

Racialised and Gendered Cities

Prof. Michele Lancione (he/they)

Master's Degree in Geography and Territorial Sciences - University and Polytechnic of Turin

Course Information

Instructor

Michele Lancione (he/they), Professor of Economic and Political Geography, Polytechnic of Turin

michele.lancione@polito.it

Timeframe

Spring semester 2026

Tuesdays, 2pm-5pm starting on 24th February

36 hours, 12 lectures of three hours each

6 CFU

Objectives

The course is designed to offer an introduction to the critical study of racialisation and gender processes from a spatial perspective. Beyond the first three introductory lessons, which provide an overview of critical debates on cities and race/gender in contemporary urban geography, the course requires the active involvement of students in the readings provided and seminars offered with international guests. The aim is to provide students with conceptual tools to question the racialised and gendered assumptions of the contemporary urban world. The focus will be on notions of expropriation, banishment, racialised assemblages and black geographical thought, feminist epistemologies, patriarchy, sexism, queer thought and the role of urban planning in reproducing racist and heteronormative forms of urbanity.

Structure

The course is divided into 12 weeks of teaching. The lessons will be seminar-based, with extensive reference literature and critical reflection on the proposed texts. Students are advised to read at least one article per lesson in advance. The reference literature will be in English, with particular attention to critical race studies and critical gender studies. The seminars will revisit the topics covered in class, with presentations by international guests followed by group discussions. The last class will be dedicated to discussing the topics that emerged during the course and preparing for the final exam.



Schedule



Lecture 1 – Racialised Spaces

24th February

This lecture examines the intersection between race and space through key geographical thinkers, exploring how racial categories are not biological realities but are actively produced through spatial practices that organize social life from segregation to environmental racism. The lecture traces developments from Black Geographies and necropolitics to contemporary forms of spatial resistance, revealing how race and space are mutually constitutive and how racial justice requires fundamental transformation of spatial arrangements rather than simply policy reform.

Main Readings:

- Hawthorne, Camilla. 2019. "Black Matters Are Spatial Matters: Black Geographies for the Twenty-first Century." *Geography Compass* 13, no. 11.
- McKittrick, Katherine. 2006. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Introduction]
- Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2016. "The Uninhabitable? In between Collapsed Yet Still Rigid Distinctions." *Cultural Politics* 12(2): 135-154.
- Summers, Brandi Thompson, and Desiree Fields. 2022. "Speculative Urban Worldmaking: Meeting Financial Violence with a Politics of Collective Care." *Antipode* 54, no. 4: 1-20.

Lecture 2 - Gender and Space

3rd March

This lecture examines how space and gender are mutually constitutive through complex relations of power, exploring how spatial arrangements actively participate in constructing gendered identities while gendered relations simultaneously organize space in particular ways. Moving across multiple scales from the body to global political economies, the lecture investigates feminist geography's challenge to masculinist knowledge systems, the spatial organization of patriarchal relations through reproductive labor, performative gendered spaces, intersectional identities, and the possibilities for transformative spatial practices that could support more equitable ways of organizing social life.

Main readings:

- Cavallero, Lucí, and Verónica Gago. 2021. *A Feminist Reading of Debt*. Translated by Liz Mason-Deese. London: Pluto Press. [Introduction]
- Nash, Jennifer C. 2019. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [Introduction]
- Nelson, Lise, and Joni Seager. 2005. *A Companion to Feminist Geography*. Oxford: Blackwell. [Introduction]
- Peake, Linda. 2016. "The Twenty-First-Century Quest for Feminism and the Global Urban." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40 (1): 219-227.
- Zaragocin, Sofia, and Martina Angela Caretta. 2021. "Cuerpo-territorio: A Decolonial Feminist Geographical Method for the Study of Embodiment." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 111 (5): 1503-1518.

Lecture 3 – Queering Space

10th March

This lecture explores contemporary queer geography as a field characterized by productive tensions between theoretical sophistication and material intervention, examining how the spatial organization of sexuality and gender extends beyond simple mapping of "queer spaces" to understanding the complex relationships between heteronormativity, embodiment, and spatial power relations. The discussion encompasses key theoretical frameworks including Sara Ahmed's work on orientation and phenomenology, Lauren Berlant's analysis of desire and spatial politics, trans geographies that challenge binary thinking about space and identity, and the ongoing tensions between feminist and queer geographical approaches in both academic and activist contexts.

Main readings:

- Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [Introduction]
- Elwood, Sarah. 2020. "Digital geographies, feminist relationality, Black and queer code studies: Thriving otherwise." *Progress in Human Geography* 45 (4): 1-20.
- Kinkaid, Eden, et al. (Queering Feminist Geography Collective). 2025. "Queering feminist geography I: queer/trans inclusion, exclusion, and belonging." *Gender, Place & Culture* 32 (8): 1290-1301.
- Matthews, Peter, Christopher Poyner, and Richard Kjellgren. 2019. 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Experiences of Homelessness and Identity: Insecurity and Home(o)Normativity'. *International Journal of Housing Policy* 19 (2): 232–53.
- Oswin, Natalie. 2010. 'The Modern Model Family at Home in Singapore: A Queer Geography'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35 (2): 256–68.

Reading Week

17th March

No Lecture

Use this week to catch up on readings and prepare for upcoming guest seminars.

Guest Seminars

Lecture 4 – Making the Case for Hustle Studies

24th March

Guest seminar by Tatiana Thieme

NOTE: The seminar will start at 4pm in Sala Vigliano (Castello del Valentino), but students will have the chance to meet with Tatiana for an hour, at 2pm, in our usual classroom to discuss the suggested reading below. Please note that Tatiana is happy to be guided by the questions and interests of the MSc students, and eager to hear about your own research including your dilemmas around methods, writing, and the complicated relationship between fieldwork and theory.

In this talk, Tatiana Thieme will discuss her recently published book *Hustle Urbanism: Making Life Work in Nairobi* (University of Minnesota Press, 2025), engaging themes that resonate with the work of the Beyond Inhabitation Lab. In Nairobi, "hustle" operates as both a narrative and an urban practice. Drawing on 15 years of ethnographic engagement, *Hustle Urbanism* centres youth logics, perspectives, and inventive strategies for resisting the legacies of colonial violence and uneven urban development, while carving out opportunity spaces for themselves and their peers. Cautioning against fetishising hustle as social and economic uplift, the book advances a pluriversal urban theorisation that thinks with vernacular self-narrations of life, labour, and learning the city.

Prepatory reading to be read in advance of the lecture:

- Thieme, Tatiana A. 2025. 'The Significance of Sketching: Drawing a Streetscape in a Nairobi Neighbourhood'. *Area* 57 (1): e12922.

Lecture 5 – Sex Work and the Urban Borders of (In)decency

31st March

Guest lecture by Daniela Morpurgo

The regulation of sex work, the functioning of sexual markets, and the struggle of sex workers in particular, provides a powerful lens through which to examine the hierarchies embedded in urban space. It exposes how racialized, classed, and gendered orders are enforced through planning, policing, and property regimes. At the same time, sex workers have often been pivotal figures in challenging these exclusionary geographies and in reshaping the terms of urban belonging. This class will explore these dynamics, asking how cities are morally organized, how stigma becomes spatialized, and how struggles around sex work illuminate broader questions of power, citizenship, and urban justice.

Prepatory reading to be read in advance of the lecture:

- Blair, Cynthia M. *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010, (pages 1-18).

Further readings:

- Hubbard, Phil. "Sexuality, Immorality and the City: red-light districts and the marginalisation of female street prostitutes." *Gender, Place and Culture* 5, no. 1 (1998): 55-72.
- Morpurgo, Daniela. "The impossibility of home: conceptualizing home a-making through the lens of sex work in Italy." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (2025): online first.

Lecture 6 – On Racial Capitalism

7th April

This lecture examines racial capitalism as a foundational framework for understanding how capitalism and racism developed as mutually constitutive systems, tracing the concept from Cedric Robinson's intervention to contemporary manifestations in urban policing, border regimes, and carceral expansion. Drawing on critical geography and the Black radical tradition, the lecture explores how racial capitalism operates through spatial technologies of partition and dispossession while highlighting resistance movements—from antipolitical refusal to abolition geography—that imagine and enact alternatives to these violent arrangements.

Main readings:

- Davis, Angela Y. 1994. "Report from Harlem." In *The Meaning of Freedom*, 17-27. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Danewid, Ida. 2024. *Resisting Racial Capitalism: An Antipolitical Theory of Refusal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Introduction]
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2022. "Race and Globalization." In *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, edited by Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano. London: Verso.
- Porter, Libby. 2022. "Racial Violence Is Woven into the Fabric of Our Cities." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Spotlight on Racial Capitalism.
- Roy, Ananya. 2019. "Racial Banishment." In *Keywords in Radical Geography: Antipode at 50*, 227-230. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Guest Seminars

Lecture 7 – Spatiotemporal Interference

14th April

Guest seminar by Irene Peano

NOTE: The seminar will start at 4pm in Sala Vigliano (Castello del Valentino), but students will have the chance to meet with Irene for an hour, at 2pm, in our usual classroom to discuss the suggested readings below

The non-linearity of time and the non-synchronicity of space are long-established themes of critical scholarship – yet how to keep such dimensions together remains in some ways a thorny question. In the migrant encampment archipelago of Italy's agroindustrial enclaves, recursions of mobility containment - and its excesses - materialise in multiform landscapes of inhabitation, where several spatial projects with long genealogies overlap and fuse into one another. In this seminar, I mobilise the notion of interference to make sense of the ways in which spatial typologies and their temporalities are always contaminated, layered, and multidimensional.

Preparatory reading to be read in advance of the lecture:

- Peano, Irene. 2021. 'Specters of Eurafrika in an Italian Agroindustrial Enclave'. E-Flux: <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/coloniality-infrastructure/411213/specters-of-eurafrika-in-an-italian-agroindustrial-enclave>

Lecture 8 – Fugitive Care: Beyond Capitalist Welfare

21st April

Guest seminar by Ida Danewid

NOTE: The seminar will start at 4pm in Sala Vigliano (Castello del Valentino). So on this day the formal timing of the lecture will be 4pm-7pm. Note also that on the 22nd April, the Beyond Inhabitation Lab will host an international lecture titled "Beyond Sanctuary", with Ananya Roy, Veronika Zablotsky, Ash Amin and Ida Danewid, on themes very much related to this module. Albeit optional, you are warmly invited to attend. The lecture will start at 4pm, Salone d'Onore, Castello del Valentino.

Care is often seen as the antidote to violence and as a powerful frame for abolition: hence the activist slogan "fund care, not cops." But while scholars of racial capitalism have done much to excavate the violent history of prisons, borders, and police, they have had less to say about the history of state care and welfare. In this talk, I explore how state-sponsored forms of care have functioned as technologies of pacification, expropriation, abandonment, and control. By looking beyond the neoliberal period of "punitive welfare", I examine the messy relationship between care and carcerality across three sites of the "benevolent" welfare state: public health, housing, and schooling. In so doing, I work towards an anarchistic approach to abolition which seeks, not just to fund care, but to transform and conceive of it anew: what I call fugitive care.

Preparatory reading to be read in advance of the lecture:

- Danewid, Ida. 2024. *Resisting Racial Capitalism: An Antipolitical Theory of Refusal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Introduction]

Lecture 9 – Workshop: Gender and Race in the Italian Home

28th April

In this workshop, students will be invited to reflect on notions of homing, housing and belonging in Italy, starting from the Black, queer and feminist perspectives explored in the module. On the basis of the preparatory reading listed below, they will be asked to reflect on their own experience of homing in the country, and to discuss how the geographical literatures discussed in previous lectures can allow for a critical reading of the Italian home.

Preparatory reading to be read in advance of the lecture:

- Lancione, Michele. 2023. *For a Liberatory Politics of Home*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [Chapter 3, Italian Ritornellos]

Guest Seminars

Lecture 10 – The Mediterranean and Critical Shipwrecks

5th May

Guest seminar by Iain Chambers

NOTE: The seminar will start at 4pm in Sala Vigliano (Castello del Valentino). So on this day the formal timing of the lecture will be 4pm-7pm.

Who has the right to narrate, map and explain the Mediterranean? Answering requires removing critical practices from the calculations of Western objectivity and relocating them within currents that constitute a historical density and cultural complexity that cannot be reduced to a single language or perspective, however universal its claims may be. Renegotiating the Mediterranean, which is not automatically authorised by Occidental lexicons, leads to questioning and interrupting the linearity of the empty, homogeneous spacetime of "progress". Here, the colonial clock is confronted with the temporalities and rhythms of other histories and lives.

Preparatory reading to be read in advance of the lecture:

- Chambers, Iain, and Marta Cariello. 2025. *The Mediterranean Question*. 1st edn. Punctum Books. [Introduction]

Lecture 11 – Ordinary Cities, Ordinary Women

12th May

Guest lecture by Saanchi Saxena

What does it mean to see the city through the eyes of women? How does caste as a system of racialised hierarchy intersect with gender to produce urban space in South Asia? Through historical and current examples, we will discuss how caste, gender, and its intersections shape urban relations such as housing, labour, spatial transformations, political movements, and everyday experiences. This will help us understand how different power structures operate spatially in different cities across the world.

Preparatory reading to be read in advance of the lecture:

- Saxena, Saanchi. 2024. 'Gender, Caste, and Street Vending in India: Towards an Intersectional Geography'. *Area* 56 (3)

Lecture 12 – Final Workshop

19th May

Reflecting on Course Readings

Students will have the opportunity to further discuss the readings proposed during the module.

Discussing Essay Writing

Preparation for the writing of individual essays and final examination.



Examination

Attendance is strongly recommended as the final examination is largely based on the content, discussions, and activities conducted during the lessons.

Attending students:

- Preparation of an essay based on a topic of choice selected by the student, on the basis of the lecture content and assigned readings (50% of final grade), of max 4,000 words. The essay must demonstrate critical analysis and synthesis capabilities of the chosen area of interest.
- Oral examination based on slides, provided readings, and content from international guest seminars (50% of final grade). The oral exam will focus on two questions: discussing the essay, and the presentation of a second topic of choice from the student.

Non-attending students:

Learning assessment involves the writing of an essay (as described for attending students), and an oral examination based on readings provided in the course bibliography, lecture slides, and the additional text:

- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2022. *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*. Edited by Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano. London: Verso.

Course Bibliography

No textbook, but a selection of academic articles discussed in lectures and seminars. Access to the texts will be provided through a shared folder on the first day of class. The main ones are:

- Ahmed, S. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press. [Introduction]
- Blair, Cynthia M. 2010. *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cavallero, Lucí, and Verónica Gago. 2021. *A Feminist Reading of Debt*. Translated by Liz Mason-Deese. London: Pluto Press. [Introduction]
- Chambers, Iain, and Marta Cariello. 2025. *The Mediterranean Question*. 1st edn. Punctum Books. [Introduction]
- Danewid, Ida. 2024. *Resisting Racial Capitalism: An Antipolitical Theory of Refusal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Introduction]
- Davis, Angela Y. 1994. "Report from Harlem." In *The Meaning of Freedom*, 17-27. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Elwood, Sarah. 2020. "Digital geographies, feminist relationality, Black and queer code studies: Thriving otherwise." *Progress in Human Geography* 45 (4): 1-20.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2022. "Race and Globalization." In *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, edited by Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano. London: Verso.
- Hawthorne, Camilla. 2019. "Black Matters Are Spatial Matters: Black Geographies for the Twenty-first Century." *Geography Compass* 13, no. 11.
- Kinkaid, Eden, et al. (Queering Feminist Geography Collective). 2025. "Queering feminist geography I: queer/trans inclusion, exclusion, and belonging." *Gender, Place & Culture* 32 (8): 1290-1301.
- Lancione, Michele. 2023. *For a Liberatory Politics of Home*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [Chapter 3, Italian Ritornellos]
- Matthews, Peter, Christopher Poyner, and Richard Kjellgren. 2019. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Experiences of Homelessness and Identity: Insecurity and Home(o)Normativity." *International Journal of Housing Policy* 19 (2): 232-53.
- McKittrick, Katherine. 2006. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Introduction]

Course Bibliography (continued)

- Morpurgo, Daniela. 2025. "The impossibility of home: conceptualizing home a-making through the lens of sex work in Italy." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (online first).
- Nash, Jennifer C. 2019. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [Introduction]
- Nelson, Lise, and Joni Seager. 2005. *A Companion to Feminist Geography*. Oxford: Blackwell. [Introduction]
- Oswin, Natalie. 2010. "The Modern Model Family at Home in Singapore: A Queer Geography." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35 (2): 256–68.
- Peake, Linda. 2016. "The Twenty-First-Century Quest for Feminism and the Global Urban." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40 (1): 219-227.
- Peano, Irene. 2021. "Specters of Eurafrica in an Italian Agroindustrial Enclave." E-Flux: <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/coloniality-infrastructure/411213/specters-of-eurafrica-in-an-italian-agroindustrial-enclave>
- Porter, Libby. 2022. "Racial Violence Is Woven into the Fabric of Our Cities." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Spotlight on Racial Capitalism.
- Roy, Ananya. 2019. "Racial Banishment." In *Keywords in Radical Geography: Antipode at 50*, 227-230. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Saxena, Saanchi. 2024. "Gender, Caste, and Street Vending in India: Towards an Intersectional Geography." *Area* 56 (3).
- Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2016. "The Uninhabitable? In between Collapsed Yet Still Rigid Distinctions." *Cultural Politics* 12(2): 135-154.
- Summers, Brandi Thompson, and Desiree Fields. 2022. "Speculative Urban Worldmaking: Meeting Financial Violence with a Politics of Collective Care." *Antipode* 54, no. 4: 1-20.
- Thieme, Tatiana A. 2025. "The Significance of Sketching: Drawing a Streetscape in a Nairobi Neighbourhood." *Area* 57 (1): e12922.
- Zaragocin, Sofia, and Martina Angela Caretta. 2021. "Cuerpo-territorio: A Decolonial Feminist Geographical Method for the Study of Embodiment." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 111 (5): 1503-1518.

Contact & Resources

Get in Touch

Prof. Michele Lancione (he/they)

michele.lancione@polito.it

Book office hours:

Schedule a meeting here:

<https://radicalcloud.de/apps/appointments/pub/z3wG01MwEA14Dlc4/form>

Course Materials

All readings and course materials are stored here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kqIGHRiqxR9zKl8mMzfGZhkvorC0ln5n?usp=sharing>

Access to the folder will be given to students on the first day of class.

Students are encouraged to read at least one article per lesson in advance to facilitate meaningful seminar discussions.