

URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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OVERVIEW

This class explores some themes and concerns central to the study of urban spaces. We consider different framing questions and analytic approaches by reading a variety of texts, and by doing original archival research. New York City will be our informal lab and frequent example, though we don't concentrate on it exclusively.

READING (available at the NYU Book Center)

Duneier, Mitchell

1999 *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Hecht, Tobias

1998 *At Home in the Street*. New York: Cambridge UP.

Langeweische, William

2002 *American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center*. New York: North Point.

Reid, Donald

1991 *Paris Sewers and Sewermen*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Also a collection of articles, available at New University Copy, on reserve at Bobst Library, at the anthropology office (25 Waverly Place), and at the Draper Program office (14 University Place).

WRITING

Response papers - 40%

Each week you will write a one-page response to readings, discussions, tours, and assignments. These papers are due at the start of Thursday's class. They must be typed, double-spaced, and may not exceed a page. Late papers count as missed assignments and will not be graded. If at all possible, please print them on used paper.

Let these brief essays reflect your best writing. Don't get tense about them, but don't be sloppy, either. Proof-read them (which means you can't rely only on the computer's spell-check function).

Research proposal - 40%

You will choose one problem that vexes contemporary cities and will find out how that problem was confronted a hundred or so years ago. The purpose of this exercise is for you to use key city archives and to let you focus on a concern that interests you. No anthropological study is complete without historical research to contextualize the moment, or the group, or the social event at the heart of that study, and no historical research is complete without using relevant archives.

Here are examples of the kinds of questions you might investigate. These are just suggestions; you're welcome to come up with your own.

--What was the biggest problem for mass transit in New York in 1903? How was it answered?

--In the west, cities like Las Vegas and Los Angeles are running out of water. How was water apportioned in the west in the early 20th century, and what were the debates in settling the policies? Do those older arguments still resonate today?

--Some neighborhoods in any city are understood to be disadvantaged, and/or crime-ridden, and/or not a great place to live. What were some of those places like a hundred years ago, who lived there, how were they viewed, and what was the city's response to them?

This work will be done in groups that we'll establish in the second week of the semester. You are not required to focus on New York, but the project will be easier if you do. You will have to use original archives from sources such as the New York Public Library, the New-York Historical Society Library, the Municipal Archives Library, and the Schomburg Center (part of the NYPL). Bobst is also useful for some references.

The final result of your research will be an 8- to 10-page paper describing the problem in its current guise and then proposing a long-term research project into its roots and history. You are not actually going to do the long-term research project. Your work over the semester will give you an overview of resources available to you to answer the problem in depth, and your proposal will outline the approach you would take if you were trying to get financial support to carry out the bigger project.

In the last week of the semester, your group will give a presentation about your research question, the sources you used, your findings, and the kind of project you are proposing based on your investigation.

Your grade on the project will be determined by the members of your group: that is, you'll grade each other.

EVENTS

We'll have a walking tour of Lower Manhattan later in the semester, on a date to be determined. As preparation for the tour, please see the film Gangs of New York and read through the material on the Five Points website (<http://r2.gsa.gov/fivept/fphome.htm>). If you want to be thorough, read the novel *Paradise Alley*, by Kevin Baker.

We will also take part in a tour of the sewage treatment plant on 145th Street and Riverside Drive, in upper Manhattan.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Why and how might we study a city?

Jan 21 - Introduction to class themes, logistics

Jan 23

Rykwert, Joseph. 2002. Introduction from *The Seduction of Place: The History and Future of the City*. New York: Vintage, p3-20.

Week 2: Early Questions

Jan 28

Kasinitz, Philip, ed. 1995. *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of our Times*. New York: NYU Press.Mumford, Lewis: *The Culture of Cities* (p21-29)Simmel, Georg: *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (p30-45)Wirth, Louis: *Urbanism as a Way of Life* (p58-82)

Jan 30

LeGates, Richard and Frederic Stout, eds. 2001. *The City Reader*, 2nd ed. New York: RoutledgeBurgess, Ernest: *The Growth of the City*Whyte, William H.: *The Design of Spaces*Week 3: Race and Class / On the Street

Feb 4

from Kasinitz --

Jacobs, Jane .1961. *The Uses of Sidewalks*. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

from LeGates and Stout --

Wilson, James Q and George L. Kelling. 1982. *Broken Windows*. *The Atlantic Monthly*.Start reading *Sidewalk*

Feb 6

Sidewalk, pages 1 - 111Week 4

Feb 11

Sidewalk, p112-201

Feb 13

Sidewalk, p202-289Week 5

Feb 18

Sidewalk, p293-357

Feb 20

Week 6: Globalization

Feb 25

Engels, Friedrich. 1845. *The Great Towns*. *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*.Hansen, Karen T. 1999. *Global Exposure: Secondhand Clothing from the West and the Urban-Rural Interface in Zambia*. *City and Society* IX(1-2):79-98.

Feb 27

At Home in the Street, p1-92

Week 7

Mar 4

At Home in the Street, p93-173

Mar 6

At Home in the Street, p174-233

Week 8: Space/Landscape

Mar 11

Hardin, Garrett. 1998 [1968] The Tragedy of the Commons. In J. Baden and D. Noonan, eds.; *Managing the Commons*, 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Indiana UP.

Spirn, Anne Whiston. 1996. Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted. In William Cronon, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton, p91-113.

Mar 13

Le Corbusier. 1947. New York is not a Completed City. *When the Cathedrals Were White*. New York: Harcourt Brace, trans. Francis E. Hyslop, Jr.

Wall, Alex. 1999. Programming the Urban Surface. In James Corner, ed. *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, p233-249.

Hayden, Dolores. 1998. Making Women's History Visible in the Urban Landscape. *City and Society Annual Review*, p9-20.

Week 9 - Spring Break

Mar 18 & 20 -- No class

Week 10 - Hidden Infrastructure: Sewers

Mar 25

Paris Sewers, Introduction and Chapters 1 - 4

Mar 27

Paris Sewers, Chapters 5 - 8

Week 11

Apr 1

Paris Sewers, Chapters 9 - 12 and Conclusion

Apr 3

O'Brien, Martin. 1999. Rubbish-Power: Towards a Sociology of the Rubbish Society. In J. Hearn and S. Roseneil, eds., *Consuming Cultures: Power and Resistance*. New York: St. Martin's.

Sewer Tour (date to be confirmed)

Week 12 - Ignored Infrastructure: Solid Waste

Apr 8

Melosi, Martin. 1981. *Garbage in the Cities: Refuse, Reform and the Environment 1880-1980*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP; Introduction.

Rathje, William and Cullen Murphy. 2001. *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press; Preface and first chapter.

Miller, Benjamin. 2000. *Fat of the Land: Garbage in New York the last Two Hundred Years*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows; Chapter 9.

Apr 10

Calvino, Italo. 1986. "Continuous Cities I," in *Invisible Cities*. New York: Harvest Books.

Dion, Mark and Anne Pasternak. 1996. Interview with Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Artist for the New York Sanitation Department. In M. Dion and A. Rockman, eds., *Concrete Jungle: A Pop Media Investigation of Death and Survival in Urban Ecosystems*. New York: Juno Books.

Guest Speakers: Dennis Diggins & Jorge Gabino, Department of Sanitation, City of New York.

Week 13: Disaster

Apr 15

American Ground, Inner World (p1-72)

Apr 17

American Ground, The Rush to Recover (p73-142)

Week 14

Apr 22

American Ground, The Dance of the Dinosaurs (p143 - end)

Apr 24

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2002

http://www.nyu.edu/fas/projects/vcb/case_911/extremecloseup/kirshenblatt.html

Ukeles, Mierle Laderman. 2002. Leftovers/It's About Time for Fresh Kills. *Cabinet: A Quarterly Magazine of Art and Horticulture*. Number 6, Spring; p17-20.

Week 15: Project Presentations

Apr 29

Groups I, II, III, IV

May 1

Groups V, VI, VII, VIII