AFR370: Mapping Urban Destruction

31824
Spring 2026
Cross-listed as ARC 327R (00778), I 320 (28608), and I 320C (28614)

Instructor: Dr. Andrew G. Britt

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What stories does rubble tell?

This course investigates how demolitions have shaped the social and material lives of cities in a range of urban contexts. Course sections will follow the razing of singularly meaningful sites along with broad patterns of demolition in cities throughout the world, from Chicago to Paris and São Paulo to Austin. Specific questions that will recur throughout the course include: How do demolitions change places and the meanings attached to them? Why do authorities bulldoze certain structures and not others? Where do dislocated residents go? How have demolitions contributed to uneven urban development, including through patterns of segregation, economic immobility, and inequality, across space and time? Source materials will include historical maps, city plans, oral histories, and music that preserves razed spaces in popular memory.

Students will learn to use digital mapping tools to document, analyze, and visualize social and spatial change related to demolitions over time. They will also re/map and narrate the life and destruction a significant

demolished space. No prior experience with mapping or programming is required; students interested in learning foundational mapping skills in a supportive and structured environment are welcome.

PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE COURSE

Upper-division standing

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Recognize patterns of change and continuity related to demolitions across diverse urban contexts.
2. Investigate how the study of demolitions deepens our understanding of broader urban issues, such as re/development, dislocation, historic preservation, and the culture of place.
3. Develop your facility at locating and analyzing archival evidence related to urban spatial history, including maps, plans, photographs, and other official records.
4. Learn and practice the fundamentals of digital historical mapping.
5. Hone research, digital mapping, and narrative skills to document and analyze the life and destruction of a significant place.

HOW WILL YOU LEARN?

TEACHING MODALITY INFORMATION

This course will be taught face-to-face and require in-person attendance. I do not record classes and therefore am not able to provide recordings for missed classes. Each Tuesday will be dedicated to seminar-style inquiry. Each Thursday will be dedicated to developing competencies in and conducting historical research and digital historical mapping.

COMMUNICATION

The course Canvas site can be found at utexas.instructure.com. Please email me through Canvas. You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses.

ASKING FOR HELP

Please visit me in office hours or contact me via email for any assistance.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

For a list of important university policies and helpful resources that you may need as you engage with and navigate your courses and the university, see the University Policies and Resources Students Canvas page. The

page includes the language of the University Honor Code, Title IX legal requirements for Texas employees, and information about how to receive support through the office of Disability & Access.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Readings, subscriptions, datasets, and other materials will either be provided to students (at no cost) and/or are accessible via the UT libraries. Students will engage with the following materials, in part or full:

Richard White. 2010. “What is Spatial History?”
J. Brian Harley. 1988. “Maps, Knowledge, and Power.”
Jeff Byles. 2006. *Rubble: Unearthing the History of Demolition*. Broadway.
J.B. Jackson. 1980. “The Necessity of Ruins.”
Gastón Gordillo. 2014. *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*. Duke UP.
Lawrence J. Vale. 2013. *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities*. Chicago UP.
Richard Williams. 2009. *Brazil: Modern Architectures in History*. Reaktion.
Felipe Correa. 2018. *São Paulo: A Graphic Biography*. University of Texas Press.
Goyena, Alberto. “Architecture Inside Out: Urban Transformations Through the Perception of Demolition Engineers.” *Vibrant – Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, v. 8, n.2. July to December 2011.
Daniela Sandler. “Place and Process: Culture, Urban Planning, and Social Exclusion in São Paulo.” *Social Identities*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2007, pp. 471–93.
Andrew G. Britt. “Spatial Projects of Forgetting: Razing the Remedies Church and Museum to the Enslaved in São Paulo’s ‘Black Zone’, 1930s–1940s.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* [Cambridge, UK], vol. 54, no. 4, 2022, pp. 561–92.
Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira. 2000. *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo / Teresa P.R. Caldeira*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Ragsdale, Kenneth B. 2010. *Austin, Cleared for Takeoff: Aviators, Businessmen, and the Growth of an American City*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
Busch, Andrew M. 2017. *City in a Garden: Environmental Transformations and Racial Justice in Twentieth-Century Austin*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
Edmund T. Gordon. 2026. “Retelling Central Texas History.”
Foote, Kenneth E. 1985. *Velocities of Change of a Built Environment, 1880-1980: Evidence from the Photoarchives of Austin, Texas*. Silver Spring, Md: V.H. Winston.
Tretter, Eliot. 2016. *Shadows of a Sunbelt City: The Environment, Racism, and the Knowledge Economy in Austin*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

TEXAS
The University of Texas at Austin

SHARING OF COURSE MATERIALS IS PROHIBITED

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), and in-class materials, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without my explicit, my written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials may facilitate cheating. The University is aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in initiation of the student conduct process and include charge(s) for academic misconduct, potentially resulting in sanctions, including a grade impact.

REQUIRED DEVICES

You will be provided access to a computer for the in-class research and mapping labs. You will need access to a computer for out-of-class assignments.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLASS RECORDINGS

Class recordings, if they take place, are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

GETTING HELP WITH TECHNOLOGY

Students needing general help with technology in this course should contact the UT Service Desk. For questions about the mapping software used in this course, please email me directly.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Class attendance

Each student is expected to attend and contribute to all class meetings. See section below on policy for requesting excused absences.

Class participation

Your success in this course – defined by your own learning objectives, the learning objectives outlined above, and your grade – depends on sustained, thoughtful engagement inside the classroom and timely completion of the assignments. Expect to invest, on average, between 1-3 hours of preparation per class. Your contributions to class can entail questions or comments during class, or contributions to discussion boards before or after class.

If you would like to discuss productive strategies toward efficient reading, writing, etc., I would be more than happy to chat with you individually or in groups.

CONTENT WARNING

Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and orderly exchange of ideas through discussion. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics and comments that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing. I'll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools (or Large Language Models [LLMs]) such as CoPilot or ChatGPT in this class shall be permitted on a limited basis. You will be informed as to the assignments for which AI may be utilized and how it may be utilized. You are also welcome to seek my prior-approval to use generative AI on any assignment. In either instance, generative AI should be used with caution and proper citation, as the use of generative AI must be properly attributed. Using generative AI without authorization, or failing to cite generative AI use according to the citation policy in this course, even where permitted, may constitute a violation of UT Austin's Institutional Rules on academic integrity and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity for resolution. If you are considering the use of generative AI but are unsure if you are allowed or the extent to which they may be utilized responsibly, please ask.

ASSIGNMENTS

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	Points Possible	Percent of Total Grade
1. Critical Reflections: approx. 200-word reflections on readings and in-class discussions.	300	15
2. Historical Mapping Labs: weekly labs focused on discrete historical mapping skills.	700	15
3. Paulicea 2.0 Layer: create and upload a layer of demolitions to the Pauliceia 2.0 portal.	100	10
4. "RIP Old Austin" Layer: research and remap sites from the "RIP Old Austin" t-shirt.	100	10
5. Research Bibliography: A collection of primary and secondary sources related to your final project.	100	10

Assignments	Points Possible	Percent of Total Grade
6. Final Project: A biography of a demolished place, drawing on research, advancing sound critical analysis, and presented through historical mapping. (Due 5/3)	100	20
7. Attendance	100	20

LATE WORK AND MAKING UP MISSED WORK

Late assignments may receive a deduction of one full letter grade per day late. Late submissions of the final project will not be accepted.

ABSENCES

If you cannot attend class and would like your absence to be considered excused, you should email me by the end of the scheduled class day with an explanation. Excused absences will be considered with proper documentation within a week of the absence. Possible excuses for absences include sickness with a note from the health center, family events such as sickness or death/funeral, birth, and official, university-sanctioned activities. If you incur unexcused absences beyond two, you may forfeit all attendance points (20% of your final grade). Six unexcused absences will likely lead to failure in the course.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence for a religious holy day as far in advance as possible of the date of observance. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. For questions regarding religious accommodations, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students.

GRADING POLICY

+/- grades will be used for the final class grade (excepting A+)

GRADE BREAKS

Grade	Cutoff
A	94%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	84%
B-	80%

Grade	Cutoff
C+ C C-	77% 74% 70%
D+ D D-	67% 64% 60%
F	<60%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY EXPECTATIONS

All allegations of academic misconduct will be referred by faculty to the Office of the Dean of Students. Students who violate University rules on academic misconduct are subject to the student conduct process. A student found responsible for academic misconduct may be assigned both a status sanction and a grade impact for the course. The grade impact could range from a zero on the assignment in question up to a failing grade in the course. A status sanction can include a written warning, probation, deferred suspension, suspension, or expulsion from the University. To learn more about academic integrity standards, tips for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation, and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct.

COURSE OUTLINE

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website at utexas.instructure.com. Check Canvas regularly. **Changes** to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible.

Week	Date	Day	Class Topic
1.	1/13	Tu	Course introduction
1.	1/15	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Mapping introduction
2.	1/20	Tu	Theory and History of Demolitions, I
2.	1/22	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Locating demolition-related primary sources
3.	1/27	Tu	Theory and History of Demolitions, II
3.	1/29	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Orientation to Pauliceia 2.0 mapping platform
4.	2/3	Tu	São Paulo – Spatial History
4.	2/5	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Georeferencing raster maps

Week	Date	Day	Class Topic
5.	2/10	Tu	São Paulo – Re/development
5.	2/12	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Georeferencing raster maps
6.	2/17	Tu	São Paulo – Dislocation
6.	2/19	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Using vectors
7.	2/24	Tu	São Paulo – Preservation
7.	2/26	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Using vectors
8.	3/3	Tu	São Paulo – Reconstruction
8.	3/5	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Creating vector data
9.	3/10	Tu	Austin – Spatial History
9.	3/12	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Demolition primary sources in Austin
10.	3/17	Tu	Spring Break
10.	3/19	Th	
11.	3/24	Tu	Austin – Re/development
11.	3/26	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Remapping “RIP Old Austin”
12.	3/31	Tu	Austin – Dislocation
12.	4/2	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Site Visit in Austin
13.	4/7	Tu	Austin – Preservation
13.	4/9	Th	Historical Mapping Lab: Site Visit in Austin
14.	4/14	Tu	Austin – Reconstructions
14.	4/16	Th	Final Project Workshop
15.	4/21	Tu	Final Project Workshop
15.	4/23	Th	Final Project Presentations
16.	5/3	Su	Final Project Due