

History 297G/Art 297G/597G

History of New York City

Wednesdays 1:30 to 3:30 pm
Chenoweth 227

Professor Max Page
Office: 452 Fine Arts Center
545-6952 (w)
Email: mpage@art.umass.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30 to 5 pm, and by appointment

This is a lecture and discussion course on the history of New York City, with an emphasis on the development of the city's architecture and urban form. While the course will trace the early history of the city, the focus is on the century since 1898, when the modern City of New York was created. The course will examine not only how New York City came to be unique – in its unrivaled size and density, depth and breadth of its cultural life, and economic importance – but also how the city has influenced the United States in myriad ways. As the nation's and perhaps the world's most important city, New York City has produced some of the most important works of history of the past several decades. Therefore, the course will examine how to use the methods of social and cultural history to understand the development of built form. Central themes of the course include the forces transforming the physical shape of the city; the experience and culture of immigrants and their neighborhoods; the invention and reinvention of the city's image in art and literature; and the political forces and reforms that have promoted or hindered the city's advancement.

Reading:

It is crucial that you keep up with the reading, for the purpose of making our discussions fruitful. The books for this course can be purchased at Food for Thought Books at 106 North Pleasant Street. A few readings will be available for purchase later in the term at Collective Copies (71 South Pleasant Street) as well as on reserve on the second floor of the Dubois Library. There are marked with an asterisk (*). From time to time, I may also distribute brief articles in class or via email.

Required Books:

Philip Lopate, ed., *Writing New York*
Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900 - 1940*
Frederick Binder and David Reimers, *All the Nations Under Heaven*

Useful Books for Reference:

Elliot Willensky and Norval White, *AIA Guide to New York City*
Robert A.M. Stern, *New York 1900*, as well as *New York 1930* and *New York 1960*
Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City*
Mike Wallace and Ted Burrows, *Gotham*

Assignments

I. Readings and Class Discussion – 30% of your grade

Showing up to both lectures and discussion sections is essential to this course. You will get only half of the value of this course if you only show up to the Wednesday lectures. You will also get a much worse grade. You need to do the readings and attend all sections and participate in discussions to succeed in this course, intellectually and otherwise.

Discussion sections meet at the following times. We will be assigning sections based on preferences expressed in the first day.

Friday 10:10 to 11:00 Arnold Hall 136

Friday 12:20 to 1:10 Bartlett Hall 3

Friday 1:25 to 2:15 Bartlett Hall 3

2. Papers -- 50% of your grade (10%, 15%, 25% per paper, respectively)

Since the ability to write clear and convincing prose remains crucial to all aspects of life, this course will emphasize writing papers. And since writing only improve with practice, you will be asked to write three different types of papers, each of increasing length. A number of discussion sections will deal with the process of writing, as well as the evaluation of fellow classmates writing.

A. Paper #1: a one-page reflection on what 9/11/01 means for New York City, on 9/11/02
Due on September 11

B. Paper #2: a 2 to 3 page review of *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan*.
Due in section, November 1

C. Paper # 3: a 5 to 7 page paper on a topic of your choosing (in consultation with your TA)
Due in section, December 6

3. Midterm Exam – 20% of your grade

The midterm exam will be held in class, October 23.

NOTE: there is no final exam for this class.

Weekly Topics and Readings

September 4 Introduction: Studying “The City”

September 11 September 11, 3001: How Historians Will Remember 9/11

Readings:

Max Page, “On Edge, Again,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2001, at
<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/News/daysafter.html>

Essays from *The New Yorker* at

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/previous/?020909frprsp_previous,

especially “From Our Correspondents,” “First Reactions,” “The Tower Builder,”
and essays by Paul Goldberger and Adam Gopnik

*Brief papers on 9/11 due at the beginning of class

September 18 New Amsterdam, New Orange, New-York

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, chapter 1, “Multiethnic from the Beginning: New York City, the
Colonial and Revolutionary Years”

Lopate, Washington Irving, Walt Whitman, George Templeton Strong

September 25 Antebellum New York

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, chapter 2, “Dynamic Growth and Diversity: The City and its People,
1789-1880”

Lopate:

Philip Hone, Charles Dickens, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allen Poe, Herman
Melville

October 2 Filming New York History: Ric Burns’ *New York*

October 9 The Nineteenth Century City

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, chapter 3, “Diversity in Action: Irish and German Immigrants in a
Growing City, 1789-1880”

Lopate:

Frederick Law Olmsted, Fanny Fern, Mark Twain, James D. McCabe, Wong
Chin Foo, Jose Marti, William Dean Howells, George W. Plunkitt and William
L. Riordan

October 16 NO CLASS – The University is on a Monday Class schedule

October 23 Nineteenth Century City: Becoming a Metropolis

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, chapter 4, "Old and New Immigrants in Greater New York City, 1880 to World War I" and chapter 5, "Jews and Italians in Greater New York City, 1880 to World War I"

Lopate:

Jacob Riis, Henry James, James Huneker, Sara Teasdale, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Hart Crane, Al Smith, Edith Wharton, Stephen Crane, Abraham Cahan, Theodore Dreiser,

MIDTERM -- in class -- 1 hour

October 30 Building and Destroying the Modern Metropolis

Readings:

Page, chapters 1, 2, 3

Binder and Reimers, chapter 6, "Ethnic New Yorkers from the Great War to the Great Depression"

Lopate:

Maxim Gorky, O. Henry, Lincoln Steffens, Anzia Yezierska, Bernardo Vega, F. Scott Fitzgerald

Guest Lecturer: Professor Ellen Pader

*Second papers due in section, November 1

November 6 Building and Destroying the Modern Metropolis

Readings:

Page, chapters 4, 5, 8

Lopate:

E.L. Doctorow, Claude McKay, Marianne Moore, Paul Rosenfeld, Edmund Wilson, Thomas Wolfe, Langston Hughes, Malcolm Cowley, Edwin Denby

Guest Lecturer: Prof. Gerry McFarland

November 13 The Post World War II City: Suburbanizing the City in the Age of Moses

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, chapter 7, "A Time of Trial: New Yorkers During the Great Depression and World War II"

Lopate:

Robert Moses, Joseph Mitchell, John Cheever, Kate Simon, James Merrill

*Robert Caro, *The Powerbroker*, "One Mile"

Guest Lecturer: Prof. Larry Zacharias

November 20 The Reaction: Jane Jacobs and the Defense of Cities

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, chapter 8, "A Better Time: New York City, 1945-1970"

* Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, excerpts

* Lewis Mumford, "Mother Jacobs' Home Remedies for Urban Cancer"

Lopate:

Jane Jacobs, Louis Auchincloss, Gay Talese, James Merrill, Alfred Kazin

November 27 Urban Crisis and Revival

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, chapter 9, "Truly a Global City: New York, 1970 to the Present"

Lopate:

James Baldwin, Allen Ginsberg, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Jimmy Cannon, William Carlos Williams, , Edward Rivera

December 4 A Crucible of Cultures

Readings:

Binder and Reimers, *Afterword*

Lopate:

Loren Eiseley, George Oppen, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Lewis Mumford, Oscar Hijuelos, Vivian Gornick, Amiri Baraka, Ralph Ellison

* E.B. White, "Here is New York"

Guest Lecturer: Agustin Lao-Montes

*Final papers due in section, Dec. 6

December 11 Future of New York's Past, The Future of Us All