To study the built environment of the Americas is to deal with an inherent contradiction. While our disciplines of architecture, urban design, landscape, and planning share the fundamental belief that spaces matter; an overwhelming majority of our knowledge comes from another continent. As reminded by Edward Said in the classic “Orientalism” of 1974, European culture developed narratives about all other societies on Earth and as a result established itself as the center of human knowledge. One could easily apply Said’s orientalism to a certain “occidentalism” of the American continent and we shall ask what such narrative entails. According to the Eurocentric narrative, the Americas were a vastly continent empty of sophisticated cultures and ready to be conquered by superior knowledge of the self-proclaimed “old world”

More important and much more challenging than acknowledging our Eurocentric roots is the task of reconstructing the immense amount of knowledge lost in the bonfires or the smallpox devastation that followed the encounter. Indeed, our continent has a unique synthesis of spatial knowledge. Isolated for 15,000 years, our traditional societies developed in synergy with our spaces.
ASSIGNMENTS:
Student should read the assigned texts for each class, write a paragraph on Canvas before each meeting, and be prepared to discuss the main issues when prompted. Participation on the discussions is an integral part of the evaluation. Each student will make at least one presentation on a topic of their choice (20% of grade). Besides class participation, 2 short essays and a final paper will be required. Before the final papers are due, one section will be devoted to presenting the scope of their investigations to be discussed by the whole class.

1st short paper - 15% of grade
due Feb 25th
5-7 pages reflecting on the ideas of American spaces as discussed in the first 3 sections

2nd short paper - 20% of grade
due April 1st
5-7 pages reflecting on the one or more specific theories as discussed. Should indicate a direction to be explored on final paper

diagram exercise – 15% of grade
due April 22nd
graphically represent the spatial theories elaborated on your final paper

final paper - 30% of grade
due May 6th
10-15 pages on a theme of your choice regarding any aspect of spatial theory in the Americas.

Prof. Lara Office hours are Thursdays 11-1pm, WMB 4.116
SCHEDULE and READINGS:

jan 28

Introduction and course presentation


feb 4

Why theorize space in the Americas?


feb 11

The invention of America


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**feb 18**  
Peripheral knowledge


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**feb 25**  
Amerindian perspectivism


VIVEIROS de CASTRO, Eduardo. “Exchanging Perspectives, The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies”

SMITH, Michael (2008) “Chapter 1 City and Society in Aztec Central Mexico” and “Chapter 4 Public Architecture and the Urban Townscape” in *Aztec City-State Capitals*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, pp. 1-26; 94-123.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mar 4</td>
<td>Amerindian holocaust</td>
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<tr>
<td>mar 11</td>
<td>Manifest destiny</td>
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<tr>
<td>mar 18</td>
<td>No class – spring break</td>
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<tr>
<td>mar 25</td>
<td>Visit to Rare Maps Library and Blenton Museum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Look at relaciones geograficas + Cildo Meirelles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


HUYSSEN, Andreas Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World, New German Critique 100 (Winter 2007): 189-B.


suggested readings:


DEL RIO, Vicente, Beyond Brasilia: Contemporary Urbanism in Brazil, Gainesville, UPF, 2009.


HERNANDEZ, Felipe (et alli), Transculturation - Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005.


Acknowledgements:

In this course e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class work and announcements.

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html.

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471–6259 voice or 471–4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed.

This course uses Canvas, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. Student enrollments in each course are updated each evening. Blackboard can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to take online quizzes and surveys.

You will be responsible for checking the Canvas course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Canvas login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date.

Academic Integrity: According to the General Information catalog, “the value of a university degree depends on the absolute integrity of the work done by each student for that degree, a student should maintain a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work” (page98). Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.