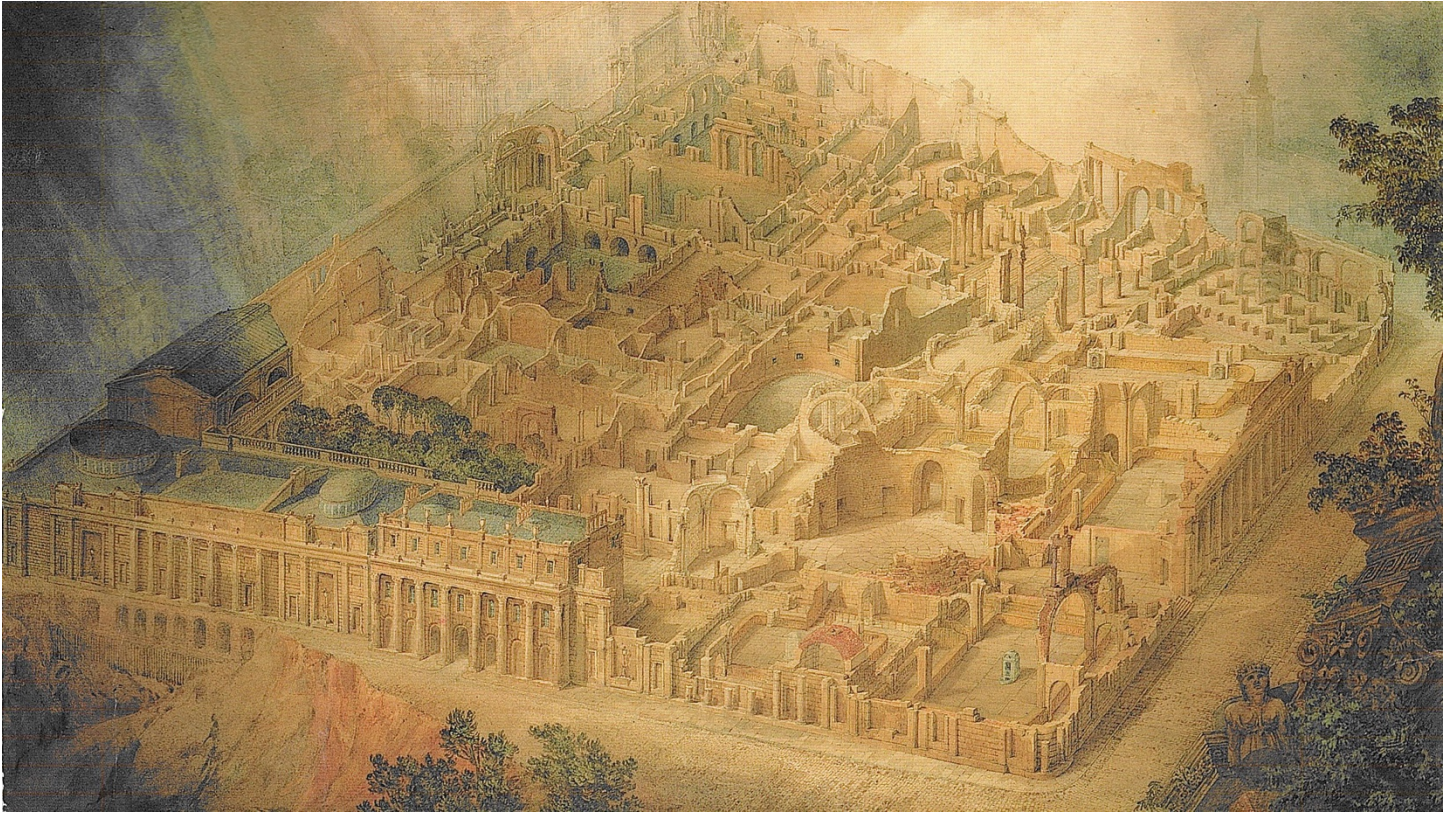


Anti-Development: Vacancy, Wilderness, Ruin

LAND 530B | Fall 2017



Joseph Gandy's depiction of the John Soane-designed Bank of England in ruins, 1830.

Location: Givens Hall 118

Time: Mondays, 8:30 – 11:30 AM

Instructor: Michael Allen

Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Landscape Architecture

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Course Description

What if we let the city decline, change or go wild? Is land development truly “sustainable urbanism,” or are depopulating cities like St. Louis and Detroit trying to speak another path to us? This seminar examines anti-growth urban land management and preservation practices – practices that embrace systems of emergent, wild and unexpected urbanism. With some readings as guide, students will explore topics of state landbanking and autonomous land trusts, managed depletion (including St. Louis’ infamous “Team Four” memorandum), wilderness conservation and “greenway” creation, watershed reintroduction, agricultural land reclamation, experimental historic preservation projects that eschew restoration or even rehabilitation and even land taxation policies. Starting with grounding readings in principles of the American orientation to wilderness, ecological vitality and urbanism, the seminar explores the modern history of efforts to conserve conditions in cities that defy “developed” land. Conservation of the emergent conditions of American cities offers a way to reconceptualize the wholeness of the city.

The seminar will probe the question of what makes the city whole, with field outings in St. Louis and beyond. Work in the seminar will be based on site-specific interventions developed throughout the semester, proposing ways to undevelop sites and realize latent ecological vitalities. Sites will include empty urban land, waterways, visits to meet government officials, an abandoned Palladian mansion and a lost town in the exurban woods. Students will gain an understanding of alternatives to economic development and designed “sustainable urbanist” landscapes, and develop the skills to think through and produce their own conservation programs.

1.0 Readings

Students should obtain copies of this book:

- Keller Easterling, *Subtraction* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2014)

All other required and suggested readings are accessible on Blackboard (<http://bb.wustl.edu>).

2.0 Seminar Requirements

2.1 Seminar: *Oxford English Dictionary* definition 1.1: “A class at university in which a topic is discussed by a teacher and a small group of students.” Origin: Late 19th century: from German Seminar, from Latin seminarium (see seminary).

In this course, each of us is responsible for producing discussion. There will be some lectures, but most of the course time will be driven by students’ bringing their responses to and questions about readings, sites and concepts. Reading on the syllabus is posted to provide background for your participation, so you have ideas against which to form your own. All readings are strongly encouraged. There will be no quizzes on content, so read with free curiosity.

2.2 Field Trips: Field work is indispensable for the subject matter, and several course sessions will involve field work outside of class. Students will provide their own transportation, and may carpool if there are any issues. Some field sessions will begin at a site, and students should arrive at the class start time. Students will have to sign waivers supplied by the Sam Fox School.

2.3 Attendance: All students should attend each class session, take notes and participate in discussions. Only one unexcused absence is allowed. A second unexcused absence will result in automatic drop of one half-letter grade for the final course grade. If a student cannot attend a session due to a conflicting academic requirement, that student should notify the instructor in writing at least one day prior to the session that will be missed. Leaving class late or arriving later than 15 minutes after start will constitute an unexcused absence.

3.0 Assignments

3.1 Response Papers: Students will complete two assigned response papers in the first half of the course, which will address distributed prompts. Due to the short nature of the summer course, the papers will be brief. If any student needs an extension on one of these assignments, the student should ask for one at the start of the class *before* which the paper is due. One extension will be granted, but only if it is requested according to the requirement listed on this syllabus. Late assignments will lose 3 grade points for each day they are not submitted. Email submission is strongly encouraged.

3.2 Strategic Propositions: At the end of the first half of the semester, students will divide into four teams of three to develop two projects. The first of these projects is the creation of strategic propositions around land management in St. Louis. Since St. Louis lacks a comprehensive plan, this assignment is a prefigurative essay at developing one. The exact assignment will be distributed ahead of fall break, and will invite the teams to select a section of the *Detroit Future City* plan, assess its applicability to conditions in St. Louis, and synthesize the thinking as a written protocol. The four student propositions will be combined into a class manifesto and distributed to all students before the final project.

3.3 Final Project: The teams will work together through the final project. The exact assignment for the final project will be distributed by Monday, November 13. Student teams will develop landscape-scale proposals for sites in St. Louis that exemplify the entropic conditions of vacancy, wilderness or ruin. Students will be graded for individual contributions, but the projects will not be complete without all members submitting their work. The final projects will be reviewed by the instructor ahead of submission, and presented to the class and guest critics in the last week of class. The goal of the project is to envision implementation of the strategies developed in the previous project.

4.0 Grading

4.1 Grade Distribution

Response Papers	20%
Strategy Project	20%
Final Project	40%
Course Attendance and Participation	20%

4.2 Grades

A (excellent) exceptional performance; strongly exceeding the requirements of the course, showing strong academic initiative and independent resourcefulness.

B (good) performance above the norm; accurate and complete; beyond the minimum requirements of the course; work demonstrates marked progress and initiative.

C (average) satisfactory work that adequately meets minimum requirements and demonstrates satisfactory comprehension, communication skills, and effort; demonstrates little initiative to investigate the problem without substantial prodding of the instructor; work shows little improvement.

D (inferior) unsatisfactorily meets minimum requirements; demonstrates minimum comprehension, communication skills, and effort at an inferior level; initiative lacking; improvement not noticeable.

F (failing) does not meet minimum requirements; fails to adequately demonstrate comprehension, communication skills, and effort.

4.3 Academic Integrity: You are responsible for adhering to the university's academic integrity policies. Specifically you are expected to produce your own work, to avoid inappropriate collaboration (especially on the written assignments), and to avoid various other forms of academic dishonesty, including falsification of data and misrepresentation of sources. Failure to cite and formally acknowledge your sources constitutes plagiarism, and will result in a failing grade (and likely disciplinary action within the bounds of Washington University's usual policies). You should produce work that is *very clear* in its acknowledgement of others' work – not only quoted material, but ideas and language as well

4.4 Citations and Formatting: All work for the course should use the Chicago Style or MLA Style. Please use an 11-point font, double space your work, and provide page numbers, appropriate references and a works cited or bibliography at the end. Papers should also have a title, which can be generic or simply a statement of theme.

Schedule

I. CONCEPTS AND TACTICS

Monday, August 28 (Introductions)

Introductions and Keywords

Film in Class:

The Lathe of Heaven (1980)

Monday, September 4 (Urban Entropy)

Readings:

Eric Zencey, "Some Brief Speculations on the Popularity of Entropy as Metaphor," *North American Review* 271.3 (September 1986).*

Michel Serres, Excerpt from *Malfeasance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).*

Patricia Heyda, "Erasure Urbanism," *Architecture Is All Over* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).*

Monday, September 11 (The Myth of Urban Decline)

Film In Class:

Cleveland: Confronting Decline in an American City (2016)

Readings:

Team Four, *Technical Memorandum 6B* (1975)*

Patrick Cooper-McCann, "The Trap of Triage: Lessons from the 'Team Four Plan.'"

Brent D. Ryan, "Rightsizing Shrinking Cities: The Urban Design Dimension," *The City After Abandonment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013)*

Monday, September 18 (Finding New Energies)

Field Visit:

Cherokee Street and Chippewa Street

Guest Guide: Jason Deem, Principal, South Side Spaces

Reading:

Keller Easterling, "Disposition," *Extrastatecraft* (New York: Verso, 2014).*

Paper #1 Due

Monday, September 25 (Finding New Energies)

Field Visit:

TBD

Reading:

J.B. Jackson, "The Necessity for Ruins," *The Necessity for Ruins* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).*

Monday, October 2 (Wilderness Returns)

Field Visit:

Harlem Creek Watershed

Guest Guide: Andrew Hurley, Professor of History, UMSL

Readings:

Roderick Nash, Excerpts from *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).*

Frederick Turner "Valuing Alteration," *Designing the Reclaimed Landscape* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2008).*

Monday, October 9 (Counterpreservation)

Guest Lecture:

Carlie Trosclair, installation artist (carlietrosclair.com)

Field Visit:

St. Liborius Church

Clemens House

Other locations TBD

Reading:

Daniela Sadler, "Counterpreservation as a Concept," *Counterpreservation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2016).*

Paper #2 Due

Monday, October 16 – NO CLASS

II. STRATEGIES

Monday, October 23 (Anti-Development as Protocol)

Guest: Rebecca Weaver, Urban Vitality Initiative, City of St. Louis

Reading:

Keller Easterling, *Subtraction*.

Monday, October 30 (Landbanking as Strategy)

Reading:

Center for Community Progress, *Take It To the Bank* (2014)*

Asakura Robinson et al, *St. Louis Landbank Assessment* (2016)*

*What Is a Landbank?**

Monday, November 6 (Strategic Propositions)

Student Teams Present: Detroit Future City and St. Louis

Reading:

Detroit Future City (2012)

<https://detroitfuturecity.com/framework/>

Monday, November 13 (The Entropy of Existing Buildings)

Field Work:

Historic Landbank-Owned Building Assessments

Site Visit to Refab

Guest speaker: Lynn Josse, historic preservation practitioner

Monday, November 20 (The Entropy of Urban Agriculture)

Field Visit:

Good Life Growing, The Ville

Reading:

Laura Lawson and Abbilyn Miller, "Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture as Antithesis to Abandonment: Exploring a Citizenship-Land Model," *The City After Abandonment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).*

Darrin Nordahl, "To Glean and Forage in the City," *Public Produce: The New Urban Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2009).*

Monday, November 27 (Scaling New Infrastructural Systems)

Field Visit:

River Des Peres, St. Marcus Cemetery and River Des Peres Greenway

Reading:

Michael Allen, "The Harnessed Channel: How the River Des Peres Became a Sewer," *Ecology of Absence* (November 27, 2010).

<http://preservationresearch.com/infrastructure/the-harnessed-channel-how-the-river-des-peres-became-a-sewer/>

River Des Peres Greenway:

<https://greatriversgreenway.org/river-des-peres-greenway-master-plan/>

Monday, December 4

Work Session – Teams Meet With Instructor

Monday, December 11

Final Presentations

Friday, December 15

Final Projects Due by 11:59PM