

New York University
Media, Culture, and Communication
Spring 2021
MCC-UE 1038-095
Mon/Wed 11-12:15 Zoom

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Visual Cultures of the Modern and Global City

Course description:

This course examines visual culture of the city, from the dynamics of visibility in the nineteenth-century modern cityscape to the mega cities of globalization. It addresses the visual dynamics, infrastructure, architecture, public art and design imaginaries of urban spaces, taking New York City and Paris as primary case studies and including other cities from the nineteenth century to the present. We will consider the politics of urban design, the city as a site of division, disaster, and memory, and the city as political activism. In tracing the history of the city as a site of visual culture, we can gain understanding into the complexities of global visual culture

Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Describe visual culture as a field of study
- Define key aspects of the modern city and the role of the visual in modernity
- Define and compare distinct urban geographies such as center-periphery, sprawl, division-segregation, etc.
- Describe different architectural forms and styles of the modern and global city
- Interpret and evaluate the role of immigration, diaspora, and postcoloniality in the global city

Required Texts:

All readings are posted in pdf on NYU Classes.

Course Requirements:

Each week, students will be required to do the following: do a series of readings, watch a posted lecture or video and answer study questions about it, do a blog post on the class blog, and participate in discussion section on Wednesday. Students will do 2 class presentations throughout the semester. There will be one paper assignment, 8-10 pages, due at the end of the semester. For those students in NYC we made do a few field trips, TBD.

Grades will consider class participation and presentations 30%, class blog 40%, paper 30%.

Weekly Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week 1: February 1-3 What Makes a City?

Mon Feb 1 Introductions

Discussion: Wed. Feb 3 What Makes a City?

Reading:

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," excerpt

Lewis Mumford, "What is a City?" excerpt

Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, excerpt

Recommended:

Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, excerpt

Blog prompt: Tell us something about the city you are living in now or the cities you have lived in, how they are different.

Week 2: February 8-10 The Modern City

Posted Lecture: Urban Geographies and the Modern City

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, excerpt from *Practices of Looking*

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "World Cities, City Worlds" section on Imperial City (pp. 159-74)

Discussion: Wed. Feb. 10, Modern New York

Reading:

Ben Singer, "Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism"

Christoph Lindner, "New York Vertical"

Blog prompt: Describe an aspect of the modern city that you have experienced.

Week 3: February 15-17 Paris as the Modern City

Posted lecture: Paris as a Modern City

Reading:

David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, excerpt

Walter Benjamin, "Paris, The Capital of the Nineteenth Century"

Recommended:

Vanessa Schwartz, Introduction to *Spectacular Realities* and Chapter 2: "Public Visits to the Morgue"

Discussion: Wed. Feb. 17, The Arcades and Modern Ways of Seeing

Reading:

Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, Chapter 1: "The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze in Modernity"

Recommended:

Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex"

Blog prompt: What makes Paris a modern city?***Week 4: Feb 22-24 The Skyscraper and the Street*****Posted lecture: The Vertical City**

Reading:

Stephen Graham, *Vertical*: "Skyscraper" and "Elevator"

Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City" excerpt

Discussion: Wed. Feb. 24, The Tenement and the Street

Reading:

Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Sidewalks"

Michael Sorkin, *Twenty Minutes in Manhattan*, except

Recommended:

Adrienne Brown, Introduction to *The Black Skyscraper*

Blog prompt: Analyze an aspect of the skyscraper or the street.***Week 5: March 1-3 The City of Consumerism*****Posted Lecture: The Modern City as Consumption: Department Stores**

Reading:

Christoph Grunenberg, "Wonderland: Spectacles of Display from the Bon Marche to Prada"

Adam Gopnik, "Under One Roof"

Discussion: March 3: Space of Shopping, Farmers Markets, Pop Ups

Reading:

Sharon Zukin, "A Brief History of Shopping"

Blog prompt: Analyze a space for shopping in the city.

Week 6: March 8-10 The Divided City**Posted Lecture: The Divided City: Division/Occupation**

Reading:

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "World Cities, City Worlds," section on Divided Cities (pp.175-92)

Eyal Weitzman, *Hollow Land*, excerpt**Discussion: March 10: Berlin as a City Divided and Reunified**

Reading:

Jonathan Bach, "The Berlin Wall After the Berlin Wall"

Blog prompt: Analyze divided cities in some way.***Week 7: March 15-17 The City of Memory*****Posted Lecture: Berlin as City of Memory**

Reading:

James Young, *The Stages of Memory*, Introduction

Andreas Huyssen, "After the War: Berlin as Palimpsest"

Discussion: March 17: New York and Memory

Reading:

Marita Sturken, *The 9/11 Museum***Blog prompt: Analyze an aspect of how memory and memorialization works in a city.*****Week 8: March 22-24 The Postcolonial and Global City*****Posted Lecture: Posted Lecture: The Colonial and Postcolonial City**

Reading:

Katie Beswick, et al, "Towards a Spatial Practice of the Postcolonial City"

March 24: Anna Greenspan on Shanghai

Reading:

Anna Greenspan, *Shanghai Future* excerpt**Blog prompt: Analyze an aspect of how a city is postcolonial.*****Proposals for final papers due.***

Week 9: March 29-31 Global Cities and Global Elites

Posted Lecture: The Global City

Reading:

Nick Mirzoeff, "World Cities, City Worlds" section on Global City (pp. 194-209)

Evelyn Schulz, "Walking the City: Tokyo"

Recommended:

Chad Haines, "Cracks in the Façade: Landscapes of Hope and Desire in Dubai"

March 31: Global Finance and the City

Reading:

Aiwa Ong, "Hyperbuilding: Spectacle, Speculation and the Hyperspace of Sovereignty" excerpt

Yasser Elsheshtawy, "Real Estate Speculation and Transnational Development in Dubai"

Saskia Sassen, "Who Owns Our Cities?"

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/24/who-owns-our-cities-and-why-this-urban-takeover-should-concern-us-all>

Blog prompt: What makes a city global?

Week 10: April 5-7 The Digital City and Smart City

Prerecorded Lecture: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Real Estate State

Reading:

Samuel Stein, *Capital City* excerpt

Discussion: April 7: The Digital City and the Smart City

Reading:

Selections from *Urban Screens Reader*

Christine Boyer, "The Smart City in the Twenty First Century" (in *Cities in Transition*)

Smart Cities Readiness Guide <https://readinessguide.smartcitiescouncil.com/>

Blog prompt: Analyze an aspect of digital cities or smart city projects.

Week 11: April 12-14 *The Networked and Surveillance City*

Prerecorded lecture: The Mobile and Networked City

Reading:

Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces, excerpts

Discussion: April 14: Surveillance in the City

Reading:

Kai Strittmatter, *We Have Been Harmonised*, excerpt

Blog prompt: Analyze an example of a city under surveillance.

Week 12: April 19-21 *The DIY City*

NO MON CLASS—no prerecorded lecture

Discussion: April 21: The DIY City

Reading:

Gordon Douglas, *The Help-Yourself City*, excerpt

Blog prompt: Analyze a DIY aspect of a city.

Week 13: April 26-28 *The City of Disaster and Climate Change*

Prerecorded lecture: April 26: The Disaster City

Reading:

Hatim El-Hibri, *Visions of Beirut* excerpt

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200302-tokyo-2020-olympic-preparations-city-redevelopment>

Lynnell Thomas, *Desire and Disaster in New Orleans*, excerpt

Discussion: April 28: Climate Change and the City

Reading:

Eric Klinenberg, "Department of Urban Planning: Adaption"

Ashley Dawson, *Extreme Cities*, excerpt

Blog prompt: Analyze an example of a city struggling with disaster or climate change.

Week 14: May 3-5 Postindustrial Style in the City**Prerecorded Lecture: May 3: Postindustrial Style**

Reading:

Sharon Zukin, *Naked City*, "Destination Culture"

The High Line, Interview with architects

Recommended:

Richard Ocejib, *Masters of Craft*, excerpt

May 5: Presentations of papers

Blog prompt: Analyze postindustrial style in New York or any city.

Week 15:

May 10: Conclusion

Final papers due: May 17
