

Culture: Cities, Makers of Modernity
Quest University Canada



Rue de Paris, temps de pluie
Gustave Caillebotte, 1877

General

2017-2018, Spring Block 2

Monday-Friday, 1 pm-4 pm

Classroom: A.214

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Office Hours: Wednesday & Friday, 11 a.m.—noon and by appointment

Course description

In the eighteenth and increasingly in the nineteenth century, a curious thing happened: an age-old balance between large agrarian populations and small urban centers began to shift dramatically in favor of urban centers. Cities grew rapidly; this growth transformed the cultures of the cities—places like Paris, London, and Vienna—but it also helped create modernity. In this course, using the methods of cultural and social history, we examine the complex cultures of these modern cities. We look at the hopes that cities engendered in their populations – and examine the deep fears that the growth of cities provoked. What new pleasures did they provide? What new dangers did they create? And, throughout the course, we seek to understand how the city helped make modernity.

In the first part of the course, we examine the growth of modern European cities, using Andrew Lees and Lynn Hollen Lees' *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe, 1750-1914*. Our aim here is to understand the large patterns of change: demographic, industrial, political, and cultural.

We then narrow our focus to Paris, using Colin Jones' *Paris: The Biography of a City* as the backbone of our investigation. In addition, we will read Balzac's *Farragus*, grapple with other texts and cultural artifacts, and engage with the rich cultural history of Paris. (In-class lectures and additional readings will help provide some of the historical framework.) Our aim is to understand Paris as a particular place, but, again, our goal is to draw connections and contrasts between Paris and other cities.

General Course Goals: Culture

- To introduce students to the analysis of culture using the tools and techniques of the humanities
- To give students a richer sense of the importance of exploring cultures.
- To understand how the study of culture is particular and specific, even if the techniques and methods used to understand culture lend themselves to the study of diverse and varied cultures.
- To help students develop the ability to understand how differences—of, for instance, race, class, ethnicity, gender, wealth or power—play into cultural phenomena and practices.

Assignments

Grades and assignments

Grades will be on a standard A-F scale. Further details will be posted on Moodle.

Assignment weights

Journal: pass/fail; required. (In other words, a student who does not turn in the journal cannot pass the course.)

- **Contribution to discussion leadership / general participation / good citizenship: 15%.**
- **Group work: 10% (one grade per group; Feb. 14, Feb. 28)**
- **Midterm: 20%**

- Final: 25%
- Paper: 30%

Journal (P/F)

You must keep—and submit—a journal. Your entry for each day must be completed before class. Your journal is not simply a collection of reading notes; instead, you should write a paragraph or so about the major questions, issues, dilemmas, points of interest, or curiosities in the day's readings. (It is not a replacement for those invaluable notes—it is a more synthetic approach.) You need not respond to each document or source in detail, but should say something about the totality of what you have read or studied. Write your journal entry after you have read everything. If you are shy about contributing to class, a reading journal is a useful tool to write down questions and comments that will help you contribute to discussion.

This is a pass-fail exercise: if you fail to keep a journal, you will fail the course. It will not otherwise have a grade associated with it, and so will not affect your grade otherwise.

Paper

For this paper, you will write on an artifact of your choice. The goal is to focus on the material, temporal, spatial, social, and cultural aspects of your artifact, and to situate it in the broad urban context of nineteenth-century Paris. **NB:** An *artifact*, for the purposes of this assignment, is an object made by a person or by a group of people that has cultural or historical significance. An object may be a painting, structure (e.g., the Eiffel Tower, a train station), story, poem, novel—in short, just about anything that can be invested with that significance. Part of your task will be to show why the artifact you have chosen is *significant*.

The work for this paper will be done in several stages, each of which is a marked assignment in its own right.

1. CHOOSE AN ARTIFACT (FEBRUARY 22) – 5%

By today, you must have chosen an artifact and gathered some preliminary information about them. You may choose an item from the list provided on Moodle, but you may also want to (and are strongly encouraged) to investigate on your own. (“Selected Resources,” also on Moodle, may help guide you.) You should think about what your object really is. So, for instance, if you have a photograph of the Eiffel Tower, you might consider the photograph as the artifact—or you may consider the tower the artifact. You need to be prepared to explain which it is (for you).

You will write approximately one (double-space) page about your artifact. This includes basic identifying information and a discussion. Please bring three printed copies to class with you.

Begin with the following basic information about the item:

- Name or other identification.
- The kind of object it is.
- Creator of object (there may be more than one).
- Date (or date range) when the object was created.

- If the object is an image (or is in an image), include a copy of the image. If the artifact is a story, poem, or other written work, provide a full reference.

You may begin your research with encyclopedias of either the electronic or printed variety, but you must—of course—go further and deeper. As with any other academic work, cite your sources.

Having provided this basic information, you should write about the relationship between the artifact and the city—in other words, you want to be able to explain (briefly) how and why this artifact reveals something about the urban experience. (At this early stage of the course, this will necessarily be tentative, but you should consider such factors as demographic growth, industrialization, urbanization, and urban renewal.)

2. OUTSIDE SOURCES: WORKING THESIS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY (FEB. 26) – 5%

Begin by asking what the texts we have read for this course say about your artifact, either specifically or generically. To make this a worthwhile exercise, you need to decide what kind of thing your artifact is. (Hint: an artifact may be—and usually is—several things simultaneously: so a painting may be a record of a place at a particular time, a reflection of a style or a school, a thing that changes the way we perceive something, the product of new technology, and so on.)

Provide a *working thesis*: this is (for now) a declaration of what you think the central argument for your final paper will be. (This is not a contract: you can change this later.)

To get more information about your artifact, you will need to ask who else has written about your artifact—or the class of things from which your artifact is drawn.

So, for this stage of the individual assignment, find several (by which I mean five or more) scholarly sources (not counting the texts assigned for this course) that shed light on your artifacts. At least one must be a book to which you have access. (Snippets from Google books *do not meet this requirement*. You may be asked to provide the book for inspection.) Your aim should be to find good and diverse sources.

Append a properly-formatted bibliography, using the Chicago footnote style, to your working thesis. After each title, provide a one- to-two sentence justification for inclusion of each item.

The goal here is to get you to think about the broader intellectual context for your artifact, give you some research background for the final essay, and give you practice working with bibliographic styles.

ROUGH DRAFT (FRIDAY, MARCH 2) – 5%

Bring three copies of a rough but complete draft to class. We will work together in class on papers.

FINAL ESSAY (MONDAY, MARCH 5) -15%

Turn in a thoughtful, well-argued, elegantly-written polished, proofread gem of a paper on Moodle. Use the supplied template. Celebrate.

EXAMS

The midterm will be based on Lees and Lees and on lectures. Familiarity with the arguments made and evidence provided by Lees and Lees will help you do well. You will be expected to be able to apply what you have learned. You will have short IDs (not just vocabulary, but images), may have some multiple-choice or fill in the blank, and will certainly have a short critical essay option.

The final exam is comprehensive, but weighted heavily toward the Paris section of the course. You will want to have command of the material we have read, but, just as important, will want to think about major themes and connections in the course.

More on this in the introduction on day 1 of the course.

Reading Schedule (preliminary)

Day 1: Tuesday, Feb. 13

In-class exercise: What is a city?

Group exercise: Life in the city

Day 2 - Wednesday, Feb. 14 - Lees

In-class exercise: understanding food and transport in 1800

L&L: Introduction

1 Urban worlds around 1750

Day 3 - Thursday, Feb. 15 - Lees

2 Industrial urbanization

3 Varieties of urban protest

Day 4 - Friday, Feb. 16 - Lees

4 Pursuits of urban improvement

5 The challenge of the big cities

Day 5 - Monday, Feb. 19 - Lees

6 Toward the social city

7 Urban cultures

Conclusion

Day 6 - Tuesday, Feb. 20 - exam

Day 7 - Wednesday, Feb 21: Jones

Introduction: An Impossible History of Paris?

The Kingless Capital of Enlightenment, 1715-1789

Day 8 - Thursday, Feb 22: Jones / Paper Topic Due

Revolution and Empire, 1789-1815

Day 9 - Friday, Feb 23

Between Napoleons, 1815-51

Day 10 - Monday, Feb 26

Ferragus

In-class: Mapping Balzac's "History of the Thirteen"

Day 11 - Tuesday, Feb 27

Haussmannism and the City of Modernity, 1851-89

Baudelaire, "Le Cygne"

Day 12 - Wednesday, Feb 28: Group Work / Images

Baudelaire – "Painter of Modern Life"

Benjamin, Walter. "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century."

Day 13 - Thursday, Mar 1

Gullickson, Gay L. "La Pétroleuse: Representing Revolution." *Feminist Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 241–65. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178333>.

Luxenberg, Alisa. "Creating Désastres: Andrieu's Photographs of Urban Ruins in the Paris of 1871." *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 1 (1998): 113–37. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3051256>.

Thomas, Edith. "The Women of the Commune." *The Massachusetts Review* 12, no. 3 (1971): 409–17.

Day 14 - Friday, Mar 2

Paper workshop

Day 15 - Monday, Mar 5

The Anxious Spectacle, 1889-1918

Loyrette, "Eiffel Tower"

Day 16 - Tuesday, Mar 6

The Metro: Paris against France

Day 17 - Wednesday, Mar 7

Final Exam