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# Dividing Lines: US History of Residential Segregation

Professor Jill Ogline Titus

Starting September 13, 2023  
6:30 PM ET

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This two-week course will explore one of the most visible yet least well understood aspects of racial segregation in the United States: the color line in housing. While some Americans do live in racially diverse communities, by and large, the housing landscape in the US remains remarkably segregated along racial lines. These racial lines largely correspond with economic status. While there are certainly many well-to-do white people in cities (and many expensive, exclusive urban neighborhoods) and many middle class and wealthy people of color in suburbs, in the aggregate, across the country inner-city neighborhoods tend to be disproportionately minority – and poor – in composition and suburbs tend to be disproportionately white, and wealthier. This course will explore the long history that has produced today's segregated residential landscape, paying particular attention to the role of government at all levels in instituting housing policies that have historically advantaged whites and disadvantaged blacks.

### Session 1

**September 13, 2023 - Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. ET**

### Segregated By Design

This class session will explore the range of 20th-century policies and laws (zoning regulations, lending policies, mortgage & real estate practices, school district policies, housing covenants, etc.) that intersected with private prejudice and economic inequity to create and reinforce residential segregation across the US. Particular attention will be devoted to the ways that racially restrictive zoning and restrictive housing covenants operated, the barriers preventing people of color from participation in the

mid-century suburbanization of the United States, and the long-term consequences of its systematic exclusion.

**Required Pre-Class Reading:**

Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (Liveright, 2018): Preface, Ch. 3-6, 8 (p. vii-xvii, 39-99; 115-137)

Watch short film "Segregated by Design"

**Session 2**

**September 20, 2023 - Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. ET**

**Rocks and Riots**

Our second class session will focus on the violent resistance that confronted African Americans who, against all odds, managed to find avenues to purchase homes or arrange rentals in white neighborhoods. Examining the murderous 1925 riot outside the Sweet family's newly-purchased Detroit home; the physical violence directed against the Clark and Howard families in 1950s Chicago; and the hostile obstruction dogging the Mays' family's 1957 attempt to purchase a home in San Francisco, will illustrate the various forms of resistance engaged in by white Americans determined to "protect" their neighborhoods in the face of what they perceived as an "invasion" that would degrade their property values. This historical context will provide vital framing for considering the broader issues surrounding a racially-charged housing clash on Long Island that ended in death in 2006.

**Required Pre-Class Reading:**

Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, Ch. 9, 11-Epilogue (p. 140-151; 177-217)

Calvin Trillin, "The Color of Blood," in Jelani Cobb and David Remnick, eds., *The Matter of Black Lives: Writing from The New Yorker* (HarperCollins, 2021): 693-710

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