Race, Place, and Law Reading Group  
Spring 2022  
Date and Time TBA

Student Organizers: Nketiah Berko (nketiah.berko@yale.edu); Raymond Fang (raymond.fang@yale.edu); Ann Sarnak (ann.sarnak@yale.edu)

Faculty Sponsor: Amy Kapczynski

Course Description: This reading group, adapted from a reading list prepared by Brian Highsmith, will explore the relationships between race, place, and the law. Our goal is, per Highsmith, to understand the “institutional stakes of geography for distribution...focusing particularly on racial separation and subjugation in the United States” and the commodification of urban space. “Our readings will consider how people’s lives are shaped by where they reside—and why people reside where they do, now and across our history,” with special attention to legal and political institutions that “work to condition the possibilities for economic provision...on the arrangement of people across geographic space.” The main goal of our reading group is to understand the “hidden stakes of geography” for contemporary issues of race, class, social identity, and political economy. We will invite guests—including activists, legal scholars, and policy experts—to join us for particular sessions and enliven our discussions with their experiences, perspectives, and expertise.

Attendance Policy: There will be 13 weekly meetings of 60 minutes each. Students must attend 750 minutes to receive credit.

Syllabus:

Week 1: Introduction to the Study of Race, Place, and the Law  


Laura Pulido, Flint Michigan, Environmental Racism and Racial Capitalism, Capitalism Nature Socialism (2016) [16 pages]

Week 2: Housing discrimination, neighborhood segregation, and intergenerational wealth  

David Imbroscio, Race matters (even more than you already think): Racism, housing, and the limits of The Color of Law, Journal of Race, Ethnicity and the City (2020) [24 pages]


**Week 3: White flight, suburbanization, and restrictive zoning**


David Imbroscio, *Biden's Ill-Advised Plan to Eliminate Exclusionary Zoning* — [Shelterforce](#) [8 pages]

**Week 4: Examining race and place in several American cities, pt. 1**

Anna Blatto, *A City Divided: A Brief History Of Segregation In Buffalo*, Partnership For The Public Good (2018), [link](#) [26 pages]


**Week 5: Examining race and place in several American cities, pt. 2**


**Week 6: Mobility and opportunity**


Edward Goetz, Anthony Damiano, and Rashad Williams, ‘Opportunity Areas’ Shouldn’t Just Be Places With A Lot of White People — Shelterforce [7 pages]

Week 7: Local tax structures and public goods
Michael Leachman, Michael Mitchell, Nicholas Johnson and Erica Williams, Advancing Racial Equity with State Tax Policy, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2018), link [24 pages]

Destin Jenkins, “The Bonds of Inequality: Debt and the Making of the American City” (2021), Introduction [22 pages]


Week 8: Perspectives on fiscal federalism
Brian Highsmith, The Implications of Inequality for Fiscal Federalism (or Why the Federal Government Should Pay for Local Public Schools), Buffalo Law Review (2019) [45 pages]


Philip Rocco, Ending Federalism as We Know It, Jacobin (2020) [8 pages]

Week 9: Speculative Capitalism and Real Estate Financialization, pt 1
Sam Stein, Capital City, Introduction [12 pages]

Raquel Rolnik, Urban Warfare: Housing Under the Empire of Finance, Introduction [18 pages]


Week 10: Speculative Capitalism and Real Estate Financialization, pt 2


Leilani Farha, *Financialization of Housing and the Right to Adequate Housing*, UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Housing (2017) [22 pages]

Sara Safransky, *Rethinking Land in the Postindustrial City*, Antipode (2016) [21 pages]

**Week 11: Cities in Transnational Context**


**Week 12: Policing, Punishment, and Place**


U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department (Mar. 2015) — Parts I-III [15 pages]


**Week 13: Federalism, Localism, and Sovereignty**


Nestor M. Davidson, The Dilemma of Localism in an Era of Polarization, 128 Yale L. J. 954 (2019), Part III and conclusion [16 pages] Available at: https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/faculty_scholarship/1002

Conclusory Thoughts