

# Course Syllabus

## **Conflict Urbanism: Puerto Rico Now**

### **Course Numbers:**

ARCH A4890

CSER GU4002

**Seminar: Friday 1-3pm, Hamilton 420**

**Tutorials: Friday 11-1, Studio @ Butler as needed by students**

**3 Credits**

**Laura Kurgan, Associate Professor of Architecture**

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Office Hours: Friday 11am - 1pm, at CSR, Schermerhorn Hall Extension #654

**Frances Negrón-Muntaner, Professor of English**

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Office Hours: Fridays 3-5 pm 422 Hamilton, or by appointment

**TA, Anna Stokes**

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Office Hours:

- Thursdays 10am – 12pm, at CSR, Schermerhorn Hall Extension #654 weekly until April 4th

- Fridays 1-3pm, at CSR, Schermerhorn Hall Extension #654 weekly on April 12th, April 19th and April 26th

**Professor Office Hours by Appointment**

**Tutorial Assistance by Appointment**

This is the fourth in a series of multidisciplinary Mellon seminars on the topic of Conflict Urbanism, as part of a multi-university initiative in Architecture, Urbanism and the Humanities. This spring, we will focus on the role of natural and economic disaster in terms of the spatial restructuring of Puerto Rico today.

**Conflict Urbanism: Puerto Rico Now** Our seminar will examine the ways in which hurricanes, debt, and migration are major forces which produce and shape spatial inequalities in contemporary Puerto Rico. We will approach Puerto Rico as a network of conflicting forces, demands, and discourses (economic, spatial, political, environmental, historical, memorial, mediatic, aesthetic), and compare the Puerto Rican context with other intensive politicized spaces. What does Puerto Rico have in common with New Orleans Post Katrina? With the Dominican Republic or Singapore? Prior to Hurricane Maria, what did San Juan have in common with Detroit or Miami? To do our work we will draw on and work with diverse sources of information including data about population displacement, urban destruction housing values and foreclosures, and reports and analysis of “expert” bodies such as FEMA, Puerto Rico’s government, and the United Nations. We will consider how local and global organizing is challenging spatial inequalities, and will reformat this information in a way that exposes some alternate images of Puerto Rico prior to these disasters and present some new post-disaster visions of it. Our seminar involves thinking and action from some very new perspectives which engage multiple methods of learning and engagements.

**Methods and Course Requirements:** Our work will be, by necessity, multidisciplinary across history, economics, architecture, politics, law, literature, and visual culture as related to the topic of Conflict Urbanism. Our work will also be multi-media. Students will create a web-based map as well as written reflections, incorporating analogue as well as digital media. We will use a flipped classroom method in the technical workshops where students will develop mapping and visual storytelling skills. No previous technical skills are necessary for registration; students will not be graded on technical expertise, but on the quality of their individual work. Professors will set individual guidelines for each student based on their disciplinary expertise.

**Midterm, Final, and Presentations:** Students in the class are expected to complete a minimum of 4 and maximum of 6 mapping tutorials as well as weekly readings in order to complete the assignment for the semester, which involve the creation of maps. The midterm evaluation will be in the form of a written project proposal where students will have an opportunity to get feedback on their a. The project idea, b. methodology, c. a data collection or analysis plan. Near the end of the semester, students will present the results of their work and specific plans for their final projects. These presentations are an integral component of the course as they give students an opportunity to share their findings and explain the decisions they made both in data collection and presentation. This is also an opportunity for students give and receive feedback before the final project is submitted. The final project will be submitted after the presentations, and be a combination of writing and maps in which students share qualitative and quantitative information about their chosen neighborhood.

Note: Students will not be graded on their technical proficiency with the tools, but their work in the seminar as a whole. Teamwork and collaboration will be encouraged, but students will be evaluated on their individual contribution to the work.

**Course assignment will be provided on the first day of class.**

### **Grading Breakdown - Graduate**

*Technological skill is not factored into the grade*

10% Participation

20% Tutorials (completion)

20% Presentation

50% Final project

### **Grading Breakdown - Undergraduate**

*Technological skill is not factored into the grade*

10% Participation

20% Tutorials (completion)

15% Midterm

15% Presentation

40% Final project

### **Weekly Plan**

**January 25**

**1. Introduction, Professors Kurgan and Negrón-Muntaner**

## February 01

### 1. Puerto Rico, the “world’s oldest colony”: An Introduction (FN-M)

Required Reading:

González, Juan. “Puerto Ricans: Citizens Yet Foreigners,” “Puerto Rico USA: Possessed and Unwanted,” in *Harvest of Empire* (chapter 4 and 14), 81-95, 249-267.

Smith, Rogers. “The Bitter Roots of Puerto Rican Citizenship,” in, *Foreign in a Domestic Sense, Puerto Rico, American Exceptionalism, and the Constitution*, 373-388.

Recommended Reading:

Alfredo Lopez, *Doña Licha’s island* (1987)

Jose Trias Monge, *The World’s Oldest Colony* (1997)

**Tutorial 1:** Introduction to QGIS

## February 8

### 1. Conflict Urbanism and Representing Conflict (LK) FNM away

Required Reading:

Latour, Bruno. “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public.” *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, 4-31. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005.

Kurgan, Laura. Million Dollar Blocks.” In *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology and Politics*, 187-206. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2013.

Recommended Reading:

Weizman, E. (2014). Introduction: Forensis. *Forensis. The Architecture of Public Truth*, 9-32.

Simone, A. M. "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg." *Public Culture*, Volume 16, Number 3, Fall 2004, pp. 407-429

### **Tutorial 2:** Making Spatial Data

#### **February 15**

##### **1. Space and Inequality in the Twentieth Century (FN-M)**

Required Reading:

Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. *The Emptying Island*, E-misfésferica, 2018.

Gendall, John. "A Puerto Rican Architect Explains How Rebuilding the Country Will Take More than Brick and Mortar," *Architectural Digest*, 3, October 2017.

Recommended Reading/Viewing:

Pedro Rivera and Susan Zeig, *Manos a la Obra: The Story of Operation Bootstrap* (1983)

Gabriel Miranda, Vietnam (2018), <https://vimeo.com/258320930>

### **Tutorial 3:** Satellite Imagery

#### **February 22**

##### **1. Case Study: New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina (LK)**

Required Reading:

Campanella, Richard, "Hurricane Katrina and the Geographies of Catastrophe," in *Geographies of New Orleans*, University of New Orleans Press, 2006 pp 385-405

Yates McKee, "Haunted Housing: Eco-Vanguardism and Eviction in New Orleans," in Eds. Reese, Sorkin, Fontenot, *New Orleans Under Reconstruction: The Crisis of Planning*, Verso, 2014, pp 407-417

Recommended Reading:

Eds. Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, *There is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster: Race, Class and Hurricane Katrina*, Routledge, 2006.

Eds. Reese, Sorkin, Fontenot, *New Orleans Under Reconstruction: The Crisis of Planning*, Verso, 2014

**Tutorial 4:** Web Mapping 01

**March 01**

**1. Puerto Rico's "Unpayable Debt" (1996-2015)**

Required Reading:

Morales, Ed, "[The roots of Puerto Rico's Debt Crisis—and Why Austerity Will Not Solve it \(Links to an external site.\)](#)," *The Nation*, 8 July 2015.

Ora Bannan, Natasha Lycia. "[Puerto Rico's Odious Debt: The Economic Crisis of Colonialism \(Links to an external site.\)](#)," *The City University Law Review*, Vol. 19, Issue 2 (summer 2016).

Recommended Reading:

Caribbean Debt Syllabus, unit 17, <https://caribbeansyllabus.wordpress.com/caribbean-syllabus/>

## **Tutorial 5:** Web Mapping 02

### **March 08**

#### **1. Case Study Detroit: Debt and the Housing Crisis in the USA.**

##### Required Reading:

Kirkpatrick, L. Owen, *Urban Triage, City Systems, and the Remnants of Community: Some "Sticky" Complications in the Greening of Detroit*, in Journal of Urban History 2015, Vol. 41(2) 261–278

McGraw, Bill, *Life in the Ruins of Detroit*, History Workshop Journal, No. 63 (Spring, 2007), pp. 288-302, Oxford University Press

##### Required Links:

<https://makeloveland.com/company> (Links to an external site.)

[McKenzie, Jessica, Detroit's Foreclosure Crisis and the Need for 'Information Justice,'](#) (Links to an external site.)

[Mar 8, 2017](#) (Links to an external site.)

Interboro Architects: Improve your Lot

##### Recommended Reading:

Easterling, Keller, *Subtraction*, Critical Spatial Practice 4, Sternberg Press, 2014

Smith, Michael Peter, Kirkpatrick, L. Owen, eds, *Reinventing Detroit: The Politics of Possibility (Comparative Urban and Community Research) 1st Edition*, Routledge 2015.

Sugrue, Thomas J., *The Origins of the Urban Crisis Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. TBD

## **March 15**

1. **Visitor in Class: Hector Tarrido: will show his work on Electricity in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria and its Aftermath (2016-present)**

**NOTE: Project Proposals due for all, this counts as MIDTERM for Undergraduates.**

Required Reading:

Negrón-Muntaner, Frances, "Blackout: What Darkness Illuminated in Puerto Rico," *Politis/Letters*, March 2, 2018.

Klein, Naomi. "The Battle for Paradise," *The Intercept*, April 7, 2018.

Recommended Reading:

Center for Puerto Rican Studies, *The Housing Crisis in Puerto Rico and the Impact of Hurricane Maria*, 2018 <https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/research/data-center/research-briefs/housing-crisis-puerto-rico-and-impact-hurricane-maria> (Links to an external site.)

## **March 22 - SPRING BREAK**

## **Mar 29**

2. **Guest to Seminar: Martin Guzman.**

**Required Reading: TBD**



**Tutorial 6:** Final Project Publishing 11-1pm: Studio @Butler

**NOTE THIS TUTORIAL IS MANDATORY Studio @Butler 11am – 1pm.**

**Laura Kurgan’s office hours will be 3-5pm in 200 Buel after class.**

**April 05**

**10. Guest to Seminar: Pablo Guardiola Co-Director Beta Local  
see:<http://betalocal.org/> (Links to an external site.)**

**Required Reading: TBD**

**April 12. No class: replaced on April 13.**

**April 13**

**11/12 Student Presentations 11am – 2.30, Buell 200**

**April 19. No class: replaced on April 20.**

**April 20**

**13/14 Student Presentations 11am – 2.30, Buell 200**

**April 26. No class: replaced on April 20.**

**May 3 - 11:59pm**

**Final Projects Published via Github**

**Wrap Up Panel Discussion: Date TBD**

## **Conflict Urbanism: Puerto Rico Now**

### *Tutorial Module Descriptions*

The following tutorials are designed to introduce students to techniques of spatial research and critical cartographic practices. Through a combination of in class instruction and tutorial exercises completed at home students will develop basic fluencies with open source mapping tools. With support from module instructors, students will apply these newly acquired skills to topics and questions of interest through their final projects for the seminar.

All students must attend the **Final Project Publishing** session (March 8), and must complete at least **three** of the remaining six modules. See below for descriptions of each. All modules are designed for students with no prior experience with the topics covered. Students will be evaluated on their completion of the required exercises.

Please note: students who have prior experience with GIS or webmaps are encouraged to use this requirement to develop aspects of their final project and should speak with the course instructors about equivalent deliverables.

### **1. Introduction to QGIS**

**February 1, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due February 8

This module will allow students to: develop basic familiarity with QGIS and its functions; gain fluency with foundational GIS concepts; understand GIS spatial data types and the kinds of analysis that are possible with each.

### **2. Making Spatial Data**

**February 8, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due February 15

This module will introduce students to methods for creating spatial data. The exercise and workshop will cover how to give geographic coordinates (georeference) scanned

maps using QGIS, as well as how to digitize (trace) features from this scanned map to create new shapefiles. In addition, the module will introduce students to basic methods of geocoding locations from addresses. These are two key ways of creating spatial data from printed sources, as well as from text fields.

### **3. Satellite Imagery**

**February 15, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due February 22

This module will cover methods for obtaining high resolution satellite imagery (via the Google Static Maps API) as well as low resolution satellite imagery from the Landsat Program. The workshop and exercise will cover the difference between these two types of remotely sensed data as well as methods for creating false color composites and simple land classification schemes.

### **4. Web Mapping 01**

**February 22, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due March 1

In this two part module will introduce webmaps using [Mapbox GL JS \(Links to an external site.\)](#). This tutorial will introduce basic setup for making a webmap including basic elements of development for a web browser.

### **5. Web Mapping 02**

**March 1, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due March 8

In part two of the web mapping module students will learn how to create custom basemaps (tilesets) using external data. Students will be introduced to methods for creating custom tilesets with vector as well as raster data (satellite imagery).

### **Final Project Publishing Tutorial**

**March 29, 11am-1pm**

Exercise due April 12

In this required module students will learn how to compose a document using markdown, a very simple markup language, and how to publish this document as a webpage using Jekyll and github pages. All students are required to attend this session and to use this format for the submission of their final projects.