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The City and Its Moving Images: Urban Theory, Media Theory | Spring 2014 Studio Course

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THE CITY AND ITS MOVING IMAGES:
URBAN THEORY, MEDIA THEORY

GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES
INTERDISCIPLINARY
GRADUATE THEORY COURSE
CASE STUDY

WHY READ THIS CASE STUDY?

More than half the world's population live in cities, resulting in a huge variety of urban forms, cultures, politics, problems and conflicts. Many academic disciplines – ranging from the urban social sciences to history and environmental design – have traditionally taken 'the city' as their object of study. More recently, the field of cinema studies has focused on explorations of cities as portrayed and imagined across times, places and cultures.

This graduate research seminar, The City and its Moving Images, was led by city planner and geographer Michael Dear and Wei Hong Bao, an expert on film, media, and East Asian languages and cultures. The seminar included students from a variety of disciplines including architecture, film studies, performance studies, and environmental science and policy, and East Asian studies. Students thus came to the course with a wide range of theoretical and practical ideas about cities.

Students interrogated foundational theoretical literature on cities, focused on social theory and media theory;

how filmmakers see the city; urban globalization; and the urban question after modernity. They quickly realized that their ideas were rooted in widely divergent academic understandings, generating lively debate and discussion, and a "concordance" exercise that mapped terms/ideas about cities to arrive at a common understanding and analytic framework. Then, students explored questions about cities and urban representation via hands-on projects ranging from the production of a field guide to gentrification to an architectural zoetrope, interactive websites, architectural installations on urban space and power, a poster/photograph collage visualizing urban social movements and a "Dérive Machine" a la Guy Debord, generating random walks to discover the city.

Keywords:

urban theory, film theory and epistemology, concordance mapping, spatial scale, cities and modernity, urban diversity, design process, urban futures

CONTENTS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

THE CITY AND ITS MOVING IMAGES: URBAN THEORY, MEDIA THEORY

A GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES RESEARCH STUDIO

CY PLAN 291, Film 240, Chinese 280

Spring 2014, 4 Units

Instructors:

Weihong Bao (Film & Media Studies and East Asian Languages & Cultures)

Michael Dear (City & Regional Planning)

What is the city? Is it a space, a place, a process, or practice? Is it actual or virtual? How do we demarcate the spatial and temporal limits of the city? How does the city become a unit of social space and experience? How does such a unit register both social contiguity and tension in spatial terms and recast relations of gender, class, race, and other power configurations such as the global and local? How are the changing experiences of the city perceived and mediated through film and other media? How do media technologies and their aesthetic articulations create and occupy actual and virtual spaces of the city and contribute to its demise and transformations?

Taking the city as a concentrated and contested site, this class examined key issues of urban modernity and postmodernity at the intersection of urban planning, architecture, and film and media.

The purpose of this jointly-taught doctoral-level seminar was to examine the fundamental precepts of approaches to urban theory, method, and analysis that characterize disciplines in the humanities and environmental design. Its specific goal was to explore the extent to which integrating the diversity of these approaches is possible and/or desirable, and the extent to which this integration could advance understanding, research practices, and pedagogy in global urban humanities disciplines.

Stated plainly, our goal was NOT to transform students into experts in another discipline, but instead to develop skills that enable successful cross-disciplinary work in collaborative settings in which students act as partners, not contestants or competitors.

INSTRUCTORS

Weihong Bao

Weihong Bao is Pamela P. Fong and Family Distinguished Chair in China Studies and an Associate Professor of Film and Media & East Asian Languages and Cultures, UC Berkeley. She has published widely on comparative media history and theory, media and environment, early cinema, war and modernity, affect theory, propaganda theory and practice, and Chinese language cinema of all periods and regions. Her book *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China*, 1915-1945 (University of Minnesota Press, 2015) received an honorable mention for the Modernist Studies Association Best Book Prize in 2016. Her more recent work explores the relationship between medium and environment, by engaging intellectual history, political theory, cultural anthropology, and comparative media theory. On this subject she has co-edited two special issues on "Media/Climates" (Representations) and "Medium/Environment" (Critical Inquiry); she is also completing a new book, "Background Matters: Set Design Thinking and The Art of Environment."

She has held fellowships from the Getty Research Institute, the Internationale Kolleg für Kulturtechnikforschung und Medienphilosophie (IKKM), Germany, the University of Melbourne, Australia, Freie Universität Berlin, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München, the National Humanities Center, the Townsend Center for the Humanities, and the Suzy Newhouse Center for the Humanities. She is the editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Chinese Cinemas* and co-edits the film theory in media history book series published by Amsterdam University Press. She also serves on the editorial board for *Representations, Discourse, Journal of Visual Culture and Feminist Media History.*

Michael Dear

Michael Dear is Professor Emeritus in the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley, and Honorary Professor in the Bartlett School of Planning at University College, London. His graduate education was at University College London and the University of Pennsylvania. Before coming to Berkeley in 2009, he worked for two decades at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

His most recent book, *Why Walls Won't Work: Repairing the US-Mexico Divide* was awarded the Globe Prize for 'Geography in the Public Interest' from the Association of American Geographers. His latest edited volume, entitled *Geohumanties: Art, History, Text at the Edge of Place* focused on emerging transdisciplinary intersections among geography, environmental design and the humanities.

Dear was the founding editor of the scholarly journal *Society and Space: Environment & Planning D*, and is a leading exponent of the Los Angeles School of Urbanism. His book, *The Postmodern Urban Condition*, was chosen by CHOICE magazine as an "Outstanding Academic Title" of 2000.

Dear's most recent curatorial venture was *'Trazando la Línea: Pasado, Presente y Futuro de las Communidades Transfronterizas* / Tracing the Line: Past, Present and Future in Cross-border Communities ' at the Centro Estatal de las Artes in Mexicali, the state capital of Baja California, Mexico. He is a frequent contributor to exhibition catalogues for such major institutions as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and most recently for "The US-Mexico Border: Place, Imagination and Possibility," an exhibition that opened in September 2017 at LA's Craft and Folk Art Museum.

Dear has been a Guggenheim Fellowship holder, a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, a Fulbright Specialist, and Fellow at the Rockefeller Center in Bellagio, Italy. He has received the highest honors for creativity and excellence in research from several organizations, as well as numerous undergraduate teaching and graduate mentorship awards. In 2014, he was elected as a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales (his country of birth).

He has engaged in professional practice in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the USA, including the preparation of amicus briefs for the US Supreme Court and the American Civil Liberties Union.

He is currently writing about representations of the US-Mexico border in film.

COURSE SUMMARY

The course had two phases:

Ways of Seeing the City, focusing on keywords on the urban question (such as city, scale, and representation), as well as established options in theory, method and practice that are current in contemporary urban-oriented disciplines.

The Urban Question after Modernity, including manifestations of globalization, hybridity, sustainability, and socio-economic polarization, as well as changing urban spaces (corporate spaces, networked/cyber city, urban ruins, and hypertopia) to explore convergences and concordances in an integrated "global urban humanities." Each class was taught jointly by both instructors. It featured a simultaneous film program, as well as presentations by prominent guest speakers, whose presentations were open to the wider campus community.

By the end of the course, students were expetected to have a working knowledge of the current state of urban theory and film/media theory, focusing on the city as a common object of inquiry, and how to undertake transdisciplinary work that combines conventions of environmental design and the humanities. Such knowledge included the following:

- Some fundamental theoretical approaches for analyzing urban society and its representations (i.e. the ways we see and understand things).
- Various methods for analyzing the city, including quantitative, qualitative, visual and historical approaches (i.e. the kinds of evidence we select for analysis, and by extension what we exclude).
- What it means to take a "critical" perspective on the construction of urban knowledge (i.e. understanding precisely who is doing the seeing/explaining, and with what purposes).
- How "space" and "place" are important to the way we know things, and how this knowledge is constitutive of successful environmental design and of practice in the humanities.
- The major intellectual arc of urban theory over the past 75 years, summarized as the shift from Chicago to Los Angeles as an archetype of contemporary urban understanding.
- How to undertake successful transdisciplinary work, and how to recognize its demonstrably superior work through practice.
- How pedagogies of the humanities and environmental design can be productively combined to facilitate effective transdisciplinary work.

The course was frankly experimental in nature, and studio work was inherently informal, messy, and oftentimes unstructured. Students were told to bring a capacity for invention, tolerance and flexibility to the classroom.

The overall goal of the studio projects in this class was to devise and produce a "map" of intellectual terrain and trends in their disciplines, past and present; and then to combine these mappings into a single, multidisciplinary, epistemological narrative, likely to require multiple forms of presentation media. Students were also required to produce an individual critique of the semester's experience

The combined narrative was constructed as a series of four assignments, creatively re-assembled at the end of

Top: Discussing the Mellon Mashup symposium on interdisciplinarity.

Bottom left: Lawrence Zi-Qiao Yang and Prof. C. Greig Crysler operating the "Derive Machine."

Bottom right: Chryl Corbin: "Visualizing Static Transition."

the semester. The four steps and corresponding outputs in narrative construction were:

- CONCORDANCES: assessing the extent of concordance among the various disciplinary histories (including identifying key texts, scholars, and dominant intellectual traditions in each disciplinary stream);
- GEOHUMANITIES PRACTICE: the lessons from the Geohumanities experience about how transdisciplinarity worked in practice – its problems, potential and pitfalls (in connection with the Feb 21 Mashup);
- KEY WORDS: a list of key words descriptive of individual disciplines, and the merged trans-disciplines; and
- TRANSDISCIPLINARY EPISTEMOLOGIES: synthesizing the transdisciplinary epistemological narratives, based on revisions and updates of the concordances, practices, and key words identified in previous assignments.

Required text books

M. Dear, *The Postmodern Urban Condition*. Blackwell-Wiley, 2000.

T. Elsaesser & M. Hagener, *Film Theory: An introduction through the senses.* Routledge, 2010.

W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark Hansen eds., *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, U. of Chicago Press, 2010.

Filmography

Berlin: symphony of a great city (Walter Ruttmann, 1928, 65 minutes)

Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982, 117 mins)

Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974, 131 mins)

Demolition (JP Sniadecki, 2008, 62 mins)

LA Plays Itself (Thom Anderson, 2003, 169 mins)

Man with the Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929) 69 mins

N.Y.N.Y. (Francis Thompson, 1957, 15mins)

No (Pablo Larraín, 2012, 118 mins)

Playtime (Jacques Tati, 1967, 124 mins)

Powers of 10 (Charles & Ray Eames, 1977, 9 mins)

Sleep Dealer (Alex Rivera, 2008, 90 mins)

Still Life (Jia Zhangke, 2006, 108 mins)

Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005, 128 mins)

The City (Steiner and van Dyke, 1939, 43 mins)

The Fountainhead (King Vidor, 1949, 114 mins)

Things to Come (William Menzies, 1936, 97 mins)

Yumen (JP Sniadecki 2012, 78 mins)

SEMESTER MAP

ARC OF THE SEMESTER ━━━━━━━

PART 1: WAYS OF SEEING THE CITY

WEEK 1- INTRODUCTION: READING AND REPRESENTING THE CITY

The course as a self-conscious experiment in transdisciplinary learning: its focus, content, practices, and terms of evaluation. The nature of the 'urban' and how to read a city. Media as reflecting upon and shaping perceptions of the city while constituting the urban environment both in virtual and real spaces; the city as medium (perceptual, social, and technological). The potential and limits of social action.

WEEK 2- THE CITY IN HISTORY

An overview of the historical evolution of cities, and associated representations in map, art, film, literature, etc. Includes imaginary and utopian visions.

WEEK 3-SPACE AND SOCIAL THEORY

An overview of theoretical approaches in space/place and social theory; structure and agency; perspectives on social action. Reading the city, and elementary approaches to environmental design.

WEEK 4- FILM / MEDIA THEORY: SPACE, PERCEPTION, BODY

Highlights of paradigms in film and media theory; the interrelationship between space, perception, and body; ideology and viewing position; from sight to site.

WEEK 5- STUDIO SESSION – 1: DIVERGENCES AND CONCORDANCES IN INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS; THE CASE OF ARCHITECTURE.
IN-CLASS GUEST: PROFESSOR GREIG CRYSLER, CED ARCHITECTURE.

Inventing a transdiciplinary lexicon for urban studies, including possible key words such as: space, place, city, urban, scale, text, hybridity, representation, media and mediation, spectatorship. The structure of past and present disciplinary paradigms (including methods of representation, key texts, scholars, and characteristic puzzles). Reconciling the traditions of humanities, social theory, and environmental design; assessing the teaching/learning potential of the various approaches, with emphasis on the example of architectural theory.

WEEK 6- MASHUP! LEARNING FROM THE GEOHUMANITIES PROJECT – SARAH LURIA, JIM KETCHUM, DOUGLAS RICHARDSON

Reflections on the experience of the Geohumanities project with scholars who have directly engaged with transdisciplinary practice, followed by discussion by Cal faculty on how the Geohumanities experience may (or may not) be transferable into other disciplines and projects.

WEEK 7- STUDIO SESSION – 2: ASSESSING THE GEOHUMANITIES PRACTICE; AND PRELIMINARY WORK ON K-CUT, OR 'KEY WORDS FOR A COMMON URBAN THEORY.'

Student workshop/charrette dedicated to devising a lexicon for urban studies that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

WEEK 8- STUDIO SESSION – 2: ASSESSING THE GEOHUMANITIES PRACTICE; AND PRELIMINARY WORK ON K-CUT, OR 'KEY WORDS FOR A COMMON URBAN THEORY.'

Student workshop/charrette dedicated to devising a lexicon for urban studies that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

Conversation with Professor of Architecture
C. Greig Crysler: seminar held in a studio
space.

PART 2: THE URBAN QUESTION AFTER MODERNITY

WEEK 9- MID-CENTURY MODERN: CORPORATE SPACES/VISUAL DESIGN/ CYBERNETICS

Immediate postwar era as the important transition period to rethink postmodernism through the rise of cybernetics and phenomenology in visual and architectural design and corporate spatiality.

WEEK 10- THE URBAN QUESTION

The evolution of urban theory, from modern to postmodern, as encapsulated in the shift from the 20th-century 'Chicago School' to the late 20th-century 'Los Angeles School' of urbanism.

WEEK 11- GLOBALIZATION AND NETWORK SOCIETY

Globalization, rapid urbanization, and global (dis)connectivity; the rise of network society, and its geographies.

WEEK 12- URBAN RUINS

The crisis of environmental sustainability. Urban development as ruins, aesthetics and politics of ruins; the

possibilities for social action, and planned/managed growth and change (city and regional planning).

WEEK 13- PUBLIC SCREENING OF YUMEN

Guest: Professor J.P. Sniadeki, Cornell U. (public discussion moderated by Weihong Bao).

WEEK 14- HYBRID + UNEQUAL CITIES. STUDIO SESSION – 3: K-CUT, OR 'KEY WORDS FOR A COMMON URBAN THEORY.'

Examines the evolution of the 'twin cities' along the US-MX border as a case study of cultural hybridity and socio-economic polarization, together with cinematic representations of the borderlands from 1949 to the present day. Studio session to complete work on K-CUT.

WEEK 15- HYPERTOPIA AND SCREEN CULTURE

Expanded cinema and screen culture in transforming space and place, virtual and actual city, persistence of cinema as experience, site specific spectatorship, between seeing and doing.

WEEK 16- GUEST: PROFESSOR FRANCESCO CASETTI, YALE U. ["SCREENS/ EVERYWHERE,"]

Talk by media scholar Francsco Casetti.

WEEK 17- POLITICS AND SOCIAL ACTION: THE CASE OF CITY PLANNING

The practice of politics: personal, academic, and public – including formal and informal manifestations; politics in the network society; urban planning as a contested realm of politics and social action.

WEEK 18- STUDIO SESSION – 4 : E-CUT, OR 'EPISTEMOLOGIES FOR A COMMON URBAN THEORY'

Key words, convergences, and concordances revisited, in the context of a globalized, hybrid, urban society, including the view from the Global South. The thorny question of transdisciplinary 'method.' The prospects of an integrative epistemology: how would you know one if you saw it?; how would you assess its validity, utility, limitations? On what basis would you choose to act? How to avoid the perils of a promiscuous, unfettered bricolage? This will be the final, formal "crit" session held in Wurster Hall, to which external reviewers will be invited to hear and discuss your presentations.

WEEK 19- STUDIO SESSION – 5: ASSESSING THE COURSE EXPERIMENT

Assessing, imagining, writing, making, visualizing and otherwise representing the course – as a pedagogical experiment, intellectual adventure, creative exercise, and learning experience.

FACULTY REFLECTION

CONCORDANCE-ING

By Weihong Bao, Michael Dear, and Oscar Sosa

September 2022

In the spring of 2014, "The City And Its Moving Images: Urban Theory, Media Theory" was offered as a graduate-level class in the "Theory" stream of the Global Urban Humanities (GLOUH) project. It was jointly taught by Weihong Bao (East Asian Languages & Cultures, and Film & Media) and Michael Dear (Professor of City and Regional Planning), with Oscar Sosa (advanced doctoral student in the Department of City and Regional Planning).

The purpose of the seminar was to examine the fundamental precepts of urban theory, method, and analysis that are characteristic disciplines in the humanities and environmental design. Our goal was to explore whether integrating the diversity of these approaches was possible and/or desirable, and the extent to which such integration could advance understanding, research, practice and pedagogy in urban humanities disciplines. We did not set out to transform students into experts in one another's discipline, but rather to develop skills that would enable successful cross-disciplinary work in collaborative settings where students could act as partners, not competitors.

The course was to be taught jointly by both instructors, featuring a concurrent film program and presentations by prominent guest speakers. Class time was designed around lectures, seminar discussions, studio workshops, and presentations of student work. Lectures laid the foundations for a common knowledge. Seminar discussions developed a critical assessment of that knowledge. Studio workshops would take the form of collaborative work sessions in a "studio" format, designed to produce new understanding and practical expressions of knowledge-in-action that could take the form through diverse projects. Periodic student presentations of their projects ensured constructive feedback on work in progress, working to interim deadlines, as well as developing the presenter's capacity to synthesize and describe projects in a concise, coherent and convincing manner. The course featured a final 'crit' session where outside experts responded to student presentations of their principal work products.

From the outset, this class was experimental in nature, avoiding traditional conventions of academic work and evaluation such as the production of a single term paper. Students were advised to move quickly beyond familiar disciplinary bases into uncharted intellectual territories, and to anticipate MAKING or CREATING several objects that employed a variety of representational means such as maps, artwork, models, posters, plans, designs, charts, proposals, or short films/videos. The course had five related assignments formulated as a sequence building to a cumulative understanding:

- **CONCORDANCES:** assessing the extent of concordance among individual disciplines represented in the class (i.e. identifying key texts, scholars, and dominant intellectual traditions in each discipline);
- **GEOHUMANITIES PRACTICE:** the lessons learned from existing examples of transdisciplinary practice;
- **KEY WORDS:** a list of concepts and terms constitutive of individual disciplines and their aggregation into a trans-discipline;
- **TRANSDISCIPLINARY EPISTEMOLOGIES:** synthesis of a transdisciplinary epistemological narrative, based on revisions and updates of the concordances, practices, and key words previously identified; and finally
- **AUTO-CRITIQUE:** individual and group assessments of the course and its outcomes.

Fig. 1: Prof. Weihong Bao's first visit to studio classes at Wurster Hall. Prof. Bao, a film and media studies scholar, co-taught the course with Professor of City and Regional Planning Michael Dear.

THE COURSE IN PRACTICE

Our basic challenge was to bring together two distinct fields into an experimental, single-semester synthesis, using a common focus on the city with deliberately unconventional student assignments. For several months before the class started, we labored to devise an agreeable course outline. Our initial optimism – based on similarities in focus and readings of courses we had previously taught – was adjusted as we proceeded through eight iterations of the final outline in order to accommodate our differences. As things turned out, this final syllabus was itself subject to considerable amendment throughout the semester in response to changing circumstances. Students were tolerant of these shifts and the stresses they entailed.

An easy overlap soon emerged regarding the students' personal research interests, centering on issues of urban growth and decline, infrastructure, and memory. These topics provided focus but were also robust enough to establish a common ground for students' interests and thus allow for a common dialogue from the outset. Subsequently, some of the class's pre-determined exercises were deleted, and replaced by a new emphasis requiring that students work collaboratively as well as undertaking individual projects. These two exercises – the jointly-researched Concordance, and the individual projects – were popular with students and we regard them as the major didactic accomplishments of the class.

The prospect of working in a studio setting generated much excitement among humanities students, but in practice its openness— both physical and cognitive— was disorienting and even intimidating for some. (Certainly, entering some workspaces in Bauer/Wurster Hall required great courage on the part of humanities strangers in this strange land!)

Prof. Michael Dear, a geographer and urban planning scholar, co-taught the course.

See Figure 1. Unfortunately, the expansive studio space proved inimical to the intensive theoretical debates that characterized the early weeks of class. In retrospect, our general sentiment was that "studio is studio," i.e. a place of practice and problem-solving, rather than a space for reflection. As a consequence, the formal studio-based component of the class was eliminated about half way through the semester. This was a disappointing, but the action gained general student support. This was not the end of the story, however, as we engineered the later sections of the class deeper toward the direction of practice.

Despite our intent to place the discourses of our principal disciplines into conversation, students complained early in the semester that instructors were relying too much on lectures, so classes were redesigned to permit a more discursive format. This improved student engagement and satisfaction, but at the cost (we felt) of diminished coverage of fundamental domain knowledge necessary for effective transdisciplinary collaborative work. The instructors' continuing concern to impart adequate fundamental domain knowledge may have been instrumental in causing the course to slip from a joint co-taught format to classes led primarily by individual instructors on alternating weeks. Interestingly, co-teaching arose more organically when students and instructors responded to presentations by visiting speakers. By the end of the semester, students had sufficient fluency in both epistemological realms to begin cross-disciplinary work in concordancing and project work (see next section).

It took far longer than we expected for students to break free of their home disciplines and all too frequently we witnessed their retreat into more familiar territories during

our discussions. To be fair, instructors occasionally availed themselves of the right to retreat, too, especially during periods of intense intra-disciplinary wrangling! Yet the course improved as the weeks passed, even if progress was sometimes hard-won. At the final class meeting, one student remarked: "Now I feel ready to take this class!" – which we regarded as a positive outcome.

Three aspects of the course worked well, and were popular with students: the Concordance exercise; the projects, which involved individual work undertaken in a collaborative milieu; and the stimulus of multidisciplinary visiting speakers in conversation.

Concordance Throughout the semester, students periodically returned to the question of the overlaps and discontinuities among their disciplines. Work began by defining the intellectual history and foci of their own disciplines, moved on to consider the commonalities among disciplines, and finally produced an aggregate Concordance "map" that encompassed all student disciplines within a single transdisciplinary metric, or framing.

Some students were uncertain about the direction of the cumulative sequence of assignments involved in constructing a Concordance. However, by term's end, they commented on how valuable the search for common ground had been, in 1) gaining exposure to a vastly expanded domain of theoretical, methodological and practice-oriented knowledge, plus its application to action; 2) finding one's own place in the constellation of human knowledge; and 3) glimpsing new horizons for transdisciplinary exchange and understanding.

When working independently, students expanded their lists of key concepts and words beyond the two disciplines featured in the class. The exercise acted to spark enlarged cross-disciplinary inquiry that pushed beyond the class's horizons. Also without guidance, the students devised their own democratic,

"Throughout the semester, students periodically returned to the question of the overlaps and discontinuities among their disciplines. Work began by defining the intellectual history and foci of their own disciplines..."

counter-hegemonic way of compiling a Concordance that valued all students' opinions equally. Basically: if only one student supported a concept/keyword, it would automatically be included for consideration in the aggregated Concordance, which also weighted each concept/keyword according to its frequency of mention. The self-determined egalitarianism of this approach inspired engagement and confidence, and was instrumental in promoting self-directed learning and participant satisfaction. The resulting Concordance was an
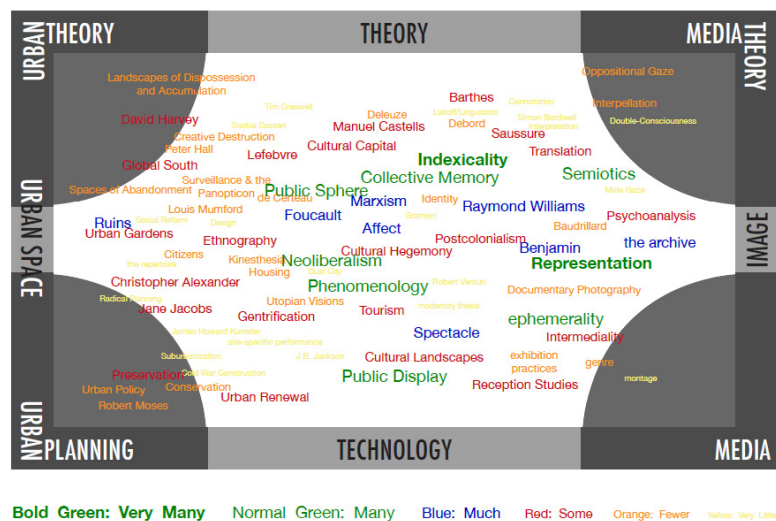

Figure 3. Final version of the Concordance Map

impressive achievement. See Figure 3.

Projects Early on, students identified a range of personal research interests that (fortuitously) revealed significant overlap. We substituted the requirement for individual student projects to a set of urban-related projects that could be undertaken collaboratively in a classroom setting. In this way, some features of studio work were incorporated into student work sessions, including multiple deadlines for producing work, public critiques of work, and the requirement to make some kind of physical object.

This adjustment took place about mid-way through the semester. Students hesitatingly settled into the maker/

production routine, as well as the obligations of periodic reporting on progress and receiving critical input from others. They ultimately expressed great satisfaction with this experience, and realized that better work would have been possible had we committed to project work earlier in the semester. Most were delighted (and perhaps a little panicked) that the class required them actually to make something.

The students' projects focused on topics relating broadly to space/place, urban life, and architecture:

- A Field Guide to Residential Gentrification in San Francisco (book, on the eponymous topic);
- Architectural Zoetrope: the Archaeology of Garden Cities (object, illustrating history of a key concept in city planning);
- Laughing in the Dark Apartment (interactive website, exploring the living rooms behind the external façade of buildings);
- Mobilizing Utopia: Staging Human Rights and the Architectonics of International Space (installation, on architectural and spatial representations of power);
- The Dérive Machine (a slot machine-type object in the manner of Guy Debord, generating random walks to discover the city);
- Urban Transportation Systems of the Future (website, assessing infrastructure investments in LA); and
- Visualizing Memory (poster, historical and contemporary photographs of social movements in Oakland since the 1960s). See Figure 4.

Guests Visiting guests added immeasurably to our class and were an essential component of our successes. Greig Crysler (Architecture, College of Environmental Design) joined the class early to discuss intellectual traditions in architectural theory and practice, and the challenges of transdisciplinary theory-making. Greig returned to the final course crit, bringing his experienced studio eye when students presented their work in a public forum. His presence at the beginning of the class helped

Figure 4. Student project: Chryl Corbin, Memories of the Black Panthers

students to grasp the format and meaning of a studio focus, and later demonstrated how he evaluated students' progress and work product by the end of the class.

A half-day "Geohumanities Mash-Up!" event focused on practices of transdisciplinarity. It brought three experts to campus (Sarah Luria, Jim Ketchum, and Doug Richardson), together with five feisty Berkeley faculty (Janaki Bhakle), History; Dan Chatman, City & Regional Planning; Nils Gilman, History/Social Science Matrix; Jonathan Simon, Law; and Jennifer Wolch, College of Environmental Design). The perspectives of these experienced scholars on the practice of cross-disciplinary work provided a vision of, and pathway toward, the potential of transdisciplinary work. Students especially enjoyed hearing Cal faculty's candid critique of the intellectual enterprise embodied in a university. Taken together, the events of the day combined to frame the geohumanities as a credible, serious intellectual enterprise, worthy of widespread scholarly attention, and having enormous (if as yet ill-defined) potential.

In the second half of the semester, film scholars J.P. Sniadeki and Francesco Casetti turned the spotlight to media and the visual in issues relating to space and urbanity. Sniadeki brought the perspective of filmmaker and scholar to the classroom; and Casetti's long-time interest in film and space challenged us to go faster and further in our explorations. Both gave credibility and legitimacy to our efforts, and were inspirational and catalytic in their commentaries.

Our visitors also opened up space for instructor co-teaching

to occur. By offering themselves as exogenous points of reference in discussion, the visitors freed course instructors to engage in opinionated argument rather than being bound by the facilitator role typical of a seminar moderators.

Concordance-ing, together with the constructive freedom of "maker" projects, and the wilful intellectual boundary-breaking inspired by outsiders, produced (in the last weeks of the semester) a vibrant petri dish of freedom, innovation and anxiety that was exciting and exhausting. And exhilaration followed as we managed to cross over safely to the other side.

Figure 5.Our guest critics: Wolch, Crysler, Moffat

STUDENT VIEWPOINTS

In a class that was avowedly experimental, and where "course evaluation" was identified as a specific learning objective, students and instructors were placed in the role of co-conspirators rather than the traditional hierarchy of instructor and student. For these reasons, what follows in the remainder of this report should be understood as continuing a dialogue about the evolution of pedagogic and intellectual ideas of the Global Urban Humanities Initiative, rather than as formal student evaluations.

In general, one student remark encapsulated the essence of students' mixed feelings about this class: "[It was the] most difficult and unsettled and heartburn-inducing course ever. I wouldn't have registered knowing what I know now BUT – Also probably the most intellectually rewarding experience. This is a major conundrum." Similar contradictions were evident in other student commentaries. One person most appreciated the class because it "put me out of my comfort zone." Another, perhaps exhausted by the course's "flexible'"schedule, advised that future versions of the course should "clarify assignments and assessment [expectations]."

Students were happy (and nervous) about becoming engaged in a self-consciously experimental and boundary-shifting experimental classroom. Humanities students were sometimes elated by the challenge to make a physical something. Their evaluations produced a consistent set of conclusions: that the class was challenging and occasionally frustrating, but also rewarding; and that it generally succeeded in its achieving objectives.

The Global Urban Humanities Initiative's focus on the city worked well to bring students and instructors quickly to some common ground. However, both instructors felt that inadequate progress was made in communicating the basic domain knowledges (from film and urban theory) necessary for productive collaborative work.

The focus on a "maker culture" in the class was enormously powerful, even if initially daunting for many students. The requirement to produce objects or products (such as a physical model, sketch, or a website) at regular intervals during the semester – formally framed as class 'assignments' – was resisted at first by those who resented such notions as "deliverable" deadlines. (Faculty and students are also sometimes uncomfortable about such terminology.) Ultimately, however, students were universally pleased by the accumulation of tangible outputs from the class, and by freedom from the Tyranny of the Term Paper. Students enjoyed the communal learning experience in crit sessions where they learned about one another's projects and listened to the criticism offered alongside input and advice directed at their works in progress (such discussions extended beyond the classroom). This 'multiplier' effect is a common feature of collaborative research and practice in many profession-oriented disciplines, including environmental design.

While initially disappointing to the course instructors, deleting the formal studio component from the course design was a wise choice. Substituting a class-based individual project requirement that was executed in a collaborative workspace provided an expeditious and successful substitute. Future instructors are advised to choose a common empirical object focus before the
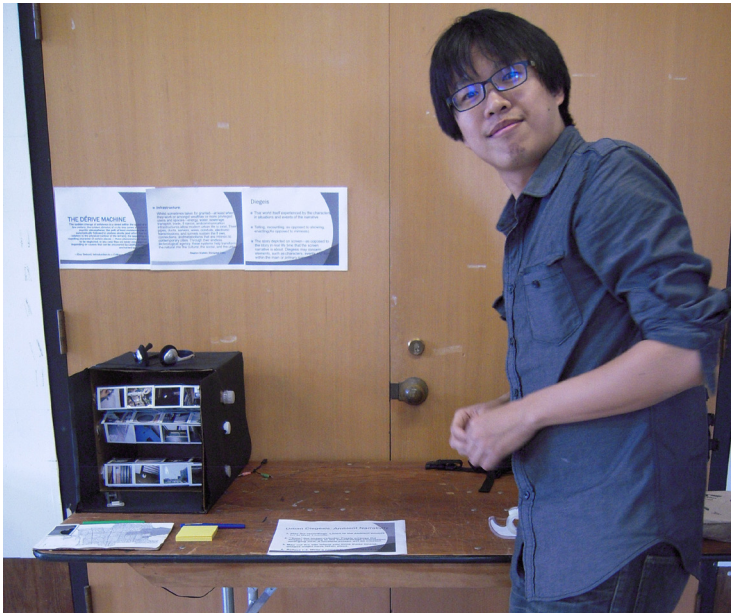
Figure 6. Student project:
Lawrence Zi-Qiao Yang,
The Dérive Machine.

Some students in our class revealed their commitment to the transdisciplinary enterprise by enrolling in subsequent Global Urban Humanities courses. A minor but persistent buzz throughout the semester was student concern about the validity of such an enterprise, in terms of its staying power, acceptance in their home disciplines, and potential to aid post-graduation job searches. Questions were also raised about the whole notion of an "urban humanities" as a viable, distinct academic (sub-)field. Needless to say, in 2014 we had no conclusive answers to all these concerns. But we regarded these as healthy worries, provoking further thought and discussion on everyone's part, and revealing personal metrics about how students were judging the class as well as their deepening engagement.

class starts, so that student projects are focused from the outset. Some topical choices may lend themselves more easily to a standard studio setting than ours (e.g. a task with specific design emphases). Studio-based work is generally more conducive to collaboration, informal interaction and flexible experimentation, but dogmatic insistence on a particular epistemological or pedagogic style is usually ill-advised.

The thorny problem of co-teaching (as distinct from individual instructor-led seminars on alternating weeks) would benefit from clear resolution before a class begins. One student evaluation commented: "What if each class was taught around the point of intersection [of different disciplines]?" This is a valuable suggestion. Frankly, we began conservatively, from our foundations in disciplinary domains. We could have begun the class further along the road toward a "post-discipline" consciousness by organizing around points of intersection such as space, time, method, representation, etc. The major stumbling block in this option is the mixed levels of preparedness among beginning students.

So it's also useful to recall that many students expressed a desire for a more thorough exposure to the discrete disciplinary domains of film theory and urban theory. This suggests another approach, namely, designing a course in 'pure' theory that starts unabashedly from disciplinary domains and works toward forging a transdisciplinary confederation. Experience with such classes is not always encouraging because in practice students tend to be reluctant to abandon the security of their home disciplines. Moreover, a course in pure theory that abandoned its applied/practical dimension would foreshadow the return of the dreaded 'Read and Write a Term Paper' format, which we swore to avoid.

INSTRUCTORS' POSTSCRIPT 2022

The class was challenging, and hard work for everyone concerned. It was also one of the most rewarding classes in our professional experience, and its influence continues to inflect our personal researches and teaching to varying degrees. The successes of the course were made possible through the collaboration, experience and support of GSI Oscar Sosa. Oscar already possessed qualifications and experience in film and urbanism. He worked diligently in all aspects of the course and, simply stated, it would not have been possible without his efforts. This is not meant as a pro forma acknowledgment, but is instead a comment on the resources needed to launch successful cross-disciplinary courses.