CHUM 324 / ANTH 334
Emplacing the Local: Community, Place, and History in Middletown

Wednesday 1.10 – 4pm, CFH106
Spring 2013

Professor Sarah K. Croucher
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Office Hours: Monday 10am – noon, or by appointment

Course Description
In an era of globalization, it might seem that local place matters less and less to mobile communities, where individuals increasingly interact through cyberspace, drive from office to home, and pass through homogenous spaces of airports and shopping malls. In contrast to this view, many scholars have drawn attention to the ongoing importance of place, where individuals actively seek ways form authentic histories within particular spaces, despite their seeming incommensurability with practices and experiences of dwelling in modern urban areas and diasporic communities.

This class engages these questions of emplacement through active research with local communities in Middletown. The major question we will be addressing in this class is how and why history matters to individuals and communities in terms of their experience of place. We will cover the geographical and spatial theory in relation to the idea of place making in the contemporary and recent historical United States, the practical, ethical, and analytic process of conducting oral historical research local history of Middletown, and discuss how this relates to wider historical processes. The second half of the semester will be dedicated to working with community partners in recording oral histories in relation to Middletown. We will analyze the way that relatively modern spaces have become integral to the heritage and place-making within Middletown. Through recording histories in a variety of locations, we will reflect on the way in which histories and narratives are engaged in a close relationship to experiences of place and material culture.

Books & Readings
Three books are recommended for purchase, all of which are available at Broad St. Books:


All other readings will be posted on Moodle.
Grading & Attendance

» Participation: regular comments on discussion board, leading class discussion, full participation in movement workshop, and regular comments in class time (worth 20% of final grade)

» Short paper on place and locality, due Friday February 22 (worth 10% of grade)

» Short paper on place and history, due Friday March 8 (worth 10% of grade)

» Final project prospectus, due Friday April 12 (worth 10% of grade)

» Presentation of oral history project, Wednesday May 8 (worth 10% of final grade)

» Final research paper, due Friday May 17, noon (worth 40% of final grade)

Participation will form 20% of your overall grade. This will be a combination of a minimum of one weekly post to the online discussion forum, acting as discussion leader in one class, participating in the movement workshop, and participation in class discussions. As this is a once a week seminar class, attendance is vital; you will rapidly miss important information. Absences will be counted as a negative against your participation grade. If you are sick, please let me know in advance and/or inform your class dean. Being absent from class without support from your dean and without clear reason will impact your overall participation grade.

An online discussion board will be available each week on Moodle. This is intended to prepare you for discussing sometimes complicated texts. You must post at least one comment (this can be a reply to the question or comment of a classmate) each week by 7pm on the Tuesday evening prior to our Wednesday meeting.

For each class, two students will act as discussion leaders, these students should be prepared to steer the dialogue around key theoretical issues for the class. Discussion leaders are encouraged to use comments on the discussion board to open up conversations of interest to the class.

As this class forms part of the Center for the Humanities theme, ‘Emplacing the Local,’ you are encouraged to attend Monday night lectures at the Center, particularly the talk by Delores Hayden on Monday April 8, 6pm. Details can be found at:
http://www.wesleyan.edu/humanities/current_theme/index.html#.UQkztPKy2Vo

Short papers will be 3-4 pages in length, and will respond to prompts which reflect on theoretical ideas from class readings. Your final project prospectus will be 3 pages in length and will lay out the methodology and research questions for your oral history project. It will include a discussion of how you plan to archive your interview materials. Your final project will be presented to the rest of the class, and will be written up into a 12 page formal research paper.

In all writing you will be expected to reference works in line with academic conventions. Whichever form you use, you will be expected to fully grasp the concept of referencing academic work. I am
happy to help with small questions, but if you have significant issues with understanding the process of academic citations you should contact the Writing Center for tuition.

I am sympathetic towards those who may require extensions on written work. However, all extensions must be authorized and arrangements should be agreed well in advance of the deadline. Due to the deadline for submitting final grades, it will not be possible for any seniors to have an extension for the submission of final projects.

Movement Sessions

Two weeks of our class will form a module with the choreographer Morgan Thorson. We will use these movement sessions to explore the notion of embodied places. Through these we will think about the ways in which our bodies experience historical and contemporary spaces in different ways. These sessions will allow us to build on key theoretical ideas relating to embodiment and place. Through movement, we will discuss readings studied earlier in the semester, and consider how using movement may enable us to better engage with theory.

Final Project

Final projects will be based on original oral history interviews, which you will undertake during the second half of the semester. These should focus in some way on the ways in which subjects’ understanding of place is related to their sense of history in Middletown. You may conduct your interviews individually or in pairs, depending on your preference, but final papers must be written individually. These will center on interpreting the narrative of your interviews through theoretical insights drawn from class materials. You should aim to conduct your interviews after spring break, and to make sure that these are completed by the end of April.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy

Please read Moodle for my full policy on laptop computers. I encourage their use as an aid for class work. However, I request that they are not used in the back three rows of the classroom, and that you do not use your computer for email, Facebook, or similar applications during class. I find that following these guidelines helps those who use laptops in class to stay more focused.

Cell phones should be switched off and put away before the start of class. Checking your phone and sending text messages during class time is not appropriate behavior.
Disability Policy

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as us soon as possible (by preference during the first two weeks of the semester), so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at:  

Course Schedule

**Wed Jan 30**

*Introduction*


**Wed Feb 6**

*Theories of Place*


Wed Feb 13
The Local in the Global


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Wed Feb 20
Places of Late Capitalism


**First Short Paper Due: Friday February 22, 5pm**

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Wed Feb 27
Authenticity


Wed March 6
Middletown History / Oral History


* Read online exhibition, SC&A, Olin Library: [http://crossstreetchurch.site.wesleyan.edu/](http://crossstreetchurch.site.wesleyan.edu/)


**Second Short Paper Due: Friday March 8, 5pm**

Wed March 13
Spring break

Wed March 20
Spring break

Wed March 27
Preservation and Place

Wed April 3


Wed April 10

* Re-read Zukin, *Naked City* & Augé, *Non-Places*

**Final Project Prospectus Due: Friday April 12, 5pm**

Wed April 17

* Re-read material on Middletown history and Hayden, *The Power of Place*

Wed April 24


**Wed May 1**

*Interpreting Oral History, workshop session (bring material from interviews to discuss in class)*


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**Wed May 8**

*Final Presentations*

**Final Project Due: Friday May 17, noon**