English 178A

California
An Interdisciplinary Approach

Professor Blake Allmendinger

January 6
Introduction
This course identifies two opposing narratives about California that have evolved over time. According to some, California is a tropical paradise, the home of the Gold Rush, the site of Disneyland (“The Happiest Place on Earth”), and a land of celebrities. According to others, California is a dystopic region, associated with earthquakes, Santa Ana winds, El Niño, overpriced real estate, race riots, freeway chases, trendy liberals, and air-headed blonds. We will trace the controversy that has arisen about California over the years by studying a wide range of disciplines, including: history, politics, climate, geography, cartography, real estate, education, architecture, art, advertising, TV, and film.

January 8
History: Through a Glass Brightly
Kevin Starr, Inventing the Dream (excerpts)

January 13
History: Through a Glass Darkly
Mike Davis, City of Quartz (excerpts)

January 15
California Adventure Land: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It
Class presentations

January 20
Politics: Two Different Views
Starr and Davis (excerpts)

January 22
Politics: How to Balance the State Budget
In-class debate

January 27
Climate and Geography: California, Land of Sunshine or Noir?
Starr and Davis (excerpts)

January 29
Real Estate: The Cost of Living in California
Starr and Davis (excerpts)

February 3
Real Estate: A Look at the Market Today
Class presentations

February 5
Midterm

February 10
Architecture: Three Regional Styles
Slide-show

February 12
Field Research

February 17
Urban Planning: Los Angeles as a Liveable Space
First paper due

February 19
Art: An Exhibition Presented by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Slide Show

February 24
Education: The UC System
Class presentations

February 26
Class Bibliographies

March 3
Advertising: The Selling of California
Class presentations

March 5
Television
I Love Lucy (The Hollywood Episodes)

March 10
Film
In-class discussion

March 12
Final Class
Second paper due

Requirements: The midterm, the two papers, the in-class presentation, and attendance/participation each count for 20% of your grade. Note: The assigned films and episodes of I Love Lucy are on reserve at Powell Library. The pictures for the slide shows on art and architecture have been uploaded onto the course website. Office Hours: T/Th 3-4 in The Humanities Bldg, Rm 260. allmendi@humnet.ucla.edu.