

Course Syllabus

HOME/LESSNESS

Summer 2025: July 9 – September 10

Instructor: Professor Saladdin Ahmed Bahozde

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Meeting time: Wednesdays 13:30 -15:30 EST

Course Description

This course investigates homelessness as a political problem from an interdisciplinary perspective, focusing on the political economy of housing and homelessness in relation to democratic citizenship, biopolitics, governmentality, and social justice. For any comprehensive inquiry into the problem of homelessness, it is imperative to avoid reductive methods whether in the discipline of politics, economics, sociology, or philosophy. Therefore, the course benefits from and encourages multidisciplinary research about housing and homelessness. We will start by looking into the concept of dwelling from ontological, phenomenological, and aesthetical perspectives. Then, we will investigate housing as a question of biopolitical economy, consulting some of the most important scholarships that have been published recently. Next, the course zooms into political concepts, such as democracy, citizenship, and sovereignty. For instance, we will ponder on the link between homelessness and the ability to participate meaningfully in the public sphere; homelessness and othering; and homelessness and the exercise of biopower in contemporary nation-states. While this is a political theory course, a substantial number of the sources focus primarily on homelessness in the United States, so it might also be of interest to students of American politics.

Learning Goals

Upon successful completion of the course, participants will:

1. recognize what makes housing an essential aspect of human ontology;
2. comprehend different aspects of homelessness as a political and societal problem;
3. critically analyze the biopolitical nuances of governmentality in relation to homelessness;
4. critically examine and articulate the relationship between the right to housing and social justice;
5. formulate original research questions; and
6. conduct theoretical and applied research about the biopolitical economy of housing that would culminate in academic research and writing with a focus on methodology, argumentation, structure, organization, flow, and proper use of academic sources.

Textbook

Bahozde, Saladdin Ahmed. 2024. *The Death of Home: Aura and Space in the Age of Digitalization*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Email Communication

In all email communication, please include the course title in the subject line. I do my best to reply to all emails received on weekdays within 24 hours.

Schedule

Below is an outline of the topics and readings to be covered in this course. Note that I may make adjustments based on student engagement with the material and overall progress in the course.

Week 1: Introduction; 1.6 billion homeless people

We will learn about the global magnitude of the problem homelessness and its immediate implications in terms of social (in)justice, societal well-being, poverty, and inequality

- Ruff Institute of Global Homelessness. 2019. “The Better Data Project.” <https://ighomelessness.org/global-homeless-data/>
- National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2022. “State of Homelessness: 2022 Edition.” <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/>
- Milan, Stefania, and Emiliano Treré. 2022. “The Data Gaps of the Pandemic: Data Poverty and Forms of Invisibility.” In *Social Movements and Politics during COVID-19: Crisis, Solidarity and Change in a Global Pandemic*. Edited by Breno Bringel and Geoffrey Pleyers, 78–85. Bristol: Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2qnx5gh.13>.
- Boccagni, Paolo. 2022. “At Home in the Centre?: Spatial Appropriation and Horizons of Homemaking in Reception Facilities for Asylum Seekers.” In *Making Home(s) in Displacement: Critical Reflections on a Spatial Practice*. Edited by Luce Beeckmans, Alessandra Gola, Ashika Singh, and Hilde Heynen, 139–54. Leuven: Leuven University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv25wxbv.9>.
- **Movie:** Godard, Jean-Luc. 2004. *Notre Musique*

Week 2: Ontology & Phenomenology

Through the reading materials and discussions this week we will gain a concise philosophical grounding of the concept of dwelling. Housing is an essential condition for any human being’s well-being, and it is at the heart of the formation of our identities on the existential level.

- Chapter 1 of *The Death of Home*.

Week 3: Biopower

This week's materials and discussions will be focused on the concept of biopower (administration of life) and what makes biopower so present in today's world of nation-states and so dehumanizing. We will read and discuss, Foucault and Agamben, who are among the most important figures when it comes to the philosophical theorization of biopower.

- Chapter 2 of *The Death of Home*.

Week 4: Identity

Here the course takes a turn into a more specific theme. We will zoom into the question of identity in relation to home and displacement. We will travel across disciplines, genres of writing, times, and perspectives to learn about the political and sociological implications of displacement. In the meantime, we will start engaging in a critique of humanitarian and humanist approaches to the subject of immigration.

- Chapter 3 of *The Death of Home*.

Week 5: Homelessness; Critique

As we reach the middle point of the course, we will start making a critical use of the methodological approaches and the theoretical concepts we have learned so far.

- Chapter 4 of *The Death of Home*.
- Kassie, Emely. 2020. "Nowhere Else to Go." PBS. August 11.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/coronavirus-undocumented-family-faces-threat-homelessness-deportation-covid/>

Week 6: Class; Updates on the Book Drive

It is time to raise the following question: Is homelessness essentially a problem of injustice, social inequality, and systematic discrimination? To examine this question, in the course of this critical journey, investigating homelessness in relation to class, gender, and race is in order. We will start by addressing the problem of homelessness as a question of class inequality.

- Chapter 5 of *The Death of Home*.

Week 7: Gender

This week we will look into the link between homelessness and gender inequality.

- Chapter 6 of *The Death of Home*.
- National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2022. "Demographic Data Project: Gender and Individual Homelessness."
<https://endhomelessness.org/demographic-data-project-gender-and-individual-homelessness/>

Week 8: Race

Finally, we will study homelessness in relation to racism, and by doing so we will bring our inquiries closer into a conclusive point regarding justice, equity, identity, and difference.

- Chapter 7 of *The Death of Home*.

Recommended further readings:

- Watts, Jerry Gafio. 1994. *Heroism and the Black Intellectual: Ralph Ellison, Politics, and Afro-American Intellectual Life*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. Chapter 3: "The Responsibilities of the Black Writer," pp 65-98
- National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2020. "Racial Inequalities in Homelessness, by the Numbers."
<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/>
- Kuperus, Gerard. 2016. *Ecopolitical Homelessness: Defining Place in an Unsettled World*. London and New York: Routledge. Chapter 5: "Conclusion: Toward an Ecopolitical Homelessness," pp 129-165
- Prince, Valerie Sweeney. 2005. *Burnin' Down the House: Home in African American Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press. Introduction: "A House is not a Home," pp xii-11 & Chapter 2: "Keep on Moving, Don't Stop: Invisible Man," pp 40-63

Week 9: Surveillance

Before we conclude the course, we will narrow in the scope of our inquiries in terms of both biopolitics and human geography. In the meantime, we will examine new knowledge applications and individually apply what we have learned to advance research questions.

- Chapter 8 of *The Death of Home*.

Recommended further readings:

- Beeckmans, Luce, Alessandra Gola, Ashika Singh, and Hilde Heynen, eds. 2022. *Making Home(s) in Displacement: Critical Reflections on a Spatial Practice*. Leuven University Press. pp 1-25.
- Ahmed, Saladdin. 2019. *Totalitarian Space and the Destruction of Aura*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. Chapter 3: “Spatial Technologies of Power,” pp 71-98
- Thatcher, Jim E., and Craig M. Dalton. 2022. “Life in the Age of Big Data.” In *Data Power: Radical Geographies of Control and Resistance*, 13–45. Pluto Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv249sg9w.8>.

Week 10: Homelessness in the United States

As each participant will finalize their research in preparation for the final submission of the thesis project, we will conclude the course by focusing more concretely on homelessness in the United States.

- The conclusion of *The Death of Home*.

Assignments

There is another document to be shared with participants who wish to receive academic credits.