The goal of this class is to learn to think spatially – to understand how the ordinary, sometimes boring, and often invisible structures that we usually take for granted are both produced and consumed. Infrastructures ranging from street lights to plumbing are key to shaping our daily lives, and are used as jumping-off points for discussions of themes such as inequality, power, and identity. We use historical and anthropological methods and readings from around the globe – with a special focus on the United States and Middle East – to explore how humans are shaped by the material world and vice versa. While most of our readings are from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we will occasionally go further back in time to explore the origins of some of these themes.

Grading:
20% Reading Responses – A one-page reaction to readings for a particular week. A total of TEN responses are due throughout the semester. You should turn them in via email by 9 pm on the Monday before the relevant class session.
20% Participation (15% in-class discussions + 5% presentation of final paper). Included in your participation grade are the following. You must participate in each class discussion and other activities (ie the visit to Bobst); you must make at least one visit to office hours to discuss an assignment; and you must present your research paper on the last day of class.
10% Paper #1 (3-4 pages) due Feb. 9th.
10% Paper #2 (3-4 pages) due March 9th.
10% Paper #3 (3-4 pages) due April 24th.
10% Annotated Bibliography and Peer Review (5% each). These are critical steps toward producing your final paper.
20% Research Paper (9-10 pages). You will complete a research paper on an infrastructure-related project of your choosing in consultation with me. You can start by thinking about a single place, a type of infrastructure, or thing that circulates (goods, finance, and people).

Policies:
You are expected to arrive to class on time and be present in every session. Absences without a documented excuse will result in deductions from your final grade. The use of laptops and other devices is not permitted unless explicitly authorized.

COURSE CALENDAR
I. What is Infrastructure?
January 23 – Introduction to the course.

January 30 – Thinking Spatially
- Ruviel Netz, Barbed Wire: an Ecology of Modernity, pp. xi-xiv, 228-238
- Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” from The Practice of Everyday Life, pp. 95-117.
- Yi Fu Tuan, Space and Place, Introduction, pp. 3-7.

February 6 – A World Without Infrastructure?
- Three Reviews of James Scott, Against the Grain

February 9 – Short Paper #1 due via email at 11:59 pm. 4-5 pages. What does it mean to think of history as wrestling rather than chess? [See Netz, Barbed Wire, p. 228]

II. Cities
February 13 - Sidewalks & Street Lighting
- Jane Jacobs, Death and Life of Great American Cities, 29-88
- Murray Melbin, Night as Frontier, 117-136

February 20 - Whose Streets?
- Pascal Menoret, Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt, pp. 61-101, 133-173
- M.I.A., “Bad Girls” video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uYs0gJD-LE
- Videos of Saudi drifting, TBA

February 27 – Utilities & Identities Above Ground
- Joanne Randa Nucho, Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power, chapters TBA

March 6 – Utilities & Identities Below Ground
- Donald Reid, Paris: Sewers and Sewermen, chapters TBA
- “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”

March 9 – Paper #2 due. Ethnography of a location in or near NYU. 3-4 pages.

III. Globalization
March 20 - The Docks
- Film: “On the Waterfront,” 1954

March 27 - Bobst Library instructional and research session.

April 3 – Container Shipping
- Marc Levinson, The Box, pp. 102-135, 355-390.
- Annotated Bibliography Due.

April 10 – Digital Infrastructure
- Nicole Starosielski, The Undersea Network, pp TBA

TBA – WALKING TOUR WITH METROPOLITAN ARTS SOCIETY

April 17 – Logistics, Violence, and Circulation
- Deborah Cowen, The Deadly Life of Logistics, pp. 23-90, 163-196.

April 19-20 Conference on “Supply & Command” – details TBA

April 24 – Flows and Control
- Ruviel Netz, Barbed Wire: an Ecology of Modernity, chapters TBA
- Richard White, The Organic Machine, Ch

Paper #3 due – review/ethnography of “Supply & Command” conference panel OR review/ethnography of MAS Walking Tour

April 28 – first draft of research paper due via email to me and your peer reviewer.

IV. Conclusions
May 1 – Last class.
- Presentations and feedback. Peer review due.

Final paper due (with revisions from in-class presentation and peer review) via email at 11:59 pm on May 8th

Readings
Most readings are available on NYU Classes and/or as e-books at Bobst. You will need to annotate or otherwise take notes on the readings; you may choose to do so electronically or after printing hard copies. If you wish to purchase the books for the course, they are listed here:


