



Pruitt-Igoe public housing, St. Louis, c. 1963–72. U.S. Geological Survey, public domain.

GEOG 121 / WINTER 2027 / UC SANTA BARBARA

The Geography of Housing

Housing is four things at once: (1) shelter, a safe and stable place to live; (2) the largest monthly cost for most households; (3) the largest asset for most homeowners; and (4) a location that sets access to schools, jobs, commutes, and neighbors. These four roles often conflict: rising home values build wealth for owners while raising costs for renters. Moreover, decisions about where housing is built and who may live there have long been shaped by race and class. This course examines how public and private actors, residents, and the activists and advocacy organizations who fought for fair housing, public housing, and tenants' rights shape each of these dimensions, and how past policy decisions continue to produce unequal outcomes. Topics include redlining and segregation, public housing, gentrification, homeownership, renting and eviction, housing supply, homelessness, student housing, and international housing models. Students will leave the course understanding why housing has become so expensive, how housing has shaped people's lives, and what can be done to make housing more affordable, stable, and just.

SCHEDULE

Mon / Wed, 2:00–3:15pm

Lecture: Ellison Hall 3621

Lab: Ellison Hall 2616

Instructor: Wenfei Xu, Department of Geography