



Carnegie Mellon University

School of Architecture

College of Fine Arts, CFA 201

Carnegie Mellon University

Pittsburgh, PA 15213



*LaToya Ruby Frazier, A Despoliation of Water: From the Housatonic to Monongahela River (1930-2013), 2013*

## 48-706: Urban Design Studio II: Urban Systems

Units: 18

Instructor: Nida Rehman

Optimistic assessments about Pittsburgh's livability mask a complicated reality where prospects for health and well-being are starkly differentiated along lines of race, class, and gender. Environmental harms, underpinned by the ongoing legacies of industrial production, extraction, and segregative planning, create a toxic combination adversely impacting human health, ecology, and community futures. These challenges necessitate multidisciplinary, collaborative, and emancipatory approaches to knowing the built environment, and community-centered methods in urban design that attend to the local histories, embodied knowledges, and political ecologies of life in toxic systems.

This studio will expand on MUD students' understanding of neighborhood-scaled urban design through the examination of urban systems and systemic processes, focusing on the infrastructures of toxicity, and modes of local action against them. It will be anchored in an [ongoing collaboration](#) with [North Braddock Residents For Our Future](#), a grassroots organization which has led the opposition to unconventional gas drilling and environmental injustice in Braddock and North Braddock and surrounding communities. Paying attention to how the toxic systems and their material effects on frontline communities are inseparable from racialized abandonment, dispossession, and accumulation, the studio asks how urban design might engage with the complex histories, power struggles, ecological effects, material residues, social relationships, and desired futures within landscapes of toxicity. Students will engage in community dialogue, oral history, and field-based studies to rethink design methods as forms of environmental justice storytelling and outline collaborative proposals for the built environment which center the "hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tuck, Eve. "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities." *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (October 6, 2009): 409–28. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15>.