

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
SPRING 2008 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

Urban Visual Studies

Research Directors:

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**Crowne Plaza Hotel St. Louis,
Wednesday, May 28 – Sunday, June 1**

Urban Visual Studies productively relates the abstract sense of space to the intimate notion of place, the global network to the everyday, and the micro cultural detail to the macro context. As an emerging cross-disciplinary research field, it recasts questions about space, agency, power, status, gender, modernity, and consumption investigated by history and the social sciences in light of the specific objects and ways of seeing investigated by scholars of visual forms. Participants in this workshop are drawn from American Studies, Architecture, Art History, Film and Media Studies, History, and Planning. Their diverse objects of analysis include architecture, landscape, visual art, and cinema, on local, national, and transnational levels in various time periods in China, Cuba, France, Germany, Iraq, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, and the United States.

This workshop will seek to trace the contours of the emerging cross-disciplinary field of Urban Visual Studies and to help prepare fellows for their pre-dissertation summer research. The two goals stand in close relation to each other: through a sustained and structured discussion of student proposals and their component parts, we hope to contribute to the mapping of the research field itself. The second workshop will focus on the mechanics and methods of writing a dissertation proposal. Together, the two workshops are designed to help students prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals.

Workshop Readings and Resources

Research Field resources will be placed on the relevant workspace websites. Students will receive separate explanations and detailed instructions about the access and use of the DPDF digital platform.

Workshop Assignments

May 1, 2008. Online posting of first assignment. Each participant should prepare a 5-8 page statement specifying the research question(s) you are asking, describing the method(s) you will employ, and discussing the sources of data you will examine.

By the beginning of the workshop: Read carefully the statements prepared by all the workshop participants. These can be found on the DPDF workspace site, <https://home.ssrc.org/sites/DPDF/europe/default.aspx>, in the folder “Revised Research 1 Statements” (which can be found under the heading “Document Library”). Note that the site seems to work best with Internet Explorer; some problems have been reported using other

browsers. Participants will *not* present their own projects at the workshop; it will be assumed that everyone has read closely *all* the proposals.

• **For our first workshop session [i.e., “Session 2”]** : please read the following methodological selections:

Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life.”

Walter Benjamin, “The Streets of Paris,” “Panorama.”

Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, [A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture](#). (excerpt).

(They are on the Urban Visual Studies Workspace homepage.)

<https://workspace.ssrc.org/dpdf/Pages/DPDF.aspx>).

• **At the workshop:** Each of you will be assigned to lead an illustrated discussion of another student’s research. (Assignments will be announced on May 10). Please plan to speak initially for 6-7 minutes on the paper, and to set out in a concise way: what are the research questions (including general orienting questions and more specific questions)? What are the methods? What sorts of evidence will be considered and assessed? And how do questions, method, and evidence fit together? You may wish to propose one or two suggestions for the author or pose one or two questions for the group (for example, concerning an additional method, or an alternative way to formulate the question). These discussions should not aim to evaluate or assess the project but rather to introduce our discussions by focusing attention on key issues of research questions, methods, and evidence.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Wednesday, May 28

Reception

(Wednesday, 6PM-8PM)

Thursday May 29

Session 1: Introduction and Purpose of Workshops

(Thursday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM, Room 406)

Plenary Session: Presentations by Program Director Peter Sahlins and the Research Directors

Session 2: What is Urban Visual Studies?

(Thursday, 2 PM- 5 PM, Room 312)

The two project directors will briefly discuss three closely-connected issues: the development of the field, formulating research questions, and developing appropriate methodology. We will draw on our own work and trajectories, and the work of others. The discussion will then move to

student proposals, which have been grouped in thematic clusters. Discussions will begin with the initiator, who will be asked to speak for 6 or 7 minutes, focusing on research questions, methods, and evidence.

Presentation A: Zachary Hilpert, "Picturing the American City in Peril: The aesthetic of urban devastation and its role in American culture."

Presentation B: Bridget Gilman, "Robert Bechtle's Painted Streets: Tracing the Shifting Realities of Northern California's Urban and Suburban Landscapes."

Presentation C: Joshua Souliere, "Religious Encounters: Political Authority and Space: Urban Space in Zaire, Nigeria, 1500-1800."

Presentation D: Alla Vronskaya, "Landscaping Dictatorships."

Presentation E: Sara Stevens, "Space Rules: Aesthetic Regulation in the American Built Environment."

Presentation F: Max Hirsh, "High Speed Urbanism: The Infrastructure of International Mobility in Frankfurt and Hong Kong."

Friday May 30

Breakfast meetings (Room 406):

8:00AM Alla Vronskaya

8:30AM Bridget Gilman

Session 3: Student Presentations Continued

(Friday, 9AM-12 PM, Room 312)

Presentation G: Jennifer Boles, "8 Millimeters versus 8 Millions: Superochero Cinema, Mexico City, and National Identity after the Golden Age."

Presentation H: Nathan Holmes, "Scenes of the Crime: The Cinematic Aesthetics of Criminality and City Space."

Presentation I: Mona Damluji, "Baghdad on the Big Screen: Iraq's urban history through the lens of British Newsreels from the 1920s to the 1950s."

Presentation J: Jia Tan, "Experimental Art/Film in an Urbanization Experiment: Contemporary Chinese film and art in the Pearl River Delta Region."

Presentation K: Alfredo Rivera, "Re-envisioning Cuba: Art, Architecture and Visual Culture in Havana, 1955-1970."

Presentation L: Annis Whitlow, "Stories of trauma, visions of change: exploring how interpretations of Camden NJ's decline are impacting its revitalization."

Session 4: St. Louis Bus Tour led by Esley Hamilton (St. Louis County Parks Department) and Eric Mumford (Washington University, St. Louis)

Bus departs 2PM sharp from in front of hotel

Recommended readings:

George McCue, "St. Louis: A City Discovering Itself."

Mark Tramel, "From Dream to Reality: The Arch as Metaphor for St. Louis Plans."

Mark Abbott, "A Document that Changed America: The 1907 *A City Plan for St. Louis*."

Evening meetings (Room 312):

8:30PM Jia Tan

9 PM Zachary Hilpert

9:30PM Mona Damluji

10PM Joshua Souliere

Saturday May 31

Breakfast meetings (Room 406):

8:00AM Max Hirsh

8:30AM Sara Stevens

Session 5: From Hypotheses to Arguments: On Urban Visual Evidence and its Archives:

(Saturday, 9 AM – 12 PM)

Readings:

Robert Vitalis, "The Past is another Country" in Ellen Percemann and Sara C. Curran, eds. [A Handbook for Social Science Field Research](#), 5-17.

Michel Foucault, "The historical a priori and the archive."

Giorgio Agamben, "The Archive and Testimony."

Paul Ricoeur, "Archives, Documents, Traces."

R.J. Morris, *Electronic Documents and the History of the Late Twentieth Century: Blackholes or Warehouses?.*

(The four texts above are in the folder "Shared Resources for Fellows" on the overall DPDF page.)

Lunch meetings (TBA):

12PM Alfredo Rivera

12:30-1PM Jennifer Boles

1PM-1:30PM Nathan Holmes

Session 6: Field Trip to the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts

(Saturday, 2 PM – 5 PM)

Meet in the Hotel Lobby at 1:45 PM sharp.

Tour with Tim Reichman (Pulitzer Foundation)

Recommended readings:

Tiffany Sutton, "How Museums Do Things Without Words." (in Shared Resources Folder).

Larry Shiner, "Architecture vs. Art: The Aesthetics of Art Museum Design."

Sunday June 1

Breakfast meeting (Room 406):

8:30AM Annis Whitlow

Session 7: Looking Forward: From the Field to the Proposal

(Sunday, 9 AM – 12 PM)

In the first hour of this final session, we will revisit the question of the shape and structure of Urban Visual Studies in the light of our discussions of student projects. We will also try to consolidate some of the lessons learned during the workshop, especially as these pertain to the fit between research questions, methods, and evidence. In the second half of the session, we focus on the question of how to conduct field research. We consider some strategies for making the best use of the period of summer research, and ways of avoiding some common pitfalls. We will also discuss the process of moving forward towards the preparation of a dissertation proposal. And we will discuss our plans for the September workshop.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
FALL 2008 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

URBAN VISUAL STUDIES
<https://workspace.ssrc.org/dpdf/>

Research Directors:

M. Christine Boyer: Mcboyer@princeton.edu

Edward Dimendberg: Dimendberg@cs.com

**Hilton Milwaukee City Center, Milwaukee, WI
Thursday September 11-Sunday September 15**

This is the second of two annual DPDF workshops designed to help graduate student fellows prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals in their chosen field. The two goals of the second workshop are 1) to help fellows synthesize their summer research; and 2) to draft proposals for dissertation funding. The fall workshop focuses on the mechanics and the philosophy of proposal writing. The workshop also aims to challenge fellows to reflect on their summer research in ways that link meaningfully to their research field. In this, the goals of the fall workshop are closely related to the project of mapping a research field that was started during the spring workshop in St Louis, MI.

Fellows will come out of the second workshop with supportive networks, consisting of both mentors and cohorts of new scholars carrying out research in their fields, as well as intellectually mature dissertation proposals. In discussing the proposals developed by students over the summer we will emphasize the analysis of visual evidence and the reading of visual objects as the foundation for developing the arguments of a strong dissertation. Modes of interpretation specific to media such as photography, film, architecture, and city planning will be stressed and students will be encouraged to refine the methodological skills necessary for the completion of their specific investigations.

Workshop Readings and Resources

Research Field resources will be placed on the relevant workspace websites. Students will receive separate explanations and detailed instructions about the access and use of the DPDF digital platform.

Workshop Assignments

September 1, 2008. Online posting of dissertation proposal. Each participant should submit a dissertation proposal according to the format and specifications outlined in the assignment description posted on the workspace. Please upload a copy of your dissertation proposal to “Dissertation Proposals September 2008” in the “Assignments” subfolder located in “Research Field Documents” on the workspace.

By the beginning of the workshop: Read carefully the proposals prepared by all the workshop participants. Note that the site seems to work best with Internet Explorer; some problems have been reported using other browsers. Participants will *not* present their own projects at the workshop; it will be assumed that everyone has read closely *all* the proposals.

- **For our first workshop session [i.e., “Session 2”]** : please read the following selections:

Przeworski and Salomon, “The Art of Writing Proposals.”

(This is in the folder “Shared Resources for Fellows” on the overall DPDF page.)

<https://home.ssrc.org/sites/DPDF/default.aspx>).

- **At the workshop:** Each of you will be assigned to initiate and lead an illustrated discussion of the student’s research that you presented in June. Please emphasize questions of evidence, argument, and methodology and consider how the project has evolved in response to the field research conducted over the summer.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 11

Participant travel to Milwaukee
Registration packets will be distributed at check-in

Thursday September 12

Session 1: Plenary Session: The Dissertation Proposal: Strategies and Funding Sources

- Welcome and Introductions
- Dissertation Funder Presentations

(Thursday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM, Room TBA)

Session 2: Fellowship Application Writing Fundamentals/Formulating a Research Problem and Hypothesis

(Thursday, 2 PM- 5 PM, Room TBA)

The two project directors and students will discuss the morning presentations as a springboard for identifying the elements of a successful fellowship application. We then will consider the process of formulating research questions, approaching the dissertation proposal as both a document in its own right and the foundation for writing grants and fellowships. The second half of the session will be devoted to student proposals, which have been grouped in a thematic cluster. This afternoon’s session considers the proposals of Stevens and Holmes which emphasize the forms of the post-1945 built environment in the United States and Europe.

Discussions for this and subsequent sessions will begin with the initiator, who will be asked to speak for 15-20 minutes, focusing on research questions, methods, and evidence, and conclude with a response by the student researcher and general discussion lasting 20-25 minutes.

Presentation A: Sarah Stevens, “Space Rules-Aesthetic Regulation in the American Built Environment” (Bridget Gilman, initiator)

Presentation B: Nathan Holmes, “Scenes of the Crime: The Cinematic Aesthetics of Criminality and Urban Space ” (Zachary Hilpert, initiator)

Evening field trip to Milwaukee Museum of Art (Meeting place TBA)

(Thursday, 5PM-8PM)

Evening meetings (location TBA):

9 :30 PM Sarah Stevens

10 PM Nathan Holmes

Friday September 13

Session 3: Field trip to Johnson Wax Building and Wingspread House by Frank Lloyd Wright in Racine , Wisconsin

(Friday 9AM-1PM, meet in front of hotel at 8:45)

Session 4: Student Presentations

(Friday 2PM-5PM, location TBA)

The four projects by Rivera, Vronskaya, Damluji, and Souliere each consider the interface of the urban visual and the legitimation of state power.

Presentation C: Alfredo Rivera, “Re-envisioning Cuba: Art, Architecture and Visual Culture in Havana, 1955-1970.” (Joshua Souliere, initiator)

Presentation D: Alla Vronskaya, “Landscaping Dictatorships.” (Annis Whitlow, initiator)

Presentation E: Mona Damluji, ““Baghdad on the Big Screen: Iraq’s urban history through the lens of British Newsreels from the 1920s to the 1950s.” (Jennifer Boles, initiator)

Presentation F: Joshua Souliere, Religious Encounters: Political Authority and Space: Urban Space in Zaire, Nigeria, 1500-1800.” (Alfredo Rivera, initiator)

Evening meetings (location TBA):

9:30 PM: Joshua Souliere

10 PM: Alfredo Rivera

Saturday September 14

Session 5: Student Presentations

(Saturday, 9 AM – 12 PM location TBA)

Hilpert, Tan, Boles, and Whitlow each consider the role of urban visual culture in societies experiencing traumatic change, including that accompanying rapid modernization.

Presentation G: Zachary Hilpert, “Picturing the American City in Peril: The aesthetic of urban devastation and its role in American culture.” (Nathan Holmes, initiator)

Presentation H: Jia Tan, “Experimental Art/Film in an Urbanization Experiment: Contemporary Chinese film and art in the Pearl River Delta Region” (Max Hirsh, initiator)

Presentation I: Jennifer Boles, “8 Millimeters versus 8 Millions: Superchero Cinema, Mexico City, and National Identity after the Golden Age.” (Mona Damluji, initiator)

Presentation J: Annis Whitlow, “Stories of trauma, visions of change: exploring how interpretations of Camden NJ’s decline are impacting its revitalization.” (Alla Vronskaya, initiator)

Lunch meetings (location TBA):

12PM	Zachary Hilpert
12:30-1PM	Jia Tan
1PM-1:30PM	Jennifer Boles
1:30PM:	Alla Vronskaya

Session 6: Student Presentations /Research Methodologies

(Saturday 2PM-5PM, location TBA)

Hirsh and Gilman present case studies of urban visual forms in advanced industrial societies which raise questions of modernization and the significance of global and local cultural styles.

Presentation K: Max Hirsh, “High Speed Urbanism: The Infrastructure of International Mobility in Frankfurt and Hong Kong.” (Jia Tan, initiator)

Presentation L: Bridget Gilman, “Robert Bechtle’s Painted Streets: Tracing the Shifting Realities of Northern California’s Urban and Suburban Landscapes.” (Sarah Stevens, initiator)

Evening meetings (location TBA)

5PM	Annis Whitlow
5:30PM	Max Hirsh
6 PM	Bridget Gilman

Sunday September 15

Session 7: Planning Your Research/Two Takes on the Urban Visual/Concluding Discussion

In this final session, the research directors will present their own research and the methodologies associated with it. They will offer concrete suggestions about how to plan the various stages of a dissertation. We will conclude with a group discussion.

(Sunday, 9 AM – 12 PM, location TBA)

Presentation M: Christine Boyer, “Mapping the City.”

Presentation N: Edward Dimendberg, “Cities and Cinema.”