



African- American Enclaves
of Manhattan over time

American Ghettos: Morphology and Space

SPRING 2021 SEMINAR | Arch 3308/6308/4408/6408 Sp. Tp. in Theory

Thursdays 3:45 pm to 5: 45pm IP/OL (3 cr. Seminar)

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The intent of this seminar is to explore the urban morphology of “The American Ghetto”, a particular cultural enclave in the spatial discourse (or lack of discourse) of American cities. The course positions the “Ghetto” or African-American Urban Enclave as an essential spatial construct in the discourse of African-American space. Because of the African – American urban enclave’s central role in segregation era America, conceptually and literally, it became a city within a city, with a vital political and economic base and creating a haven for a disenfranchised people. Over time, in this post segregation and postindustrial age it has become a shadow of its former self. Due to urban flight (both white flight and black flight) – no longer does an AAUE have a healthy cross section of economic classes, or a thriving market place, or strong schools. This abandonment of place has created a perpetual state of human poverty and infrastructural deterioration for those who will not or cannot leave. The AAUE continues to be a locus of African-American collective energy, because over 80% of the African-American population dwells within metropolitan areas. This study looks at this American cultural enclave as a serious and vital space within the history and evolution of the American city. Most importantly, it positions the African – American urban enclave as something beyond its, powerful – but clichéd – image, as an economically distressed area of urban infrastructure – it is a spatially rich site of African-American and thus American collective consciousness. The course will use a number of cities and small towns as case studies to explore the histories of these African-American Urban Enclaves with an emphasis on clarifying the common spatial, environmental and physical elements that give form and definition to these places. Students will be asked to engage in the collection of historic maps and the development of new maps over the course of the semester.