

Master of Science in Sustainability Management

Building Resilience in 21st Century Detroit: Roots and Remedies to Racial Injustice **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 and I will respond within 24 hours during the workweek.

Course Overview

Detroit is well-recognized as the Blackest big city in America within one of the most segregated metropolitan areas. At one point in the 20th Century, Detroit was home to the largest Black middle class, the highest percentage of Black homeowners, and one of the most powerful Black political machines in the nation. This pre-eminence collapsed over the span of the past 40 years, under the weight of racist public policy, public and private malfeasance, financial disinvestment, and the temporary usurpation of Black political power. In an effort to better understand current conflicts between Black citizens and their government, this class will examine the role of race in public policy formation, institutional systems, and government.

Detroit's racial inequality 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 longstanding 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:

- 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.

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- L3. Describe evolving patterns of white resistance to racial inclusion and social equity and correlate this resistance to specific sustainability impacts.
- L4. Compare and contrast competing narratives of the new Detroit and power relationships between key Detroit stakeholders and leaders.
- L5. Design strategies for building resident equity and formulate an equity initiative to address specific sustainability issues.

Readings

Required:

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=43ldAQhkdY (9 minutes)

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)

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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)

Resources

Columbia University Information Technology

[Columbia University Information Technology](https://columbiauit.onthehub.com/) (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://columbiauit.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/>.

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>.

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,

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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. Each student will summarize their 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
 - 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 1/3 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

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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).

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.

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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
<p>January 13, 2021 Module 1: Sustainability and Citizenship</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>Bates, B. T. (2012). Chapters 1-2. In <i>Making of Black Detroit in the age of Henry Ford</i> (pp. 15-67). Chapel Hill, NC: University Of North Carolina Press.</p> <p>Suggested Viewing:</p> <p>Cassells, H., & Levy, K. (Directors). (2015). <i>A people's history of Detroit</i> [Video file]. Available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcAvvr6yYjM</p> <p>Required:</p> <p>Barreto, A. A., & Lozano, K. (2017). Hierarchies of belonging: Intersecting race, ethnicity, and territoriality in the construction of US citizenship. <i>Citizenship Studies</i>, 21(8), 999-1014. doi:10.1080/13621025.2017.1361906</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p>Carmichael, S., Hamilton, C. V., & Ture, K. (1992). White Power: The Colonial Situation. In <i>Black power: The politics of liberation in America</i> (pp. 2-32). Vintage Books.</p>	<p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p>
<p>January 20, 2021 Module 2: Urban Roots: Leaving the Plantation and the Rise of Black Detroit</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>Bates, B. T. (2012). Chapters 3-5. In <i>Making of Black Detroit in the age of Henry Ford</i> (pp. 70-144). Chapel Hill, NC: University Of North Carolina Press.</p>	<p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p>

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<p>January 27, 2021</p> <p>Module 3: Black Resistance and Rebellion: Building Black Political Power</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>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 <i>Detroit Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide</i> (pp. 1-27). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.</p> <p>Required:</p> <p>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.), <i>Detroit Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide</i> (pp. 93-135). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.</p>	<p>Schedule time to meet with group members for the first time.</p> <p>As a group, submit the Final Paper Topic.</p> <p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p>
<p>February 3, 2021</p> <p>Module 4: Dismantling Black Detroit: Bankruptcy and Emergency Management</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>Peck, J., & Whiteside, H. (2016). Financializing Detroit. <i>Economic Geography</i>, 92(3). doi:10.1080/00130095.2015.1116369</p>	<p>Case Study: Emergency Management</p> <p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>
<p>February 10, 2021</p> <p>Module 5: Wealth Transfers and Land Grabs</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>Atuahene, B. (2020). Predatory Cities. <i>California Law Review</i>, 108(1), 107-182.</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p>O'Grady, S. K. (Director). (2016). Land Grab [Video file]. Atlas Industries. Retrieved from https://www.amazon.com/Land-Grab-John-Hantz/dp/B07FYJ77NP</p>	<p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p> <p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>
<p>February 17, 2021</p> <p>Module 6: Deconstructing Detroit - Mass Demolitions</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>McDonald, K. (Director). (2014, September 24). How Detroit has streamlined its fight against blight [Video file]. In <i>PBS Newshour</i>. Available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=43ldAQhkdY</p>	<p>Case Study: Problem Analysis I - Proposal N</p> <p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>

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	<p>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/</p> <p>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/</p>	
<p>February 24, 2021</p> <p>Module 7: Food Systems</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>White, M. M. (2011). D-Town Farm: African American resistance to food insecurity and the transformation of Detroit. <i>Environmental Practice</i> 13(4), 406–417, doi:10.1017/s1466046611000408.</p> <p>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. <i>Environmental Practice</i> 17(2), 102–133. doi:10.1017/s1466046614000544.</p>	<p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p> <p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>
<p>SPRING BREAK (Academic Holiday).</p> <p>No Classes.</p>		
<p>March 10, 2021</p> <p>Module 8: Water Rights</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>Clark, C. (2020). Race, austerity and water justice in the United States. In F. Sulana & A. Loftus (Eds.) <i>Water politics: Governance, justice, and the right to water</i>. Routledge (pp. 175–185).</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p>Rector, J. J. (2017). Accumulating risk: Environmental justice and the history of capitalism in Detroit, 1880-2015. <i>Wayne State University Dissertation</i>, pp. 20–75, 305-368</p>	<p>Group Outline for Final Project Due</p>
<p>March 17, 2021</p>	<p>Poething, E.C., Schilling, J., Goodman L., Bai, B., Gaster, J. Pendall, R. & Fazilli, S. The Detroit</p>	<p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p>

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<p>Module 9: Affordable Housing</p>	<p>Housing Market: Challenges and Innovations for a Path Forward. Urban Institute</p>	<p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>
<p>March 24, 2021</p> <p>Module 10: Air Quality and Soil Contamination</p>	<p>Rector, J. J. (2017). Accumulating risk: Environmental justice and the history of capitalism in Detroit, 1880-2015. <i>Wayne State University Dissertation</i></p>	<p>Case Study: FCA Expansion</p> <p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>
<p>March 31 2021</p> <p>Module 11: Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management</p>	<p>Meerow, S., & Newell, J. P. (2016). Spatial planning for multifunctional green infrastructure: Growing resilience in Detroit. <i>Landscape and Urban Planning</i>, 159(29), 62–75, doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2016.10.005</p>	<p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p> <p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>
<p>April 7, 2021</p> <p>Module 12: Building Power</p>	<p>“Making Urban Greening Sustainable.” <i>Green Gentrification: Urban Sustainability and the Struggle for Environmental Justice</i>, by Kenneth Alan Gould and Tammy L. Lewis, Routledge, 2017, pp. 151–172.</p>	<p>Canvas Discussion Prompt</p> <p>Continue working on the Final Project as a group.</p>
<p>April 14, 2021</p> <p>Module 13: Sustainable Social Wellbeing</p>	<p>Niekerk, A. J. (2020). Inclusive Economic Sustainability: SDGs and Global Inequality. <i>Sustainability</i>, 12(13), 5427. doi:10.3390/su12135427</p>	<p>Final Project due April 26, 2021, 11:59 PM ET</p>