

COMM 360 FALL 2015
Professor Frazier & Professor Kun

An aerial black and white photograph of Watts, California, during the 1965 riots. The image shows a dense urban area with a large plume of thick, dark smoke rising from the center-right, obscuring parts of the sky and buildings. In the foreground, there are several residential houses and commercial buildings. A sign for 'SHOPPERS MARKET' is visible on the left, and another sign for 'SUNSHINE MARKET' is partially visible. The overall scene depicts the aftermath of the riots, with significant destruction and chaos.

THE RHETORIC OF L.A.:
THE VIEW FROM WATTS

This course explores representations of Los Angeles communicated in diverse media and diverse forms of popular culture. What is the rhetoric of Los Angeles? How is it expressed, produced, and received? We will analyze cultural identities, urban geography, film and video, sports, visual art, the built environment, food, and popular music as a means of peeling back the layers of Los Angeles as a city, as a text, as a medium, and as an experiment in urban struggle, survival, community, and growth. For this year's version of the course, we have structured its inquiries, contents, and assignments around the 50th anniversary of the Watts uprisings of August 1965. What happens when we tell the story of L.A. from the vantage point of urban rebellion? What if the rhetoric of L.A. begins in flames? How does that change the way we study the city? Our weekly readings will balance general discussions of L.A. history, culture, art, media, and critique with a specific focus on the civil rights unrest of the 1960s, from the Chicano Walkouts and the Sunset Strip riots to Watts 1965, Watts 1992, and Watts 2015. History will play a central role to our analysis but we will always keep an eye and an ear on the sights, sounds, tastes, and struggles of the contemporary city. We will meet once a week for three hours, which will allow us to accommodate an exciting range of guest speakers, film screenings, and off-campus meetings throughout the city. For the final project, students will work in research teams (and in some cases in collaboration with community organizations) to produce original projects that engage and activate the contemporary city through media analysis and production.

Course Requirements to include: Weekly group presentations; Weekly blog writing; Mid-term analytical paper (5-7 pages); Final group research project

Authors/Artists/Musicians/Activists/Films to be covered include: Mike Davis, Gerald Horne, Betye Saar, Joan Didion, Daniel Widener, Johnny Otis, The Los Angeles Dodgers, Noah Purifoy, Killer of Sheep, Elaine Brown, Freestyle Fellowship, Blade Runner, Harry Dolan, Watts Prophets, Khalil Joseph, Akwid, Cynthia Hawkins, Thomas Pynchon, Kendrick Lamar, Nathaniel West, Wassup Rockers, Roger Guenveur Smith, Wattstax, Frank Zappa, Neelam Sharma, Ed Ruscha, & More