, architecture, music, literature, photography, film, and politics associated with this city and their relation to modern life? We will explore these and other questions by tracing our own unique history of the present of San Francisco. Rather than a simple chronological re-telling of dates, facts and major events, we will endeavor to creatively enter into the historical life of the city, thereby changing and expanding our conception of San Francisco. Close attention will be paid to major historical events and cultural locations in the life of the city, such as the gold rush, immigration, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, Chinatown, the Chinese Exclusion Act, modernity, world's fairs, censorship and the beat generation (optional this semester), vice and sin, cinema and literature, photography and music. By the end of the semester, students should come away from the course with a greater knowledge of the cultural history of San Francisco, and, hopefully, a new experience of the city in relation to its past.

Everyone is welcome in this class. The online forums are, above all, a space where students are allowed to have a voice. It's really important, especially with what is going on in the world, that we support each other and strive to be respectful of our differences, our contributions, and our points of view. From the subject matter we will study, to many of the primary texts used in the course (written by women and sexual minorities), to the work we will do in the online forums, this is an inclusive class.

Required Books (available at the bookstore)

- Barbara Bergland, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846-1906*
- Jessica Ellen Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915*
- Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*

Required Essays and Book Selections (will be available as PDF files linked below on iLearn and on the course website):

- Borde and Chaumeton, *A Panorama of American Film Noir* (selections)
- Celeste Olalquiaga, "The Crystal Palace" from *The Artificial Kingdom*
- Nancy J. Peters, "[The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent](#)"
- Mary Jean Robertson, "[Reflections from Occupied Ohlone Territory](#)"
- James R. Smith, "[California Midwinter International Exposition](#)" (optional)
- Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City* (first reading)
- Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City* (second reading)
- Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City* (third reading)
- Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (first reading)
- Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (second reading)
- John Kuo Wei Tchen, "[Introduction: Tangrenbu-The Street life of San Francisco's Chinatown, 1895-1906](#)" from *Gentle's Photographs of San Francisco's Old Chinatown*

Optional Essays (online and in iLearn)

- Jonathan Crary, "Modernizing Vision" (optional)
- Rachel Brahinsky, "[Hush Puppies' Communalist Politics and Demolition Governance: The Rise and Fall of the Black Fillmore](#)" (optional)

Optional Books (available at the bookstore)

- Allen Ginsberg, *Howl: Original Draft Facsimile, Transcript, and Variant Versions* (OPTIONAL). This will be used only for optional extra credit if students need it.

REQUIRED FILMS

(In alphabetical order, most are in iLearn; *Vertigo* and *Forbidden City, U.S.A.* require streaming rental)

- Rick Butler, *Hidden Cities of San Francisco: The Fillmore* (1999)
- Felicia Lowe, *Carved in Silence* (1987)

- Felecia Lowe, *Hidden Cities of San Francisco: Chinatown* (1996)
- Arthur Dong, *Forbidden City, USA* (1989)
- Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (1958)
- Riff and Roberts, *Isbi: The Last Yabi* (1992)
- Michael Rohde, *Madams of the Barbary Coast* (2008)
- Pam Rorke, *Hidden Cities of San Francisco: The Mission* (1994)
- Stryker/Silverman, *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria* (2010)
- Jeffrey Schon, *American Cinema: Film Noir* (1995)
- or, Gary Leva, *Film Noir: Bringing Darkness to Light* (2006)
- Jill Nicholls, *The Weird World of Eadweard Muybridge* (2010/UK)
- "Muybridge's Zoopraxiscope: Setting Time in Motion" (2010) (short)

Course Assignments and Grading

- Midterm Paper 40%
- Final Paper 40%
- Forum Posts 10%
- Final Exam 10%

NOTES

- You are **required** to take notes on 5 of the films we will study this semester. You will need these notes to successfully write your papers and complete the course. These notes will need to be handed in online in iLearn as specified in the schedule. Because there are two sections for each week of work, and in some weeks, two films that require notes, notes for one film will be due on Tuesday by 11:55 PM and the other due on Thursday by 11:55 PM
- These notes are part of your research. There is no format for the notes. You are free to write them in long hand, scan, then upload the notes. Or use a computer to type them up. They can even be lists of things you note that are important. The notes are part of your paper grade (i.e. I do check them when grading papers: if you don't talk about something in your paper on a given topic, but deal with it in your notes, then I am able to give you the benefit of the doubt). The notes are a helpful structure to keep students on track with their work.
- Film notes are required for the following films: *Isbi: The Last Yabi*, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, *Madams of the Barbary Coast*, *Hidden Cities of San Francisco: Chinatown*, *Vertigo*.
- **Notes will be due on the following dates: Tuesday, June 5th, *Isbi: The Last Yabi*; Thursday., June 7th, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*; Tuesday, June 12th, *Madams of the Barbary Coast*; Thursday., June 14th, *Hidden Cities of San Francisco: Chinatown*; Tuesday, June 26th, *Vertigo*.**

FORUMS

- **The forums** are there for students to ask me questions about the materials, to allow you to interact with other students about the material, and **to provide a voice for you and your learning**. You should think of these activities as part of your research, as well as a virtual

classroom discussion. Eight of the forums are required, as listed in the schedule and in iLearn. Optional forum days can be participated in on an as needed basis. You should post to the forum on required modules no later than 11:55 PM on the due date (see the schedule below).

- Your posts should be substantial and thoughtful and should demonstrate engagement with the assigned materials, including the films, video lectures and readings. But you should also think of them the same way you would think about interacting with your peers and your instructor in the classroom. This is really all we are doing, only in a written form.
- I will be regularly checking-in and interacting with you in the forums. (Note: if anyone has any questions or issues with this format/schedule, please do not hesitate to discuss this with me. This is **your** class and i am here to help you succeed.)
- Forum posts are required for the following modules: Welcome and Introduction Forum, **Monday June 4th**; Ishi and Race forum, **Tuesday, June 5th**; Muybridge Forum, due **Thursday, June 7th**; Race and SF's Chinatown, due **Thursday, June 14th**; Playing in the City, Woodward's Gardens, Sutro's Baths, Crystal Palace, due **Tuesday, June 19th**; Forum on Midwinter Fair and Midterm Review, due **Thursday, June 21st**; Forum on Arresting Dress, Women and the Everyday City, the Riot at Compton's due Tuesday, **July 3rd**; Forum on The Fillmore and Forbidden City, U.S.A. due **Thursday, July 5th**.

Other forum posts can be posted to on an as needed basis.

Students who regularly engage in these activities are the most successful students in this course. This is a unique and challenging course and I want you to get the most out of it.

PAPERS

There will be 2 papers required (following the requirements for segment III and/or UD-C). There will be a midterm paper and a final paper due. There will be a handout on the essay assignments before each essay is due. Each essay must contain the required pages of formal *college level writing*. Your essays must demonstrate *mastery of the reading material and course lectures* for the assignments (your grade will be based on this). *All essays must be critical. No grade will be awarded for non-critical writing.* No rewrites of written work. No late papers accepted. *Plagiarism in any of the course assignments, in any form, will be dealt with harshly and will be forwarded to the Dean's Office for appropriate action.* Plagiarism on any assignment will also result in a grade of F for the assignment. (Please note that Wikipedia is NOT a critical source and cannot be used for college writing. The same is true of IMDB.) No incomplete grades will be given.

Papers are due **Sunday, June 24th by 11:55 PM**; and **Friday, July 6th by 11:55 PM**.

WEEKLY STRUCTURE

Students should think of this course, even though it is online, as following a Tuesday/Thursday schedule.

Summer session is unusually compressed. Each module is the equivalent of more than a week-and-a-half of a regular semester. Thus, each week of summer session is approximately 3 weeks of a regular semester.

The single most important thing for you to do is to make sure the schedule is going to work for you (and to make a schedule for yourself that works alongside this schedule). I have done my best to help you with this by making assignments due throughout the week. So, for example, some weeks you will have film notes due by Tuesday at 11:55 PM, and then Thursday at 11:55PM. Other weeks, you will have forum posts due by Tuesday at 11:55 PM and, again, Thursdays at 11:55 PM.

There are only 8 forum posts required and 5 film notes required. This is because Summer is so compact. The work is spread out to make it do-able. I think it's more of a burden to students, and less like an actual class, to simply to make all of the work due on a Sunday, all at once, before midnight. This structure, where the work is spread out over the course of a week, allows students to make their own schedules and make it work for them.

Do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions you have about the course schedule.

Students are responsible for completing all the assigned course work.

FINAL EXAM

A final exam will also be required. The final exam will consist of ten questions. If you do not read the course material, watch the films, or view the lecture /discussion videos you will fail the final exam. The questions are a combination of true and false, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

The final exam will be given in iLearn on Friday, July 6th. It will be turned on at 12:00 am and turned off at 11:55PM. The final exam will follow the same time schedule.

Warning: This is a difficult and challenging course. If you do not do the course readings, you will be completely lost. The biggest mistake that students make on the essay assignments is to not actually read the assignment and/or fully follow the instructions. Additionally, if your paper does not demonstrate that you've read the assigned books, you may be graded down significantly and may not receive a passing grade.

There is also a [Handout on Critical Writing](#) that I wrote nearly two decades ago that you may find of interest. I have had students tell me that in four years being in school, no one every explained to them what critical writing was (and was not) until they read this short handout. Your mileage may vary, but it is available to you as an additional resource.

DISABILITY ACCESS

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. Please do not hesitate to contact me with anything you need at any time during the semester. That is what I am here for.

The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/415-338-2472, video phone/415-335-7210) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu).

STUDENT DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Title IX Coordinator by completing the report form available at <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>, emailing vpsaem@sfsu.edu or calling 338-2032.

To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact: • The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/ • Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/> • For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>

STUDENT DROPS

Students who do not login the first week will be dropped. It is the students' responsibility to drop the course after the first class session (module). Students who stop submitting work but do not drop will be given a WU grade. Please be aware that a WU grade is counted as an F for GPA purposes.

Tentative Course Schedule

WEEK ONE (PART ONE) | INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS | SCREENING OF *ISHI: THE LAST YAHI* | SCREENING OF *RACE: THE POWER OF AN ILLUSION*

Key topics: Introduction, Ishi, Native American Genocide, Bay Area Native Peoples, Race, Spectacle

Steps to complete this module:

1. READ

- Study Questions on *Ishi: The Last Yahi*
- Study Questions on *Race: The Power of an Illusion*

2. WATCH

- Introduction to *Ishi the Last Yahi*

3. WATCH

(Note: This film streams at through SFSU click on the film title for the link. You will need to be logged into SFSU to watch it.)² *Last Yahi* (56:44) (Take Notes

→)

4. WATCH

- *Race: The Power of an Illusion: The Story We Tell* (57:08)

This is a link to Films On Demand. You will have to login to SFSU in order to watch the film. There is a link to a transcript of the film on iLearn.

5. POST

- Post your film notes on *Ishi* no later than Tuesday, June 5th @ 11:55PM

6. POST

- Post to the online forum no later than Tuesday, June 5th @ 11:55PM

WEEK ONE (PART TWO) | MODERNISM / MODERNITY, EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

Key Topics: Technology, Time, Modernism, Modernity, Eadweard Muybridge, Photography, Native Peoples

1. READ

- Study Questions on Muybridge
- Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows*, 3-24, 103-124, 127-152
- Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City*, vii-30

2. WATCH

"Muybridge's Zoopraxiscope" (4:05)

3. WATCH

- BBC: *The Weird World of Eadweard Muybridge* by Jill Nicholls (UK/2010). (57:54).

4. **POST** to the online forum no later than Thursday @ 11:55PM

5. **POST** your film notes on *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Part Two) no later than Thursday @ 11:55PM

After doing the assigned reading, feel free to watch and/or listen to Rebecca Solnit's lecture on "Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West" posted in iLearn. (She reads short selections from the assigned readings for this class, along with other observations. This can't replace the reading assignment, but I think it can help to clarify and reinforce your reading). **(optional but recommended)**

WEEK TWO (PART ONE) | LIVING IN 19TH CENTURY SAN FRANCISCO: CLASS, RACE, GENDER, ARCHITECTURE, PROSTITUTION

Key Topics: Gold Rush, Life in early San Francisco, Prostitution, Class, Race, Modern Architecture: The Palace Hotel, Gender, Media, Spectacle.

1. READ

- *Making San Francisco American*, ix – 57

2. WATCH

- Discussion of Berglund (to be posted)

3. WATCH

- Film, *Madams of the Barbary Coast* (56:15) (TAKE NOTES!)

4. **POST** Your film notes no later than Tuesday at 11:55PM

5. **POST** to the online forum no later than Tuesday at 11:55PM

WEEK TWO (PART TWO) | MAKING RACE IN SAN FRANCISCO: CHINATOWN

Key topics: Orientalism, the architecture of Chinatown, the Chinese Exclusion Act, Ways of "Seeing" Race, History of SF Chinatown, History of SFSU, Arnold Genthe, Race, Whiteness, and Photographs of Old Chinatown.

1. READ

- Study Questions on Race and Chinatown
- Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 95 – 136.
- John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Introduction: Tangrenbu: The Street Life of San Francisco's Chinatown, 1895-1906"

2. WATCH

- *Hidden Cities of SF: Chinatown* (57:30) (Take Notes)

3. WATCH

- *Carved in Silence* (46:20) (Take Notes)

4. **POST** your film notes on *Hidden Cities of SF: Chinatown* no later than

5. **POST** to the online forum no later than Thursday @ 11:55PM.

WEEK THREE (PART ONE) | PLAYING IN THE CITY: THE BARBARY COAST, WOODWARD'S GARDENS, SUTRO'S BATHS

Midterm Paper Prompt Handed Out

1. READ

- Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 58 – 94
- Celeste Olalquiaga, "The Crystal Palace"

2. WATCH

- Reading “The Crystal Palace” – to be posted
- Reading “Playing in the City” – to be posted
- Intro to *Sutro’s* – to be posted

3. WATCH

- *Sutro’s: The Palace at Lands End*

Short blog post by Dr. Thomas on the course website: The Sutro Baths and Modernity (**optional**)

4. **POST** to the online forum no later than Tuesday @ 11:55PM

You do NOT have to post any film notes.

WEEK THREE (PART TWO) | THE CALIFORNIA MIDWINTER EXPOSITION, MIDTERM REVIEW

1. READ

- Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 171 – 217, 218-226
- Study Questions on Midwinter Exposition – to be posted

2. WATCH

- Film, *The Fantastic Fair*

3. WATCH

- Reading About California Midwinter Exposition – to be posted
- Midterm Review – to be posted

4. **POST** to the online forum no later than Thursday at 11:55PM

You do Not have to post any film notes.

MIDTERM PAPER DUE via TurnItIn @ 11:55PM Sunday, June 24th

WEEK FOUR (PART ONE) | ALFRED HITCHCOK’S *VERTIGO*

1. READ

- Study Questions on *Vertigo*

2. WATCH

- Introductory lecture to *Vertigo* (to be posted)

3. WATCH

- Film – *Vertigo*
AVAILABLE ONLINE (2.99 RENTAL)

5. WATCH

- *How Alfred Hitchcock Blocks a Scene* (8:36)

(NOTE: DO NOT WATCH UNTIL AFTER YOU HAVE SEEN THE ENTIRE FILM, THIS CONTAINS MAJOR SPOILERS)

6. WATCH

- Zizek on *Vertigo* (10:27)

7. WATCH

- The Influence of *Vertigo* (3:59)

8. WATCH

- The Filmmakers Voice: *Vertigo* (11:35)

WEEK FOUR (PART TWO) | SAN FRANCISCO FILM NOIR

1. READ

- *Panorama of American Film Noir*, vii-13.
- Study Questions on Film Noir

2. WATCH

- Reading *Panorama of American Film Noir* (to be posted)

3. WATCH

Choose from among the two documentaries embedded below. Watch at least one of these documentaries.

- *PBS American Cinema: Film Noir* (Recommended)

- *Bringing Light to Darkness* (Good)

3. You will need to do some research in order to determine which film you plan to write about. You will be writing about and doing research on a San Francisco film noir of your own choosing.

Choose one SF film noir to watch, research, and write about from the following List of SF Film Noirs.

NOTE: Everyone will be required to write about a film noir as part of your final paper. You will be writing about the film you choose. Take notes while you watch the film. Here is the portion of the final essay assignment concerning film noir. This is not the entire final essay assignment, but only the part that deals with noir. Assignment on film noir (to be turned in as part of the final paper). —in iLearn

There are a total of 16 films posted on the course website at <http://www.invisiblesf.com/2016/12/30/san-francisco-noir/> These films are available online. Some cost \$2.99 to rent and some are free. They are all films on the list. You will have to do some research to determine which film you plan to write about and how you plan to write about it.

Note: I've included the late noir procedural *The Lineup* below so as not to have outside links to it on the internet. That film cannot be accessed via the URL above and can only be accessed here on iLearn.

4. Have a look at the handy BFI infographic on “What Makes a Film Noir” (note: this is not a source for your paper, just a great infographic to help with your learning).

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/infographic-what-makes-film-noir>

You do Not have to post any film notes today.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON SF FILM NOIR

The Sniper (Edward Dmytryk, 1952) in iLearn

The Lineup (Don Siegel, 1958) (scenes shot inside the Sutro Baths before it burned down.) in iLearn

"In the Cut" (Part 3): I Left My Heart in my Throat in San Francisco" in iLearn **(optional)**

A section of *A Personal Journey Through American Movies* by Martin Scorsese that deals with film aspects of film noir, "The Director as Smuggler" (Part 1). The noir section begins at 13:45 **(optional)**

WEEK FIVE (PART ONE) | WOMEN AND PUBLIC SPACE IN SAN FRANCISCO, CROSSDRESSING IN THE 19TH CENTURY, THE RIOT AT COMPTON'S CAFETERIA

Final Paper Prompt Handed Out

1. READ

Claire Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 1-60

Jessica Ellen Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City*, xi-23, 127-172

I know it's a lot. These are both GREAT books. Do the best you can.

2. WATCH

- Reading *Arresting Dress* (to be posted)
- Reading *Women and the Everyday City* (to be posted)

3. WATCH

Film – *Screaming Queens* (56:12)

4. **POST** to the required forum no later than 11:55 PM on Tuesday, July 3rd

WEEK FIVE (PART TWO) | THE FILLMORE AND THE BLACK REMOVAL / FORBIDDEN CITY USA

1. READ

Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City*, 37–44

Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City*, 57–73

Rachel Brahinsky, “Hush Puppies: Communalist Politics and Demolition Governance” **(optional)**

2. WATCH

- Film, *Hidden Cities of SF: The Fillmore* (1 hour 23 minutes)

3. WATCH

- Film, *Forbidden City, USA* (24 Hour Streaming Rental is \$2.50)

4. **POST** to the online forum no later than 11:55PM on Thursday

FINAL PAPER DUE VIA TURNITIN AND FINAL EXAM DUE FRIDAY, JULY 6TH BY 11:55PM

DO NOT BE LATE. NOT LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED.