Gentrification and the neoliberal city

Information

Credits: 3 (two 90-minute blocks)
Teacher: Prof. Ernesto López-Morales
elopez@uchilefau.cl
Days and hours: To be defined
Place: To be defined
Office Hours: (online by Zoom) Tuesday, 15:00PM – 16:30PM (by previous appointment)

Presentation

Initially depicted by Ruth Glass in 1964 as the arrival of affluent middle classes into deprived working-class neighborhoods in London, later popularized across the developed world, gentrification has been more recently described as class-motivated urban changes in very different global latitudes. No better concept refers to the myriad social, political, and economic urban policies behind the current world’s growing urban and housing inequalities and class tensions.

This course draws on three core arguments. First, gentrification should be understood as widespread land and housing dispossession. On a global scale, housing inaccessibility has soared by the hand of multinational equity firms, shell corporations, vulture investors, global real estate companies (including gigantic ones like Evergrande), highly specialized intermediary financers, REIT, and the like. Besides, state policies do not regulate but often aim at gentrification-like policies under pro-growth macroeconomic agendas and neoliberal planning instruments. This course explores the definition of ‘late-stage gentrification’ exacerbated after the 2008 global crisis, during climate change, and post covid-19 times, while architecture and urban planning call for new responses.

Second, as housing and urban space become core assets for expanding financialized capitalism in different world areas, gentrification and its architectures might require decolonizing some of its definitions. This means turning our gaze more seriously to the emerging myriad of world cases that refer to gentrification as a dominant force. Beyond the usual suspects of European and North American cities, new reference points are East Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. Further, recent evidence of gentrification in ancient urban periods suggests the need to reconsider the confinement of gentrification within a specific time and place, the wave-gentrification approach, and even capitalism as a necessary condition for gentrification.

Third, decolonizing gentrification also invites questioning some of its established reference points. Crucial gentrification aspects like race, gender, ethnicity, and religion invite questioning definitions
imposed by global north scholars. Gendered rights to land and housing not only matter to dispossessed subaltern women but also progressive, affluent gentrifiers, while the concept of marginal gentrifiers deserves an update. Racialized dispossession has often been examined in the Western context, but it is little known and may look different in South America and East Asia, where informality and urban marginalization compensate the historical absence of a welfare state, or it responds to nationalistic, ethnic dominance.

**Teaching goals**

1. To train in interdisciplinary urban analysis via a comparative policy-oriented approach that considers material (architectural, infrastructural), social and cultural variables.
2. To build a regularly functioning, participative, respectful, and enjoyable academic space.
3. To learn about gentrification from different world settings and times and compare different urban situations worldwide.

**Key topics addressed**

Gentrification’s historical background; gentrification’s demand-side thesis (liberal); gentrification’s supply-side thesis (Marxist); planetary gentrification, land and housing neoliberalism; gentrification waves; State-led gentrification; agent-led gentrification and touristification; gentrification and informality; gentrification’s class, race, and gender; displacement and evictions; the postcolonial/decolonial critique; ethno-gentrification; climate gentrification.

Study-cases from the US, UK, Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, Russia, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, China, South Korea, and Japan.

**Assignments and grading**

Grading scale: (1 to 7 pts.)

Primary assignment: Two essays written in English +/- 2,000 words inc. bibliography. National and international students will select a case and bring examples from their latitudes—submission dates: Weeks 8 and 15 (60%)

Secondary assignment: Mid-phase memos, participation in oral debates and written quizzes and tests, attendance (40%)

**Products**

- State-of-the-art understanding of gentrification, covering different world regions.
- Basic knowledge about different cities, their socio-economic features, architecture, urban spaces, and urban/housing policies at play.
- Training in academic reading and discussion, logical analysis, and philosophical reflection.
### Schedule

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Welcome / A gentrification synopsis / a decolonial perspective to gentrification</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>The gentrification-waves thesis / archeological gentrification / early examples</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Demand-side thesis / brownstoning and other cultural movements</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>The creative class: Art, architecture, and gentrification / displacement and exclusion</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Marxist approach / the rent gap 1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>The rent gap 2 / neoliberal economics / land debates</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>State-led gentrification and urban regeneration policies</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Ethno-gentrification in the Middle East - Essay #1 submission</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Airbnbization of the city / the sharing economy</td>
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<td>Recess Week – no classes</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Fifth-wave gentrification in financialized cities</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Intersectional gentrification / class, race and gender / marginal gentrifiers</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Climate gentrification and the migratory urban crisis</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>New resistances to gentrification</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Working Week – no classes</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Tbd</td>
<td>Wrap up &amp; conclusions / Essay #2 submission</td>
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### About the lecturer Ernesto López-Morales:

Since 2005, Ernesto has been engaged in empirical research on property-led gentrification in deprived inner-city areas of Santiago, Chile, adopting a critical approach to urban redevelopment and the right to housing. Later his work has gone against established orthodoxies in Latin America and abroad, such as neoclassical explanations of the extreme appreciation of value in central areas and other common assumptions that serve state bureaucracies and private real estate elites. Further comparative empirical research into the Mexican, Brazilian, and Argentinean cases has been carried out systematically since 2013 through collaborative research with scholars from Leicester University, LSE, Buenos Aires University, Mexico National University, and Federal Rio de Janeiro University, and complemented with fundamental inputs from local activists. Published works here: [https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=5w40_sYAAAAJ&hl=es](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=5w40_sYAAAAJ&hl=es)
**Lecturer’s commitments**

Accessibility (office hours – meetings previously appointed); quick response to emails; prompt return to grades and detailed feedback on the assignment; tolerant, respectful, and participative classes.

**Core Bibliography**


Florida R, Mellander C, Stolarick K, 2008, “Inside the black box of regional development–human capital, the creative class and tolerance” *J Econ Geogr lbn023*


