

SSN 240, HISTORY OF NEW YORK CITY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will explore the history of New York City through the lens of both cultural and political history, which means, in part, that we'll look at and listen to the ways that New Yorkers have described and thought about themselves, mostly through the last two hundred years. In the last hundred years, especially, New Yorkers have been part of the exploration asking, what does it mean to be modern? And we'll look at the way New York, as the first modern city, has responded to the peculiar circumstances of its geography, politics, economics, and technology? We will read not only historical accounts of major events in New York history, but we'll examine the way Americans expressed themselves scientifically, philosophically, and in literature, theater, architecture, music, and the visual arts.

The course will be unusual, in part, because it will include numerous walking tours and field trips in Manhattan and Queens. And I want to strongly encourage you to write me at this address any time if you have any question about any aspect of the course. I want to stress that I am available throughout the semester, by email and/or in class or afterwards. And I will be glad to skype or what's app or zoom with you. Please let me know if you would like to talk, and we can set a time and technology for the meeting.

GRADING

Grading will be based on a final exam and several short essays and projects relating to the various topics we'll cover.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Tu, Sept. 12, and Th, Sept. 14

1600-1750: Introduction, Dutch Golden Age

Reading: "1600s, Dutch Trading Colony"

Tu, Sept. 19, and Th, Sept. 21

1750-1865: Revolutionary New York, the Erie Canal, and the Civil War

Reading: 1819, "Rip van Winkle"; Great Fire of New York, Slavery and Civil War; 1863, "New York City Draft Riots"

Film: [National Canal Museum: Erie Canal](http://canals.org/erie.htm) <http://canals.org/erie.htm>, New York State Archives website <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/projects/eriecanal/index.html>

Fieldtrip: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Dutch and Renaissance art, American Wing

Tu, Sept. 26, and Th, Sept. 28

1865-1890: "The Gilded Age" in New York City

Reading: Kate Chopin, "A Pair of Silk Stockings"; George Will, "The Special Century"; "160 Years of Central Park"

Film: "1876 to 1900 Industrialization" and "Invention, Capital, and Consumerism"; 1981, Ken Burns, *The Brooklyn Bridge*; "Stanford White"

Fieldtrip: Upper East Side Gilded Age Mansions

Tu, Oct. 3, and Th, Oct. 5

1890-1910: Ellis Island and New York City immigration

Reading: 1880 to 1900, "Ethnic New York"; "20th Century World City"; Gotham Chapters 22, 23, and 27?

Film: "1890 to 1915, Immigration and Ellis Island" and "Progressivism"; 1903, New York street scene, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jvUrAtwbgc>

Fieldtrip: Grant's Tomb, Morningside Heights, Columbia University

Tu, Oct. 10, **No class**, and Th, Oct. 12

1910-1920: Progressivism, "Sky Boom," and "Beaux Arts New York"

Reading: "1898 to 1914, The Progressive City"; 1900s, "Skyscraper City" and "Harlem"

Film: "Classical Rome in 19th Century New York"; 1900 to 1930, "Automobile in America"; 1910s, "Mass Culture"; "Coney Island": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GegiQXsFal4>;

1911, New York street scene, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rx5sUa_2SD8

Fieldtrip: Grand Central Station, New York Public Library, Bowery Savings Bank

Tu, Oct. 17, and Th, Oct. 19

1920 to 1930: Jazz Age New York

Reading: "New York Roars Into The Twenties"; 1923, "Bowery Savings Bank"; 1920s, George Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue*; Louis Armstrong, Hot Sevens

Film: 1920s, "Roaring Twenties," "Airminded Aviation and Skyscrapers," "Prohibition"; 1921, *Manhatta*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGKsVY23D2s>; 1928, Harold Lloyd and Babe Ruth; 1927, "New York City Street Life"; 1927, *Metropolis*

Fieldtrip: Tudor City, Chrysler Building, and Daily News

Tu, Oct. 24, and Th, Oct. 26

1930 to 1945: New Deal in New York

Reading: 1931, "James Thurber, Empire State Building"; "Living New Deal" website, "Rise and Fall of NYCHA," Gore Vidal on Robert Moses; 1940, Berenice Abbott, "Changing New York"

Film: 1933, *King Kong*; 1933, *Goldiggers of 1933*; 1933, *Forty-Second Street*; 1935, Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*; New Deal in New York and 1939 World's Fair powerpoints; 1937, "A Better New York City,"

<https://archive.org/details/ABetterNewYorkCity1937>; 1939, *The City*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGL1jZ4Zxv8>; "New York mid-1930s in color";

1939, "Swingin' New York," 1937, "Easy Living"

Fieldtrip: New York Life, Met Life, and Flatiron Building at Madison Square

Tu, Oct. 31, and Th, Nov. 2

1945 to 1975: Suburbia and the International Style

Reading: "1941 to 1960, Capital of the World"; Doris Kearns Goodwin, "Wait til next year!"; 1947 Smallpox Scare; 1938 to 1945, "Walker Evans, Photos of the New York Subway"

Film: *West Side Story*; 1946, *The Godfather* opening scene; 1948, Leavitt and Agee, *In the Street*, New York City, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aH7l52gP6E>; "1964 World's Fair"; 1965, Bob Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues"; 1965, "Beatles at Shea Stadium"

“Car 54,” “Naked City”

Fieldtrip: Guggenheim Museum, Park Avenue, and United Nations Buildings

Tu, Nov. 7, and Th, Nov. 9

1975-2000: The fall and rise of New York City

Reading: “Take New Yorkers Back to the 1970s”; 1981, “New York Thrash Night”; 1982, “Music Television Revolution”; 1994, “Rise of Graffiti Art”; 1990, “Mayor Ed Koch's epic feud with Donald Trump”; 1993, “Seinfeld and Stern”

Film: 1970s MOMA home movies: <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/276>; 1979, Woody Allen, *Manhattan*; 1987, *Wall Street*; 1985, *After Hours*; 1995, *Blue in the Face*; *Taxi Driver*

Fieldtrip: Park Plaza to Trump Tower to Rockefeller Center to Empire State Building

Tu, Nov. 14, and Th, Nov. 16

2001-2008: September 11 in New York City

Reading: 2001, *The New Yorker*, “September 11”; 2002, Billy Collins, “The Names”; 2006, “An Imam in America”; 2000s, “How the 9/11 Attacks Sparked Gentrification”

Film: Bush Administration and September 11 powerpoint

Fieldtrip: LaGuardia and Wagner Archives

Tu, Nov. 21, and Th, Nov. 24, **No class**

2009, “The Great Divide”

Reading: “The Great Divide” article

Film: “The Great Divide” powerpoint

Fieldtrip: No class

Tu, Nov. 28, and Th, Nov. 30

2010-2020: Queens and Long Island City

Reading: 2017, “Times Square Reborn”; “Five Quirky Houses in Queens”; 2018, “Amazon in LIC”; 2022, “A Stainless Steel Status Symbol”; 2000, “Donald Trump, Golden Boy”; 2022, “To Understand Trump, Start With Queens”

Film: 2009, Obama takes on Trump at the Correspondents’ Dinner; 2022, Daily Show, “New York Subway Shooter Caught”

Fieldtrip: Flushing Meadows/Queens Museum Panorama

Tu, Dec. 5, and Th, Dec. 7

2020: Pandemic New York

Reading: Student writing on the lockdown; *New York Times*, “Where are the Big Ideas?”; 2020, “NYC Bodegas Going Viral on TikTok”

Film: New York Landmarks Commission, “Tourist in your own town”:

https://nylandmarks.org/explore-ny/?fwp_landmark_categories=colonial-new-york

Fieldtrip: Museum of the City of New York

Th, Dec. 14 **Final exam**