

PS 26 METROPOLIS

THE CULTURES AND POLITICS OF CITIES

Professor Doreen Lee, FALL 2008
Wednesday 2:30 – 4:30 PM
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Cities are oftentimes our entry point into “civilisation”. The diversity of our cities ranges from the global cities linking the old world and the new, to the impoverished mega-cities of the global south. Yet, given such diversity, have we been theoretically colonised by “Metropolis”? By surveying the different uses of city space and debating various models of urbanisation, such as the formation of European cities, to the indigenised theories of spatial formation in the “non-West,” we can begin to interrogate our model of the ideal city, our “Metropolis” in question. Our course will look critically at these models and their far-reaching implications on the way urbanisation has taken place in discursive and material terms. Instead of focusing on the architectural history of particular cities, we will consider the social processes in the production of space and urban subjectivities, reading selections from influential theorists of city-space, such as Henri Lefebvre, Walter Benjamin, and Michel de Certeau. A rich variety of contemporary and historical case studies of cities across the globe are juxtaposed in this course under city-types, as provocative assertions of representations of the urban.

This course hopes to generate possible answers to the related questions of “what makes a city a city?” and alternatively, “which social processes are defined as urban, and why?” Other questions of this course include: How do we recast the city from our imagination? Are political cities, colonial cities, world cities, slum cities, viable categories that capture the dominant processes of a particular city? What are specific colonial legacies that post-colonial cities must contend with? What other processes happen under the rubric “urbanisation”? Is urbanisation a form of globalisation? What kinds of urbanisms (as opposed to ‘organisms’) exist in the different (social) spaces of the city? This course suggests an interdisciplinary approach to urban studies as a method and analytical tool to read the city, and to think about multi-sited ethnography in an urban context. We will begin and anchor the class to the fabulous narrative of Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, a difficult text, but one that allows us to glimpse a different way of approaching the linked spaces of memory, desire, power, and narration in the ideal City. The films in this class will showcase the city-types from the texts of each of the subthemes.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Be punctual and read all assigned material before class meets. There are very few weeks to explore the various topics, and much reading to get through. You are responsible for ensuring that our seminars are productive and intellectually engaging.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: There are 12 sessions for this class. Depending on the final number of students in the class, you will each be responsible for generating discussion questions for one week’s set of readings. Class will work best if you contribute 3- 5 questions that address all the readings. You will circulate these questions by email to the entire class the MONDAY before

the class meets so that we will all be prepared to answer your thought-provoking questions. Students will then start the class with a brief, 5-minute introduction to the readings and their questions.

CRITICAL REVIEW PAPERS: There are TWO longer papers for this class. I will not give extensions for these papers. If you hand them in late, each day will mean a 0.5 reduction in your grade (1 day late = an A becomes a A- ; 2 days late = an A becomes a B+). Each paper should be 5-6 double-spaced, 12 font pages. Follow standard citation rules, and please format block quotes (3 or more lines). I consider it cheating if a student's paper is dominated by a substantial number of unformatted block quotes.

These web links are helpful guides on how to write a review essay. I shall include these articles in your course packet.

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html>

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/CriNonfiction.html>

Papers are due Week 4 and Week 11.

Please read the syllabus carefully for the additional short assignments for Week 1 and Week 10.

FILMS: There are several films that are required viewing. All films will be streamed or shown in class. Please watch the streamed films before you come to class.

GRADES

Class Participation and Attendance: 10%

Two Literature Review Papers: 30% x 2 = 60%

Book Review: 10%

Short assignments: 20%

Books for Purchase at **Food for Thought** co-op:

Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino

Money has no Smell by Paul Stoller

The course packet is available at the Political Science department main office, Clark House.

Additional readings are posted on **blackboard** on the course website.

1. CITY ACTS

9/10 Week 1

Introduction

- Introduction, pp. 1-6. In *the City Cultures Reader*, eds. Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden (London: 2000, Routledge)
- Calvino, Italo. "A Hermit in Paris", in *Hermit in Paris* (2003)

9/17 Week 2

The Art of Narration

- Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*.

Assignment: one page essay of a city-memory. How do you remember cities, and why this or that particular city or memory? Describe a city and its associative memory in a way that captures a particular essence or urban feel that you consider most representative of the city. You can choose one of Calvino's subheadings to model your paragraph on. Circulate your paragraph by email to the entire class by Monday evening 8 pm. We will discuss these paragraphs in conjunction with *Invisible Cities*.

9/24 Week 3 Walking the City

- Leach, Neil. Excerpts from the Introduction of *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and experiencing the modern metropolis*. Ed. Leach, Neil. London: Routledge, 2002. pp.1-5.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Hashish in Marseilles" & "On some motifs in Baudelaire"
- Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," pp.91 – 110 (focus on pp.91-96). "Spatial Stories" pp.115 - 130 (Pay especial attention to pp.117-123) from *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1984).

10/1 Week 4 The Stranger in the City

- Georg Simmel. "The Metropolis and Mental Life".
- Tallack, Douglas. " 'Waiting, waiting': the hotel lobby, in the modern city", in *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and experiencing the modern metropolis*. Ed. Leach, Neil. London: Routledge, 2002. pp.139-151.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. "The Hotel Lobby" (1963), pp. 145-148 in *the City Cultures Reader*.

Edward Hopper images: The hotel lobby; the movie theatre; Nighthawks; the apartment

Film: **Chungking Express** (Wong Kar Wai)

First Literature Review Paper due in class.

2. PUBLIC/PRIVATISED SPACE

10/8 Week 5 Public Space

- Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989) Part 1. Introduction, and Part. 5. "The Social-Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere"
- Lefebvre, Henri. Excerpts from *The Production of Space*. pp.197-199 in *the City Cultures Reader*.
- Allen, John. "Ambient Power: Berlin's Potsdamer Platz and the Seductive Logic of Public Spaces", in *Urban Studies*, Vol.43, No.2, February 2006.

Recommended reading: Hedman, Eva-Lotta. "Malling Manila: Images of a City, Fragments of a Century," in *Philippine Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century: Colonial Legacies, Post-Colonial Trajectories*, Eva-Lotta E.Hedman and John T. Sidel (London: Routledge, 2000)

Deustche, Rosalind. "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City" in Part I. The Social Production of Space, Chapter 2 from *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996.

10/15 Week 6

Urban Subcultures

- Castells, Manuel. "The Urban Sub-cultures" pp.96 – 112 in *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980)
- "Guerilla Gardeners: Taking over neglected public spaces" The Guardian, April 25, 2008. <http://www.guerrillagardening.org/ggblog10.html> Please read the blog!
- Lubow, Arthur. "Recycle City: The Road to Curitiba" NY Times, May 20, 2007.
- Kurutz, Steven. "Not buying it" NY Times, June 21, 2007. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/21/garden/21freegan.html?scp=3&sq=dumpster%20diving&st=cse>)

Film: **The Gleaners** (Agnes Varda)

10/22 Week 7

City as Pictograph

- Spivak, Gayatri. "Harlem", in *Social Text* 81, Vol.22, No.4, Winter 2004.
- McDonald, Nancy. *The Graffiti Subculture*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. SELECTIONS
- Please look at [woostercollective.com](http://www.woostercollective.com) for inspiration. We will look at some of the graffiti art projects on this website in class together.
- "Calcutta's colourless campaign" BBC article, in course packet. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4909832.stm

Week 7: Chris Pinney's talk on visual culture in India

Film: **Wild Style** (Charlie Ahearn, 2007 reissue)

10/29 Week 8

Politics in the City

- Castells, Manuel. "The Emergence of the Theoretical Field of Urban Politics." Pp.246-275, Chapter 11 in *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980)
- Berger, John. The Nature of Mass Demonstrations. In *Collected Essays*, ed. Geoff Dyer.
- Klein, Naomi. "Reclaim the Streets", Chapter 13 in *No Logo* (2000).
- Torre, Susana. "Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo" (1996), pp. 282 - 285 in *the City Cultures Reader*.
- Lee, Doreen. PDF article on **Blackboard**

Recommended: Barber, Lucy G. "The 'Spring Offensive' of 1971: Radicals and Marches on Washington" Chapter 6, *Marching on Washington* (2002).

Jukes, Peter. "Crossroads (Leningrad: Crowds and Monuments and Power)", in *A Shout in the Street: An Excursion into the Modern City*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990. pp.119-158.

Mrazek, Rudolf. "Literature or Revolution" in *Social Text* 83. **Blackboard**

3. GLOBAL CITIES

11/5 **Week 9** The Economic Metropolis

- Sassen, Saskia. "Global Cities."
- De Cauter, Lieven. "The Capsular City" in *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and experiencing the modern metropolis*. Ed. Leach, Neil. London: Routledge, 2002. pp. 271-280.
- Chua Beng Huat. "Consumerism: A View from Singapore" in *Urban Studies* 35(5-6), May 1998. **Blackboard**

Film: B.A.T.A.M (professor's copy, will show in class)

Recommended: Klima, Alan. "The New World: Bangkok and the World Order without History", Chapter 2 in *The Funeral Casino*.

Davis, Mike. "The Urbanization of Empire: Megacities and the Law of Chaos" in *Social Text* 81, Vol.22, No.4, Winter 2004.

11/12 **Week 10** Globalizing Cities

- Stoller, Paul. *Money has no Smell: The Africanization of New York City*

Read the entire book.

Assignment: book review due (2 pages). See academic journals such as Public Culture, Urban Studies, Ethnography, Identities, Cultural Anthropology, or Social Text for examples on how to write a brief and insightful academic book review. None of those "Two-thumbs up! Overall, a good read" comments allowed! You are evaluating a book on its strengths and weaknesses of argument, structure, and evidence, and not for aesthetic purpose alone. A well-written review will insert your opinion based on your intellectual argumentation and observations.

11/19 **Week 11** Inequality and Violence

- Appadurai, Arjun. "Spectral Housing" **Blackboard**
- Davis, Mike. "Planet of Slums" **Blackboard**
- Hoffman, Danny. "The City as Barracks: Freetown, Monrovia, and the Organization of Violence in Postcolonial African Cities" in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.22 (3).
- Agamben, Giorgio. "What is a camp?" in *means without end: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

Film: **Favela Rising**

Second Literature Review Paper due the following Monday Dec.1

12/3 **Week 12** Death and the City

- Low, Setha. "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear," in *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, eds. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga. Blackwell Publishing: 2003.
- Mrazek, Rudolf. "Bypasses and Flyovers: approaching the metropolitan history of Indonesia" in *Social History*, Vol. 29 No.4 November 2004. **Blackboard**

Film: "In the Suburbs" (1957), 20 min. Watch online:
<http://www.archive.org/details/IntheSub1957>
Episode of *Weeds* (in class)

Recommended: Davis, Mike. "Dead Cities: A Natural History" in *Dead Cities And Other Tales* (New York: The New Press, 2002), pp. 361-400.

12/10 Week 13

Final Session

Final assignment: Bring an image to class that best represents the different facets of "Metropolis" that we have studied in this course. Link the image to the various theories we have read on cities, urbanisms, and subjectivities, as a way to sum up what you have learned in this class. Each student will talk for a few minutes about the image s/he has chosen.

- Nuttall, Sarah. "Stylizing the Self", in *Public Culture*. **Blackboard**

Recommended: Kusno, Abidin. "Whither Nationalist Urbanism?" in *Urban Studies*, Vol.41, No.12, November 2004.
Gilroy, Paul. Conclusion from *Postcolonial Melancholia*