Master of Science in Sustainability Management

**SUMA5250: Building a Sustainable Detroit:  A Case Study in Urban Resilience**
**Online via Zoom. TBD**
**3 credits**

**Instructor:** Donna Givens Davidson, dgivens@ecn-detroit.org
**Office Hours:** Scheduled, as needed in ½ hour increments via Zoom.
**Response Policy:** Please contact me by email at dg3211@columbia.edu and I will respond within 24 hours during the workweek.

## Course Overview

Once known as the arsenal of Democracy, the birthplace of the automobile assembly line, and the model city of America, Detroit is now emblematic of deindustrialization, decay, and insolvency.  Following the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history, Detroit is now being reframed in both local and national media as a comeback city with opportunity and possibility for all - urban pioneers, global investors, a creative class of new professionals, and suburbanites seeking a return to urban grit.

Despite these narratives, Detroit remains highly segregated - racially, geographically, economically, and socially. While downtown is prospering, neighborhoods are still largely blighted and contaminated with legacy uses that remain unremediated.  Over 30,000 houses and other structures have been demolished in the past 8 years, a process that is under-regulated and contributes to both environmental and infrastructure harm.  To the extent new investments are improving the condition of housing and infrastructure in some strategic areas, those investments are displacing long term residents who remain at risk of eviction or foreclosure from their homes. Detroit remains one of the poorest big city in America and the poverty that remains is seemingly intractable.  At present, only 36% of residents earn a living wage.

Detroit's present condition  is rooted in a protracted and uninterrupted history of racist laws, policies, and practices that deny full citizenship to Black Detroiters, undermine Democracy, and position the city as a poor colony within a thriving metropolis. Racism has disfigured the social, physical and economic landscape of Detroit to produce profound levels of neglect, abuse, and exploitation of its residents, resulting in wealth extraction, housing insecurity, healthy food and water scarcity, educational malpractice, and environmental destruction, all within the framework of wealth attraction, tax incentives, subsidized growth and capital accumulation in the greater downtown.

Through this course, we will examine the thesis that sustainability and racism cannot co-exist; that sustainability is rooted in inclusive social wellbeing now and in future generations, whereas racism is rooted in hoarding of power and resources for one dominant group. This hoarding of resources for a favored population impairs preservation for future generations.   Furthermore, environmental racism disconnects the consequences of environmental destruction from its beneficiaries and therefore interferes with feedback loops that are needed for course correction.

Detroit serves as an American example of long standing racist public policy, resulting in massive depopulation, blight, abandonment, and concentration of risks that cannot and will not be fixed through neo-liberal redevelopment strategies that ignore its racist past and the racist underpinnings of public policy.  We will explore grass-roots efforts to address root causes, community development efforts to build sustainable communities, and alternative approaches to restructuring local economies.

Students will learn advocacy, management, and political tools and strategies for pursuing sustainability in a place fraught with racism:

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- Community organizing
- Coalition Building
- Stakeholder engagement
- Resident-Driven Planning
- Community benefits agreements and
- Models for Alternative Economic Development

## Learning Objectives

L1. Evaluate how racist laws, policies and practices undercut urban sustainability and the role of citizenship in building sustainable systems.

L2. Examine the evolution of Black power in 20th Century Detroit and how this power has been harnessed and sustained over time, through social, civic, economic and political institutions to strengthen community resilience.

L3. Describe evolving patterns of white resistance to racial inclusion and social equity and correlate this resistance to specific sustainability impacts.

L4. Evaluate and critique competing explanations for contemporary urban crisis from the perspectives of impacted communities as well as  external institutional, political and corporate power brokers.

L5. Design strategies for building resident equity and formulate an equity initiative to address specific sustainability issues.

## Readings

**Required text (Chapters from required textbook are assigned in the course schedule below):**

Kurashige, S. (2017). *The fifty-year rebellion: How the U.S. political crisis began in Detroit*. University of California Press. ISBN-13: 978-0520294912

**Required articles:**

***To access the following required articles and text chapters, please search via the Columbia University Libraries ([CLIO](#)). Free downloads are available through CLIO after you log in using your Columbia UNI and Columbia password. If you are unable to locate the article, please contact the course instructor or FSA.***

Bates, B. T. (2012). Chapters 1-5. In *Making of Black Detroit in the age of Henry Ford* (pp. 15-67). Chapel Hill, NC: University Of North Carolina Press (129 Pages)

Barreto, A. A., & Lozano, K. (2017). Hierarchies of belonging: Intersecting race, ethnicity, and territoriality in the construction of US citizenship. Citizenship Studies, 21(8), 999-1014. doi:10.1080/13621025.2017.1361906 (15 pages)

Darden, J. T., & Thomas, R. W. (2013). Historical causes and consequences of the 1967 civil disorder white racism, Black rebellion, and changing race relations in the post–civil disorder era. In *Detroit Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide*, (pp. 1-135). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press (135 pages)

Peck, J., & Whiteside, H. (2016). Financializing Detroit. *Economic Geography, 92*(3). doi:10.1080/00130095.2015.1116369 (29 pages)

Atuahene, B. (2020). Predatory Cities. *California Law Review, 108*(1), 107-182 (75 pages)

McDonald, K. (Director). (2014, September 24). How Detroit has streamlined its fight against blight [Video file]. In *PBS Newshour*.  Available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=43ldAQhjkdY  (9 minutes)

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Stafford, K., & Tanner, K. (2020). Children were at risk so Detroit promised to halt demolitions. But that didn't happen. Retrieved from
https://www.freep.com/in-depth/news/investigations/2020/10/16/detroit-demolitions-stopped-neighborhoods-lead/5975230002/
(22 pages)

Stafford, K. (2019, November 08). Detroit demolition program mismanaged, riddled with problems, auditor says. Retrieved from
https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2019/11/08/detroit-demolition-auditor-general-report/2522761001/ (5 pages)

White, M. M. (2011) Environmental reviews & case studies: D-Town farm: African American resistance to food insecurity and the transformation of Detroit. *Environmental Practice, 13*(4), pp. 406–417., doi:10.1017/s1466046611000408 (11 pages)

Taylor, D. E., & Ard, K. J. (2015). Food availability and the food desert frame in Detroit: An Overview of the City's Food System. *Environmental Practice, 17*(2), 102–133, doi:10.1017/s1466046614000544 (31 pages).

Poething, E. C., Schilling, J., Goodman L., Bai, B., Gaster, J. Pendall, R., & Fazilli, S. (2017). The Detroit housing market: Challenges and innovations for a path forward. *Urban Institute* (66 pages)

Clark, C. (2020). Race, austerity and water justice in the United States. *Water Politics: Governance, Justice, and the Right to Water*, by Farhana Sultana and Alex Loftus, Routledge, an Imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2020, pp. 175–185. (10 pages)

Rector, J. J. (2017). Accumulating risk: Environmental justice and the history of capitalism in Detroit, 1880-2015. *Wayne State University Dissertations* (45 pages)

Meerow, S., & Newell, J. P. (2016). Spatial planning for multifunctional green infrastructure: Growing resilience in Detroit. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 159*(29), 62–75, doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2016.10.005 (13 pages)

Gould, K. A., & Lewis, T. L. (2017). Making urban greening sustainable. In *Green Gentrification: Urban Sustainability and the Struggle for Environmental Justice* (pp. 151-172). Routledge (21 pages)

Niekerk, A. J. (2020). Inclusive economic sustainability: SDGs and global inequality. *Sustainability, 12*(13), 5427. doi:10.3390/su12135427 (17 pages)

**Suggested:**

Cassells, H., & Levy, K. (Directors). (2015). *A people's history of Detroit* [Video file]. Available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcAvvr6yYjM (69 minutes viewing)

Carmichael, S., Hamilton, C. V., & Ture, K. (1992). White power: The colonial situation. In *Black power: The politics of liberation in America* (pp. 2-32). Vintage Books (30 pages)

O'Grady, S. K. (Director). (2016). *Land Grab* [Video file]. Atlas Industries. Retrieved from
https://www.amazon.com/Land-Grab-John-Hantz/dp/B07FYJ77NP  (75 minutes)

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America*. Liveright Publishing. (Pages TBD)

Sugrue, T. J. (2014). *The origins of the urban crisis: Race and inequality in postwar Detroit - Updated edition*. Princeton University Press. (Pages TBD)

## Resources

*Columbia University Information Technology*
[Columbia University Information Technology](#) (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty, and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty, and staff may access University-provided discounted software downloads ([https://columbiait.onthehub.com/](https://columbiait.onthehub.com/)).

*Columbia University Library*
Columbia's extensive library system ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online: [https://library.columbia.edu/](https://library.columbia.edu/).

*SPS Academic Resources*
The Office of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: [http://sps.columbia.edu/student-life-and-alumni-relations/academic-resources](http://sps.columbia.edu/student-life-and-alumni-relations/academic-resources).

## Course Requirements (Assignments)

1. **Participation in 8 online discussions – 40% (Individual grade - L1, L2, L3, L4).** This will include posting 250 to 300 word Canvas discussion posts in direct response to detailed questions and response and engagement with at least two other student responses. Posts will be evaluated based on critical thinking and analysis, application and synthesis of lecture/discussion and reading topics, as well as thoughtful consideration and responsiveness to posts by other students. Each post counts for 5% of the grade.
2. **Completion of three essays, evaluating problems described in case studies – 30% (Individual grade - L4, L5).** Students will be asked to assess issues of citizenship and justice, sustainability impacts, and power relationships between primary actors. Minimum of 1,000 words, double spaced. Essays will be evaluated based on writing mechanics, organization of information, evidence of case analysis, synthesis of lecture/discussion and reading content, and personal reflections demonstrating awareness and sensitivity to competing narratives about Detroit and its residents.
3. **Final project, proposing a policy change, program, or initiative that addresses a sustainability issue relevant to Detroit residents – 30% (Group grade - L5).** Students will select from one of the following sustainability management program areas: stormwater management, air quality, water access, renewable energy, or food systems and work in small groups to propose an intervention that will be presented as a group. One student from the group should submit a summary of the group proposal in a written document, of between 4,500 to 5,000 words. Proposals will include the following elements:
   a. Description of need, using available quantitative and qualitative data
   b. Discussion of race equity concerns
   c. Power analysis between primary stakeholders
   d. Brief historical description,
   e. Type(s) of intervention
      i. Direct Action
      ii. Community Organizing
      iii. Political Action
      iv. Research
      v. Community Development
      vi. Other

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      f.    Program Objectives
      g.    Expected Outcomes
      h.    Resource Requirements

Final projects will be evaluated for the group based on quality of group presentation which will comprise ⅓ of the final grade. Written responses will be evaluated based on responsiveness to outlined elements, writing mechanics, organization of information, as well as presentation of information using graphs, charts, and other tools, as appropriate. Projects should reflect analysis of racist policy and practices and correlation between these policies and practices to current sustainability issues. Proposals will be assessed based on clarity of goals and objectives, originality, fit within Detroit context, feasibility, and differentiation from existing programs/initiatives.

## Evaluation/Grading
The final grade will be calculated as described below:

**FINAL GRADING SCALE**

| Grade | Percentage |
|-------|------------|
| A+ | 98–100 % |
| A | 93–97.9 % |
| A- | 90–92.9 % |
| B+ | 87–89.9 % |
| B | 83–86.9 % |
| B- | 80–82.9 % |
| C+ | 77–79.9 % |
| C | 73–76.9 % |
| C- | 70–72.9 % |
| D | 60–69.9 % |
| F | 59.9% and below |

| ASSIGNMENT | % Weight |
|------------|----------|
| Discussion Prompts | 40% |
| Case studies | 30% |
| Final Project | 30% |

## Course Policies

*Participation and Attendance*
You are expected to complete all assigned readings, attend all class sessions, and engage with others in online discussions. Your participation will require that you answer questions, defend your point of view, and challenge the point of view of others. If you need to miss a class for any reason, please discuss the absence with me in advance.

*Late work*
Work that is not submitted on the due date noted in the course syllabus without advance notice and permission from the instructor will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (e.g., from a B+ to a B).

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*Citation & Submission*
All written assignments must use APA format, cite sources, and be submitted to the course website (not via email).

## School Policies

*Copyright Policy*
Please note—Due to copyright restrictions, online access to this material is limited to instructors and students currently registered for this course. Please be advised that by clicking the link to the electronic materials in this course, you have read and accept the following:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

*Academic Integrity*
Columbia University expects its students to act with honesty and propriety at all times and to respect the rights of others. It is fundamental University policy that academic dishonesty in any guise or personal conduct of any sort that disrupts the life of the University or denigrates or endangers members of the University community is unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. It is essential to the academic integrity and vitality of this community that individuals do their own work and properly acknowledge the circumstances, ideas, sources, and assistance upon which that work is based. Academic honesty in class assignments and exams is expected of all students at all times.

SPS holds each member of its community responsible for understanding and abiding by the SPS Academic Integrity and Community Standards posted at http://sps.columbia.edu/student-life-and-alumni-relations/academic-integrity-and-community-standards. You are required to read these standards within the first few days of class. Ignorance of the School's policy concerning academic dishonesty shall not be a defense in any disciplinary proceedings.

*Accessibility*
Columbia is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with documented disabilities. A student's disability status and reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon disability documentation and related information gathered through the intake process. For more information regarding this service, please visit the University's Health Services website: https://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/support.

*Class Recordings*
All or portions of the class may be recorded at the discretion of the Instructor to support your learning. At any point, the Instructor has the right to discontinue the recording if it is deemed to be obstructive to the learning process.

If the recording is posted, it is considered confidential and it is not acceptable to share the recording outside the purview of the faculty member and registered class.

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**Course Schedule/Course Calendar**

| Module/Discussion Topics | Readings | Assignment |
|---|---|---|
| **Module 1:** Sustainability and Citizenship | Required:<br><br>Bates, B. T. (2012). Chapters 1-2. In *Making of Black Detroit in the age of Henry Ford* (pp. 15-67). Chapel Hill, NC: University Of North Carolina Press.<br><br>Suggested Viewing:<br><br>Cassells, H., & Levy, K. (Directors). (2015). *A people's history of Detroit* [Video file]. Available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcAvvr6yYjM<br><br>Required:<br><br>Barreto, A. A., & Lozano, K. (2017). Hierarchies of belonging: Intersecting race, ethnicity, and territoriality in the construction of US citizenship. Citizenship Studies, 21(8), 999-1014. doi:10.1080/13621025.2017.1361906<br><br>Suggested:<br><br>Carmichael, S., Hamilton, C. V., & Ture, K. (1992). White Power: The Colonial Situation. In Black power: The politics of liberation in America (pp. 2-32). Vintage Books. | Canvas Discussion Prompt |
| **Module 2:** Urban Roots: Leaving the Plantation and the Rise of Black Detroit | Required:<br><br>Kurashige, S. (2017). Introduction. *The fifty-year rebellion: How the U.S. political crisis began in Detroit* (pp. 14-26) University of California Press. ISBN-13: 978-0520294912<br><br>Bates, B. T. (2012). Chapters 3-5. In *Making of Black Detroit in the age of Henry Ford* (pp. 70-144). Chapel Hill, NC: University Of North Carolina Press. | Canvas Discussion Prompt |

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| **Module 3**: Black Resistance and Rebellion: Building Black Political Power | Required:<br><br>Kurashige, S. (2017). Chapter 1-2. *The fifty-year rebellion: How the U.S. political crisis began in Detroit*. pp. 28-67. University of California Press. ISBN-13: 978-0520294912<br><br>Darden, J. T., & Thomas, R. W. (2013). Historical causes and consequences of the 1967 civil disorder white racism, Black rebellion, and changing race relations in the post–civil disorder era. In *Detroit Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide* (pp. 1-27). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.<br><br>Required:<br><br>Darden, J. T. (2013). The emergence of Black political power in 1967: Impact of the civil disorders on race relations in metropolitan Detroit. In J. Darden (Ed.), *Detroit Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide* (pp. 93-135). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press. | Schedule time to meet with group members for the first time.<br><br>As a group, submit the Final Paper Topic.<br><br>Canvas Discussion Prompt |
| **Module 4**: Dismantling Black Detroit: Bankruptcy and Emergency Management | Required:<br><br>Kurashige, S. (2017). Ch. 3-4. *The fifty-year rebellion: How the U.S. political crisis began in Detroit* (pp. 68-113) University of California Press. ISBN-13: 978-0520294912<br><br>Peck, J., & Whiteside, H. (2016). Financializing Detroit. *Economic Geography, 92*(3). doi:10.1080/00130095.2015.1116369 | Case Study: Emergency Management<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |
| **Module 5:** Wealth Transfers and Land Grabs | Required:<br><br>Atuahene, B. (2020). Predatory Cities. *California Law Review, 108*(1), 107-182.<br><br>Suggested:<br><br>O'Grady, S. K. (Director). (2016). Land Grab [Video file]. Atlas Industries. Retrieved from https://www.amazon.com/Land-Grab-John-Hantz/dp/B07FYJ77NP | Canvas Discussion Prompt<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |

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| **Module 6:** Deconstructing Detroit - Mass Demolitions | Required:<br><br>Kurashige, S. (2017). Ch. 5. *The fifty-year rebellion: How the U.S. political crisis began in Detroit* (pp. 113-135) University of California Press. ISBN-13: 978-0520294912<br><br>McDonald, K. (Director). (2014, September 24). How Detroit has streamlined its fight against blight [Video file]. In *PBS Newshour*. Available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=43ldAQhjkdY<br><br>Stafford, K., & Tanner, K. (2020). Children were at risk so Detroit promised to halt demolitions. But that didn't happen. Retrieved from https://www.freep.com/in-depth/news/investigations/2020/10/16/detroit-demolitions-stopped-neighborhoods-lead/5975230002/<br><br>Stafford, K. (2019, November 08). Detroit demolition program mismanaged, riddled with problems, auditor says. Retrieved from https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2019/11/08/detroit-demolition-auditor-general-report/2522761001/ | Case Study: Problem Analysis I - Proposal N<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |
| **Module 7:** Food Systems | Required:<br><br>White, M. M. (2011). D-Town Farm: African American resistance to food insecurity and the transformation of Detroit. *Environmental Practice 13*(4), 406–417, doi:10.1017/s1466046611000408.<br><br>Taylor, D. E., and Ard, K. J. (2015). Food availability and the food desert frame in Detroit: An overview of the city's food system. *Environmental Practice 17*(2), 102–133. doi:10.1017/s1466046614000544. | Canvas Discussion Prompt<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |
| **SPRING BREAK (Academic Holiday).**<br><br>**No Classes.** | | |

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| **Module 8:** Water Rights | Required:<br><br>Kurashige, S. (2017). Ch. 6. *The fifty-year rebellion: How the U.S. political crisis began in Detroit* (pp.136-167) University of California Press. ISBN-13: 978-0520294912<br><br>Clark, C. (2020). Race, austerity and water justice in the United States. In F. Sulana & A. Loftus (Eds.) *Water politics: Governance, justice, and the right to water*. Routledge (pp. 175–185).<br><br>Suggested:<br><br>Rector, J. J. (2017). Accumulating risk: Environmental justice and the history of capitalism in Detroit, 1880-2015. *Wayne State University Dissertation*, pp. 20–75, 305-368 | Group Outline for Final Project Due |
| **Module 9:** Affordable Housing | Poething, E.C., Schilling, J., Goodman L., Bai, B., Gaster, J. Pendall, R. & Fazilli, S. The Detroit Housing Market: Challenges and Innovations for a Path Forward**.** Urban Institute | Canvas Discussion Prompt<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |
| **Module 10:** Air Quality and Soil Contamination | Rector, J. J. (2017). Accumulating risk: Environmental justice and the history of capitalism in Detroit, 1880-2015. *Wayne State University Dissertation* | Case Study: FCA Expansion<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |
| **Module 11:** Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management | Meerow, S., & Newell, J. P. (2016). Spatial planning for multifunctional green infrastructure: Growing resilience in Detroit. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 159*(29), 62–75, doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2016.10.005 | Canvas Discussion Prompt<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |
| **Module 12:** Building Power | "Making Urban Greening Sustainable." *Green Gentrification: Urban Sustainability and the Struggle for Environmental Justice*, by Kenneth Alan Gould and Tammy L. Lewis, Routledge, 2017, pp. 151–172. | Canvas Discussion Prompt<br><br>Continue working on the Final Project as a group. |

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| **Module 13**:  Sustainable Social Wellbeing | Niekerk, A. J. (2020). Inclusive Economic Sustainability: SDGs and Global Inequality. *Sustainability, 12*(13), 5427. doi:10.3390/su12135427 | Final Project due April 26, 2021, 11:59 PM ET |