Walking the Global City: Spatial Practice, Cultural Production
FYSEM-UA 718
Spring 2019

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Office hours: Tuesdays 11:00 - 1:00

Course Description

New York, the city that never sleeps, is also a city that never stops walking. The mundane, automatic act of putting one foot in front of the other is a vital activity of urban experience, determining our relationship with the city and with our fellow city-dwellers. Pedestrianism propels us into the vibrant dynamism and diversity of the metropolis, navigating us through its streets and enabling our observations, encounters, and interactions with a dizzying accumulation of people and objects. Walking enables chance encounters and discoveries of the new and unexpected, facilitating our participation in and perception of the theater of the street.

In this course, students will investigate walking in literature, film, and art produced in and about New York, Paris, and London from the nineteenth century to the present. Immersing ourselves in the work of peripatetic artists, writers, and thinkers from a range of epochs and cultural backgrounds, we will treat walking as a framework for cultural and social analysis. Tracing the itineraries of urban walkers from the Parisian flâneur to the London “streethaunter” to the...
migrant wanderer of New York, we will view the city as a space that is both bordered and borderless, as a site of community, connection, and belonging as well as one of alienation, exclusion, and marginalization. Throughout our study, walking will be a lens through which we investigate human experience; the culture of cities and their inhabitants; the evolving dynamics of race, gender, and sexuality in modern society; and the relationship between urban experience and creative production. This exploration will allow us to see the city as a zone that is constantly evolving and being reinvented.

**Overview**

This course is designed to serve as an introduction to intellectual life as an undergraduate student in the liberal arts. Together with your classmates, you will discover a wide range of works of art as well as intellectual movements in a transnational context, which you will read/view/study with a critical eye. In our class discussions, we will interrogate what the materials we study reveal about cities, community, exclusion, identity, and the human condition.

In tandem with our study of these works of art, this course is also designed to provide you the context to explore and discover New York City by foot, and to allow you to connect the themes of the class to your own lives. Class presentations and assignments are designed to help you hone your ability to read critically, develop analytical skills, refine your writing, and foster a stronger connection to your city and your classmates.

**Course Materials to Purchase**

[TBD]

**Course Assessment**

**Participation (10%)**
- This course rests on your attentive reading of assigned texts and materials, and your contribution to class discussion. Read with a pen in hand and arrive in class with questions and topics you would like to discuss. You are expected to bring your materials to class each day.
- Your presence in class and your punctuality are expected. If you must miss class for any reason, you are expected to email me in advance with an explanation. More than two absences will negatively affect your participation grade. You will be responsible for completing all missed work.

**Homework Assignments (10%)**
- Before class each week, you must choose one passage (1-2 paragraphs max.) from one of the readings for the week, then formulate a question to pose to the class which indicates a theme or subject that interests you and which you think will be generative for class discussion. You will
then write a brief (approximately 1 page, double-spaced) reflection in response to your own question.
- You will email me your citation, question, and response by 6pm the day before class (Wednesday). Select passages will be used during class discussion.

**Oral Presentation (15%)**
- Over the course of the semester, each student will give an oral presentation on either an author, an artist, a filmmaker, or a specific text/work of art on the syllabus. Contingent on my approval, students may also present on a related artist/artwork that is not on the syllabus. Presentations will be 10 minutes in length and may be accompanied by a Powerpoint or other visual media.
- Students will sign up for the topic of their choice and guiding questions will be provided to give an idea of what to focus on in the presentations. After your presentation, you will be expected to answer questions from your fellow classmates.

**Short Paper (15%)**
Students will write one short paper on a topic given to you in advance. Papers should be approx. 4 pages in length and will be due on **Feb 28**.

**Walking Project (20%)**
- Over the course of the semester, each student will engage in his/her own project of walking the metropolitan landscape of New York City. You will choose a neighborhood of New York City (the NYU neighborhood is not an option) and explore it on foot on three separate occasions, spaced out throughout the semester. You will take photographs as you walk (which will be posted to the class Instagram account, with captions), then write a reflective journal entry to catalogue each walking experience, indicating how your reflections resonate with themes from the course. You will send me your journal entries (minimum 2 pages typed and double-spaced), which will be graded for effort, creativity, and depth of thought.
- The objective of this project is not only to build your writing and observational skills, but also to foster an in-depth exploration of the city that will serve as your home during your years at NYU.
  **For safety reasons, all walks should take place in the light of day and in a peopled area**

**Final Paper (30%)**
Your walking project will culminate in your final paper. Drawing from your journal entries, in your final paper you will connect your observations, sensations, and reflections on walking to one or more of the readings/course materials that we have studied during the semester. A good paper will demonstrate sound knowledge of the themes, figures, readings and movements we have studied throughout the course, and will prove a strong capacity for literary and historical analysis as well as critical thinking. Your paper should also explain how walking has informed and informs your own relationship to New York. Papers should be approx. 10 pages in length and will be due on **April 25**.
**All written assignments should be double spaced with 12 pt. font and 1-inch margins.**

Classroom Policies

- The success of this course depends on your close reading and viewing of the texts and films prior to class as well as your questions, reflections, and classroom participation.
- Please arrive at class on time and prepared with all readings, notes, and assignments.
- Absences will adversely affect your participation grade. If you cannot make it to class for any reason, you are expected to contact me by email to explain your absence.
- Be prepared to remain in the classroom for the duration of the session (there will be a break halfway through class).
- The use of electronic devices, such as cellphones, laptops, and tablets will not be permitted in class. Students who use electronic devices will be asked to leave.

Additional Information

- Please take the time to read the NYU Honor Code and information on Academic Integrity: [http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity). Read carefully the section on plagiarism.

In accordance with university policies, all work must be your own. If you use a source, you must cite it. Plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment, and the dean will be notified.

- **Disability Disclosure Statement**: Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
• You may find the **NYU Writing Center** to be a valuable resource. Information about hours and how to set up an appointment is available here: [http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html)

• **The College Learning Center** provides tutoring, academic skills workshops, and help with specific classes, paper writing, study skills, as well as review for exams. All sessions are offered on a walk-in basis and feature tutoring by experienced upper-level students: [www.nyu.edu/cas/clc](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/clc)

• **The Wellness Exchange**: Support for personal and health-related issues. (212) 443-9999 (24/7 confidential calls): [www.nyu.edu/999](http://www.nyu.edu/999)

**Course Schedule**

**Week One – 1/31**  
**Introduction I**

**Wk. Two – 2/7**  
**Introduction II – Walking as a Category of Cultural Analysis**  
Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (Ch. 1 pp. (3-13) + Ch. 11 (pp. 171-195))  
Frederic Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking* (pp. 1-10; 31-64)  
Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Ch. VII: “Walking in the City”, pp. 91-110)

**Wk. Three – 2/14**  
**Rousseauian Romanticism – Walking, Meditation, and Solitude**  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (Walk 1 (pp. 145-155 + Walk 2 (pp. 156-168) + Walk 7 (pp. 239-259))  
Frederic Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking* (pp. 65-80)  
Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (Ch. 2 (pp. 14-29)  

**Wk. Four – 2/21**  
**Le Flâneur**  
Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (pp. 1-12)  
Charles Baudelaire, poems from *The Flowers of Evil*: “To a Passerby,” “Evening Crepuscule,” “The Swan”  
Frederic Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking* (pp. 175-181)  
**EXCURSION TO MUSEUM TBD**

**Wk. Five – 2/28**  
**Wandering Among the Crowds**
Edgar Allen Poe, “The Man of the Crowd” (506-518)
Charles Baudelaire, from *Paris Slpeen: Little poems in prose*: “Crowds,”
“Eyes of the Poor,” “Let’s Beat Up the Poor!”
Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (pp. 196-213)
Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (pp. 11-19)

**SHORT PAPER DUE**

**Wk. Six – 3/7**
Women Walking I
Elizabeth Wilson, “The Invisible Flâneur” (*New Left Review* pp. 90-110)
Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse* (pp. 3-23)
Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting* (pp. 1-11)

**Wk. Seven – 3/14**
Women Walking II
Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse* (pp. 69-93)
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 3-63)

**Wk. Eight – 3/21**
NO CLASS (Spring Break)

**Wk. Nine – 3/28**
Surrealist Peregrinations
André Breton, *Nadja* (11-30)

**Wk. Ten – 4/4**
Pedestrian Happenstance
Sophie Calle, *Suite Vénitienne* (approx. 96 pages)

**EXCURSION TO MUSEUM TBD**

**Wk. Eleven – 4/11**
Cruising – Walking and Sexuality
Barthes, “Soirées de Paris” from *Incidents* (pp. 72-116)

**Wk. Twelve – 4/18**
Walking and the Sense of Place
Agnès Varda, *Cleo de 5 à 7* (excerpts of film to be viewed in class)
Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse* (pp. 211-243)

**Wk. Thirteen – 4/25**
Walking and Alienation
Teju Cole, *Open City* (pp. 3-85)

**FINAL PAPER DUE**
Wk. Fourteen – 5/2  Immigrants Walking
Teju Cole, *Open City* (pp. 149-259)

Wk. Fifteen – 5/9  Street Photography