Cultural Studies and Urban Space
(All readings from *Variations on a Theme Park*, 1992)

Michael Sorkin, “Introduction”
Margaret Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall”
Edward W. Soja, “Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County”
Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space”
Michael Sorkin, “See you in Disneyland”
Places & Space

Cultural Studies and Urban Space
(All readings from *Variations on a Theme Park*, 1992)

Michael Sorkin, “Introduction”
Margaret Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall”
Edward W. Soja, “Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County”
Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space”
Michael Sorkin, “See you in Disneyland”
Trouble in Consumerland

Barbara Kruger, Untitled (It’s a small world), 1990
Trouble in Consumerland

• Consumerism and how to make it appealing to a wide range of people and audiences

• How does fantasy allow consumers to buy into the façade or illusion of building bigger, grander, and even self-contained environments geared toward consumerism?
Show me the money
Trouble in Consumerland

• How did society get to this point in history?
• How to adjust to values in a consumer minded society
• Where is consumerism going in the future?
History: How did this all Begin?

- Many of the museums in America grew out of World’s Fairs and World Expos, and malls and theme parks are no different.
- Sorkin discussed the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition.
History: How did this all Begin?

• Many of the museums in America grew out of World’s Fairs and World Expos, and malls and theme parks are no different.
• Sorkin discussed the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition
History: How did this all Begin?

- Crawford discussed what she termed as “public life in a pleasure dome” regarding consumerism beginning with the first “mass-consumption environment” with the grands magasins in Paris; the Bon Marché. She also continued by stating that the large department stores “offered a huge assortment of goods to ten thousand customers a day.... [furthermore] the department store’s fixed prices altered the social and psychological relations of the marketplace.” (Crawford, 17)
• Margaret Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall”
History: How did this all Begin?

GIMBELS WESTCHESTER at Yonker's New York's CROSS COUNTY CENTER. These images are from September 1955.

GIMBELS VALLEY STREAM -at Long Island's GREEN ACRES CENTER- shows the store as it appeared in March 1957.
An early 1950s view of "May's Lakewood". The store encompassed 4 levels and 355,600 square feet.  
*Photo from Malls Of America Blogspot*

Post-World War II the modern shopping mall was born in the 1950s, which was the child of car culture and suburbia.

A frontal view of the *North Mall* at *LAKEWOOD CENTER*. Sav-on Drug is in the foreground. May Company, the original mall's sole anchor, is seen in the distance.  
*Photo from www.yesterdayla.com*
Trouble in Consumerland

The death of small town commerce occurred with the introduction of highways, and mega freeways, which bypassed small towns and thus the closure of most of the businesses.

Victor Hugo’s famous phrase, ‘This will destroy that.’”
Trouble in Consumerland

• How does fantasy allow consumers to buy into the façade or illusion of building bigger, grander, and even self-contained environments geared toward consumerism?
Not only did the promise of a “booming consumer economy offer unimaginable prosperity”, but the need to offer “indoor spaces into fantasy worlds of shopping” occurred, along with the fantasy of theme parks. (Crawford, 22)
West Edmonton Mall, is the largest shopping mall in North America, followed by Mall of America, and the tenth largest in the world (along with The Dubai Mall) by gross leasable area. It was the world’s largest mall until 2004. The mall was founded by the Ghermezian brothers, who emigrated from Iran in 1959.
West Edmonton Mall covers a gross area of about 490,000 m² (5,300,000 sq ft). There are over 800 stores and services including nine attractions, two hotels and over 100 dining venues in the complex, and parking for more than 20,000 vehicles. More than 24,000 people are employed at the property. The mall receives about 32 million visitors per year; it attracts between 90,000 and 200,000 shoppers daily, depending on the day and season.
The mall was valued at $926 million (CAD) in January 2007, and in 2016, for tax purposes, it was valued at $1.3034 billion (CAD), making it the most valuable property in Edmonton. (Wikipedia)

http://www.wem.ca/
Variations on a Theme Park, 1992

Considering the book was written in 1992, when mega malls were the rage and big business—it’s interesting to bearing in mind that the book was revolutionary in foreshadowing the demise of some mega malls, and large department store closings, with the advent of the internet and entrepreneurs such as Jeff Bezos, who is the CEO of Amazon.
Randall Park Mall was a shopping mall located in the village of North Randall, Ohio. Despite the mall's importance to the town – it is represented by the two shopping bags appearing in the municipal seal – Randall Park Mall closed on March 12, 2009. Demolition began on the former Higbee's/Dillard's building on December 29, 2014. Amazon is currently developing plans to build a new distribution center on the former site.
Randall Park Mall was a shopping mall located in the village of North Randall, Ohio. Despite the mall's importance to the town – it is represented by the two shopping bags appearing in the municipal seal – Randall Park Mall closed on March 12, 2009. Demolition began on the former Higbee's/Dillard's building on December 29, 2014. Amazon is currently developing plans to build a new distribution center on the former site.
History Continues: The boom of internet sales, and the recession in 2008
Rolling Acres Mall was a retail mall located in the Rolling Acres area of Akron, Ohio, States. Built in 1975, closed October 31, 2008
Six Flags New Orleans, Louisiana

This park closed after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Plans to redevelop the area into another theme park fell through in 2010, and today the amusement park remains covered in weeds and strewn with crumbling debris.
Originally known as Picnic Lake, this waterfront amusement park opened in 1887 and once featured the world’s largest wooden rollercoaster, The Big Dipper. After closing in 2010, Geauga Lake is an eerie wasteland of crumbling attractions.
History Continued:

Edward W. Soja, “Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County”

• How does fantasy allow consumers to buy into the façade or illusion of building bigger, grander, and even self-contained environments geared toward consumerism?

Cresa, Orange County
This new branding of suburbia as utopia is examined in Edward W. Soja, “Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County”, as a self-contained conglomerate of a city unto a city with its own simulations and simulacra, or as “Baudrillard calls it: a primitive society of the future.” (Soja, 101)
Edward W. Soja, “Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County”

After examining the over-the-top excesses, hype, loftiness, the fraudulent practices of business, and the Federal crime of Charles H. Keating, Soja stated: “It’s not just Orange County where everything is possible and nothing is real.”
Beginning in the 1980s terrorism began to take place throughout the world. Americans decided to travel less overseas to exotic places, so in turn society wanted to reinvent the exotic, yet on their own terms—thus the birth of exotic destinations in the form of fantasy—voila Las Vegas becomes the Disneyland for adults. Where does middle-class or upper middle-class play? What manifestation of fantasy exists for Middle America? Where can members of Middle America go to fulfill their fantasy of the exotic and still feel somewhat safe?
Examining terrorist attacks within the last 40 years and the establishment in 1989, of Steve Winn’s first large resort in Las Vegas, the causation and connection between the rise of Las Vegas as the vacation mecca and the desire of Americans to vacation closer to home or at least safely within their own country.
Terrorist Attacks From 1982 Until September 11

1982- August 6th- A kosher restaurant is attacked in Paris killing eight.
1983- April 18th- Eighty-three people are killed at the US Embassy in Beirut.
September 29th- A Gulf Airplane explodes killing all 166 people aboard.
October 29th- 241 US Marines are killed in a truck bombing in Beirut by the Islamic Jihad (controlled by Syria)

1984- September 20th- The US embassy in the Beirut is bombed 15 are killed
1985 June 23rd- 345 people are killed when Sikh terrorist explode a bomb aboard an Air India 747
October 7th- The Cruise ship the Achillo Laura was hijacked by Palestinian terrorists

1986- September 5th- A Pan Am aircraft is hijacked by Palestinian terrorists. Twenty passengers are killed.
1988- Dec. 21- Pan Am flight 103 is blown up over Lockerbie Scotland. All 259 passengers and crew are killed. N.Y.-bound Pan Am. Boeing 747 exploded in flight from a terrorist bomb and crashed into Scottish village, killing all 259 aboard and 11 on the ground. Passengers included 35 Syracuse University students and many U.S. military personnel. Two Libyan intelligence officers were tried under Scottish law in The Hague; only one, Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al Megrahi, was found guilty, in Jan. 2001.

1992- The Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires is bombed and 14 die
1993- February 26th- A bomb explodes in the basement of the World Trade Center in New York- Six die 1,000 are injured.

July 27th- Five are killed in a car bombing in Milan Italy
1995- March 20th- 12 people are killed when nerve gas is released in a Tokyo subway.
April 19th- The Murrah Federal office building is destroyed by a bomb in Oklahoma City Oklahoma killing 168.

1998- August 7th – The US embassies in Mairobi Kenya and Dar es Salam Tanzania are bombed.
2000 Oct. 12, Aden, Yemen: U.S. Navy destroyer USS Cole was heavily damaged when a small boat loaded with explosives blew up alongside it. Seventeen sailors were killed in what was apparently a deliberate terrorist attack. Prime suspect thought to be Osama bin Laden, or members of his al-Qaeda terrorist network.
2001- September 11th- The World Trade Center Disaster, New York City, Arlington, Va., and Shanksville, Pa.: Hijackers crashed two commercial jets into twin towers of World Trade Center; two more hijacked jets were crashed into the Pentagon and a field in rural Pa. Total dead and missing numbered 3,038, including the 19 hijackers. Islamic al-Qaeda terrorist group blamed.
Trouble in Consumerland

• how to adjust to values in a consumer minded society
Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space”

“In architecture, the pride of man, his triumph over gravitation, his will to power, assume a visible form. Architecture is a sort of oratory of power.”

Friedrich Nietzsche
The Westin Bonaventure Hotel and Suites is widely recognized as a masterpiece in contemporary hotel design. Construction began in 1974, and was completed in 1976. The 34th floor of the Westin Bonaventure is home to a revolving cocktail lounge; where one can unwind while gazing at commanding views of the city.
Mike Davis, Prologue (City of Quartz), 1990
a absentee speculative in Chicago who awaits an offer he cannot refuse on Kaufman and Brand. Setting aside an apocalyptic awakening of the neighboring San Andreas Fault, it is all too easy to envision Los Angeles reproducing itself endlessly across the desert with the assistance of pillared water, cheap immigrant labor, Asian capital and desperate homeowners willing to trade lifetimes on the freeway in exchange for $500,000 ‘dream homes’ in the middle of Death Valley.

Is this the world-historic victory of Capitalism that everyone is talking about?

On May Day 1990 (the same day Gorbachev was hoisted by thousands of alienated Moscovites) I returned to the ruins of Llano del Rio to see if the walls would talk to me. Instead I found the Socialist City inhabited by two twenty-year old building laborers from El Salvador, camped out in the ruins of the old dairy and eager to talk with me in our mutually broken tongues. Like hobo heroes out of a Jack London novel, they had already tramped up and down California, followed by a frontier of housing starts, not silver strikes or wheat harvests. Although they had yet to find work in Palmisano, they praised the clear desert sky, the easy hitchhiking and the relative scarcity of La Migra. When I observed that they were settled in the ruins of a冒犯socialite, one of them asked whether the ‘rich people had come with planes and herded them out’ No, I explained, the colony’s credit had failed. They looked baffled and changed the subject.

We talked about the weather for a while, then I asked them what they thought about Los Angeles, a city without boundaries, which ate the desert, cut down the Joshua and the May Foie, and dreamt of becoming infinite. One of my new Llano companions said that L.A. already was everywhere. They had watched it every night in San Salvador, in endless dubbed reruns of I Love Lucy and Sunday and Bunch, a city where everyone was young and rich and drove new cars and saw themselves on television. After ten thousand daydreams like this, he had deserted the Salvadoran Army and hitchhiked two thousand five hundred miles to Tijuana. A year later he was standing at the corner of Alvarado and Seventh Streets in the MacArthur Park district near Downtown Los Angeles, along with all the rest of yearning, hardworking Central America. No one like him was rich or drove a new car – except for the cola dealers – and the police were as mean as back home. More importantly no one was on television; they were all invisible.
Victorville

“Recreation and Entertainment in Victorville”
Michael Sorkin, “See you in Disneyland”
how does fantasy allow consumers to buy into the façade or illusion of building bigger, grander, and even self-contained environments geared toward consumerism?

Disneyland has a larger cumulative attendance than any other theme park in the world, with over 650 million guests since it opened. In 2013, the park hosted approximately 16.2 million guests, making it the third most visited park in the world that calendar year. (Wikipedia)
According to a March 2005 Disney report, 65,700 jobs are supported by the Disneyland Resort, including about 20,000 direct Disney employees and 3,800 third-party employees (independent contractors or their employees). (Wikipedia)
Michael Sorkin, “See you in Disneyland”
“Disneyzone isn’t urban at all,” and that Disneyland is “assembled”, “homogenized” and thus “Disney invokes an urbanism without producing a city. Rather, it produces a kind of aura-stripped hypercity, a city with billions of citizens (all who would consume) but no residents. Physicalized yet conceptual, it’s the utopia of transience, a place where everyone is just passing through. This is its message for the city to be, a place everywhere and nowhere, assembled only through constant motion.”

Michael Sorkin, “See you in Disneyland”
Show me the money
Trouble in Consumerland

Barbara Kruger, Untitled (It’s a small world), 1990
Cultural Studies and Urban Space
(All readings from *Variations on a Theme Park*)
Michael Sorkin, “Introduction”
Margaret Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall”
Edward W. Soja, “Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County”
Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space”
Michael Sorkin, “See you in Disneyland”