What Happens in Vegas, Does Not Always Stay in Vegas (or, Re-Learning from Las Vegas).

Premise:
What happens in Las Vegas is often representative of the forces and factors at play in major cities cross the country and globe. In an effort to better understand some of the factors shaping contemporary our cities, this course will examine the architectural, urban and cultural (both popular and academic) importance of Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Strip in order to understand how what happens in Vegas does not always stay in Vegas.

Content, Objectives & Methods:
We will not be the first do take Las Vegas as a serious subject; Las Vegas has already developed into a rich academic terrain. This class will build upon on-going research on Las Vegas and seek to extend and add to the growing literature on the city. We will begin where Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steven Izenour left off in their seminal book, Learning from Las Vegas. We will retrace their steps and those of others who have followed (historical research methods), remap this landscape (analysis), and speculate (new graphs/diagrams) upon the emerging trends we may find. Therefore, this course will be one focused upon urban analysis and research but the methods deployed will be useful in a wide range of exercises. Our objective will be to find new ways to map what happens in Las Vegas and beyond. Since this class meets only once a week, each class session with focus both on seminar discussions, which require student participation, and workshop sessions focused on developing course required assignments.

Grading:
In addition to the required readings, each student will be responsible for contributing to a team-based research exercise focused upon an aspect of Las Vegas and potential lessons for other cities. Each student’s work will be collected and added to a set of group documents, which will collectively create an updated set of annotated maps of the city. In essence, we are creating an “atlas” of Las Vegas’ influences by tracking, charting, diagramming, and mapping the various places that we find the city playing a significant role today. Therefore, each student will have one two-part assignment for the duration of the course: (1) to analyze and record a specific issue, trend, etc. in both text and graphic form and (2) to speculate upon the trends found in Las Vegas as they might be seen elsewhere in map, diagram or other graphic form.

Evaluation:
Participation: 30% (this includes attendance, discussions, and reviews)  
Case Study: 35% (1 set of diagrams/maps per student developed weekly with daily updates online) Report: 35% (compilation of all diagrams with descriptive text)

Required Texts:

Other required readings will be available as pdf's on Canvas.