

Cedar Crest College Honors Program Fall 2009

Honors 218/History 218. The City as History (An E-Companion Course)

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This Panoramic View of Warsaw, Seen from the Royal Palace, Was Painted by Bernardo Bellotto in 1773 and Captures the Aristocratic Culture that Shaped Much of Europe's Urban Life Prior to the French Revolution (National Museum, Warsaw).
Source: Web Gallery of Art (<http://www.wga.hu/art/b/bellotto/3/bello304.jpg>)

Course Objectives

As the above illustration suggests, this is more than a course on the history of cities. Rather, it is an attempt to read, in a city's physical space and structures, something of the historical experience of the people who have lived there. In this course, students will learn the following:

That a city is a built environment. Its shape and appearance are the consequences of human action, sometimes intended, sometimes unexpected or irrational. A city is never "just there," simply as an accident or as the result of natural phenomena (although the processes of nature can have profound impact on the life and look of cities).

That a city functions as a public stage. The inhabitants of a city are the actors in any number of dramas, spectacles, and rituals. Sometimes these may be contrived for specific purposes and are mediated through the manipulation of space, movement, and imagery (for example, the numerous anniversaries, festivals, and “re-enactments” that came to characterize the French Revolution). Others might seem to have occurred spontaneously, with lines of development and impact that become apprehensible only by hindsight.

That a city, however modern or contemporary, is an archaeological site. To excavate the meaning of a particular place or building requires us to use the methods of several scholarly disciplines—history, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. It also means that we must develop a state of mind that permits a sympathetic, if critical, understanding of and identification with the persons or groups who were, or are, its inhabitants.

The subject matter of this course is organized both chronologically and thematically. This approach enables us to chart not only the growth and development of individual cities, within a broad historical framework, but also to see the impact one city’s experience can have on others. Europe is a small continent, “the arrow,” according to the French poet Paul Valéry, “aimed by Asia toward the West.” Distances are short. People moved about, frequently in large numbers, and not always as a result of their own choosing. Personal experiences, memories, ways of thinking and being (what the French call mentalités) were carried from place to place. The influx of new inhabitants helped transform the cities we will study, yet these same people were themselves transformed by the new environments they encountered. Previous ways of life could sometimes be recreated, at least in part, and many European cities have been characterized by a “half here, half there” existence, more sociological and psychological than geographic, practiced by their new inhabitants. Yesterday’s peasants did not become today’s proletarians simply because they changed their place of residence. Yet from the moment of his or her arrival in the city, the villager became someone different from those who had been left behind. This fragmented existence had to be played out on the public stage that Europe’s cities have always been.

Books

Brian Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape (University of Chicago Press, 1997) 0226467627

Borden S. Painter, Jr., Mussolini’s Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 1403980020

Students will also have access to a password-protected online database, through the E-Companion site that accompanies this course, which will include nearly all the locations, buildings, and events we will see in class. This resource will enable us to include substantially more content material than our brief class sessions can accommodate. It also allows you to revisit places you find of particular interest and refresh your understanding as the course progresses. Be prepared to spend a lot of time with the E-Companion site.

Requirements

Each student is required to read a recent scholarly monograph dealing with one of the cities we are studying, write a six to eight page critical review, and present a brief (fifteen to twenty minute) summary in class. For purposes of definition, a monograph is not a textbook or a general account. Instead, it is a work supported by original research, usually in primary sources, which presents an argument or interpretation explaining some political, social, or cultural phenomenon. A list of monographs from which you can choose appears at the end of this syllabus, with dates for in-class presentations. Selections are on a first-come, first-served basis. The presentation should be conversational and should be constructed to encourage questions. The written review should be handed in at the same time as the class presentation and will be returned with a grade.

Each student is also required to complete a Mid-Term Exam and a Final Exam. We will discuss the format and content of these exams at appropriate points in the semester.

Grades will be determined as follows: attendance, interest, class participation—25 percent; book review—25 percent; Mid-Term Exam—25 percent; Final Exam—25 percent. These percentages are approximate. In determining your final grade, I will include my assessment of your contribution to the success of the course. If you have concerns about your grade as the semester proceeds, see me. Regardless of mathematical averages, failure to complete any one of the course requirements will earn an “F” for the semester.



A Paris Streetscape, Painted by the German Artist Adolf Menzel in 1869. Not only the Effects of the City’s Modernization during the Second Empire (1852-70), but the Emergence of a New Urban Culture Can Be Seen (Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf).

Source: Marianne und Germania, 1789-1889: Frankreich und Deutschland—Eine Revue, ed. Marie-Louise von Plessen et al., exhibition catalog (Berlin: Argon Verlag, n.d. [1996]), p. 306.

Films

Because a visual sense is crucial in appreciating the cities we will study, I have included two films. The “city in film” has become an academic specialization in its own right, with a growing bibliography. We will view these films both for their documentary value (the use of authentic locations) and for the part the city itself plays in advancing or determining the plot—how a specific urban environment shapes the actions taken by the film’s protagonists. This last aspect involves considerably more than atmosphere or location, although “atmospherics” can be important in determining how a specific city functions in a film. If you are already familiar with reading a film as a “text,” perhaps these films will help you see a city as a text that can also be read with an informed eye.

’38—Vienna before the Fall. Dir. Wolfgang Glück. 1986. The capital of independent Austria and the experience of two lovers, on the eve of the Nazi takeover. This one will break your heart.

Wings of Desire. Dir. Wim Wenders. 1987. Berlin when it still had its Wall. Perhaps you know this film from the U.S. remake, City of Angels, with Meg Ryan and Nicholas Cage. The original is far superior.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

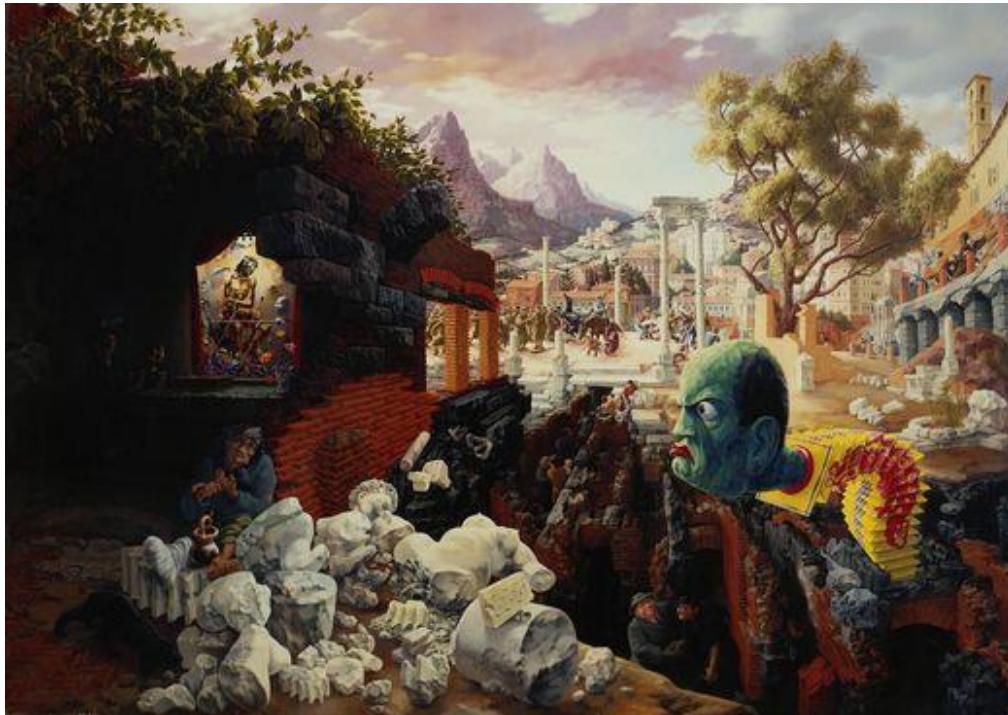
- I. 24.08/26.08 Course Organization and Introduction
Reading: Ladd, chap. 1 to get a sense how to “read” a city’s past in the present
- II. 30.08/02.09 The Impact(s) of History on an 18th-Century Planned City: Berlin’s Friedrichstadt

Labor Day, Monday 07.09—No Class

- III/IV. 09.09/
14.09/16.09 Monarchy, Revolution, Empire: Paris, 1774-1815
- V. 21.09/23.09 “Athens on the Spree”: Berlin, 1786-1840
Reading: Ladd, chapter 2
- VI. 28.09/30.09 “Respectable Classes” and “Dangerous Classes”: Paris, 1815-1848
Reports
- VII. 05.10/07.10 Modern Capitals: Victorian London
Reports

Fall Break, Monday 12.10—No Class

- VIII. 14.10 Reports, cont’d
- IX. 19.10/21.10 Modern Capitals: Second Empire and Third Republic Paris
- X. 26.10/28.10 Reports, cont’d
- XI. 02.11/04.11 Imperial Capitals: Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, 1867-1914
Reading: Ladd, chapter 3
Reports
- XII. 09.11/11.11 The Totalitarian City: Making Power Visible
Reading: Ladd, chapter 4
Painter (okay to stretch this over a couple of weeks)



“The Eternal City,” by the American Painter Peter Blume (1934-37). In a Surrealist Style that Recalls Max Ernst and Salvador Dali, Mussolini’s Dictatorship Becomes a Bizarre Carnival Staged amidst the Ruins of Rome.
Source: Museum of Modern Art, New York (<http://www.moma.org/images/collection/FullSizes/00063021.jpg>)

XIII. 16.11/18.11 Film: '38—Vienna before the Fall

Discussion, as warranted

XIV. 23.11 Open; **No Class on Wednesday, 25.11 (Thanksgiving)**

XV. 30.11/02.12 Film: Wings of Desire

Reading: Ladd, chapters 5- 6

Discussion as warranted

Last Class/Wrap-Up, 07.12

Final Exam

College Policies That Apply to This Course

All work in this course is governed by the College’s Honor Philosophy, particularly Section III, “Community Standards for Academic Conduct.” You can find the language of the Honor Philosophy in the Student Guide for 2009-10. Confirmed violations of the Honor Philosophy will result in a failing grade for this course.

Appropriate classroom behavior is implicit in the Cedar Crest Honor Code. Each student has the right to a learning environment free of distraction and disturbance. Arriving late, leaving early, disruptive conversation, and rudeness have no place in an Honors course, or, indeed, in any course at this College. All electronic devices, for communication, entertainment, or anything else you can think of, are to be turned off at the start of class. There are no exceptions to this rule.

The Final Examination is not an option and must be completed to pass this course. It is also College policy that students must take the Final Exam at the scheduled date and time, other than in extenuating circumstances, the latter narrowly (as opposed to generously) defined. Therefore you are advised to defer travel and other holiday-related events until you know the schedule for Finals.

Documented Learning Disability: Please refer to the Student's Guide for 2009-10 for the resources that the College makes available to assist students. If special accommodations are needed in class, you should discuss these with me in the first two weeks of the semester. I will be happy to cooperate in ensuring the best possible arrangements for a positive learning experience in this course.

Books for In-Class Presentations (all should be in the College Library)

- Week VI Victoria E. Thompson, The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000)
- Rachel G. Fuchs, Poor and Pregnant: Strategies for Survival in Nineteenth-Century Paris (Rutgers University Press, 1992)
- Jill Harsin, Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris (Princeton University Press, 1985)
- Mary Gluck, Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris (Harvard University Press, 2005)
- Michael Marrinan, Romantic Paris: Histories of a Cultural Landscape, 1800-1850 (Stanford University Press, 2009)
- Weeks VII/VIII Erika Diane Rappaport, Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End (Princeton University Press, 2000)
- Lynda Nead, Victorian Babylon: People, Streets, and Images in Nineteenth-Century London (Yale University Press, 2000)
- Joyce Simon, Geographies of Class and Crime in Victorian London (University of Virginia Press, 2003)
- Seth Koven, Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London (Princeton University Press, 2004)
- Judith R. Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London (University of Chicago Press, 1992)
- Jonathan Schneer, London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis (Yale University Press, 1999)

- Weeks IX/X Michael B. Miller, The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920 (Princeton University Press, 1991)
- Kathleen Kete, The Beast in the Boudoir: Pet-Keeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris (University of California Press, 1991)
- Donald Reid, Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations (Harvard University Press, 1991)
- David S. Barnes, The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-Century Struggle against Filth and Germs (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006)
- Vanessa R. Schwartz, Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris (University of California Press, 1999)
- Ann Louise Shapiro, Breaking the Codes: Female Criminality in Fin-de-Siècle Paris (University of California Press, 1996)
- Week XI Carl E. Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture (Alfred E. Knopf, 1980)
- Péter Hanák, The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest (Princeton University Press, 1998)
- Peter Fritzsche, Reading Berlin 1900 (Harvard University Press, 1996)
- Robert Wheldon Whalen, Sacred Spring: God and the Birth of Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007)