
New York City's Cultural Landscape Through Film(making): GRG/AMS

Professor Robert Lemon / Fall-Winter 2015-2016
[This draft of the syllabus: 8-10-2015]

FADE IN:

EXT. LONG SHOT OF LOWER MANHATTAN A MOONLIT - NIGHT

NARRATOR

(an easy, conversational tone)

A city has many faces -- It's one o'clock in the morning now -- And this is the face of New York City -- when it's asleep -- on a hot summer night -- Does money ever sleep, I wonder? Does a machine become tired? Or a song? Does stone ever feel weariness? A city asleep -- or as nearly asleep -- as any city ever is. The pulse of a city like the pulse of a man -- can be felt in sleep, slow and steady. And while some people work and most sleep, others are at the close of an evening of relaxation -- (voice sharp, intense) And still another -- is at the close of her life. (quietly) A hot night working its way toward dawn. And everything is as usual -- Jersey lettuce for New York markets -- A chicken escapes from a crate and a man runs after it. Tonight's fricassee is somewhat reluctant -- Everything as usual -- and even this, too, can be called routine in a city of eight million people --

-Opening Narration from *The Naked City* (1948)

"It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by [city practitioners', everyday citizens'] blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other."

— [Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*](#)

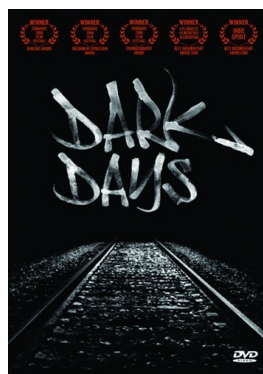
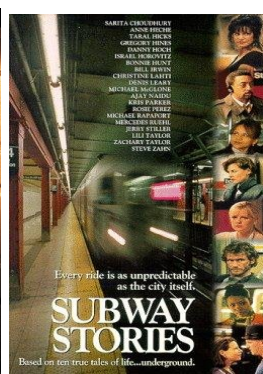
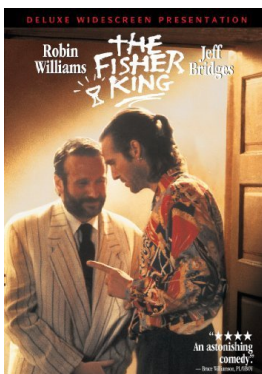
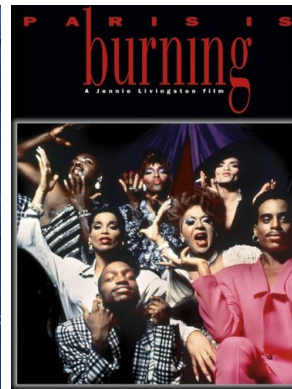
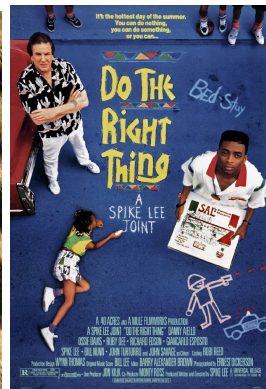
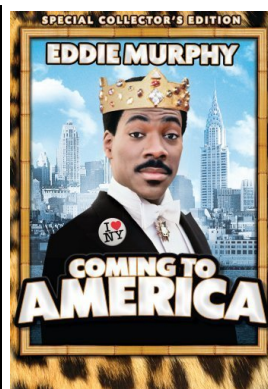
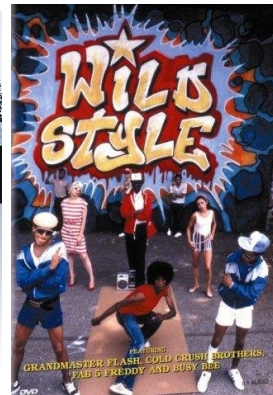
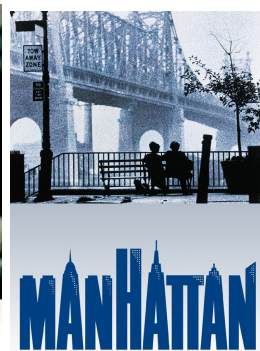
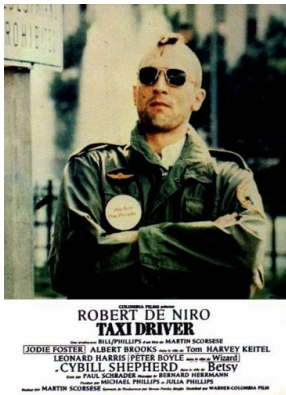
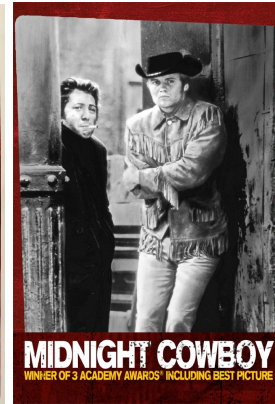
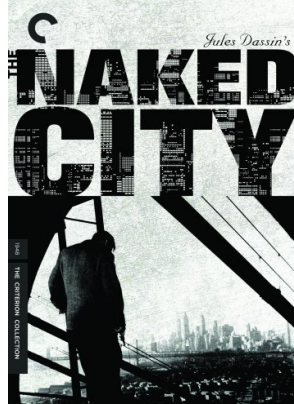
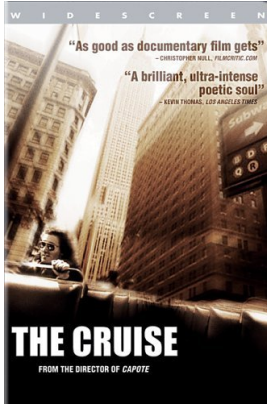
Course Description: This course is a critical geographic exploration of the social and cultural dimensions of New York City's landscape through film and filmmaking. We will investigate the social issues of New York City and the ways in which they are portrayed on film. Throughout the course we will examine the ways in which New York City as a place, and as a place composed of a myriad of places, is represented through the camera's lens and the director's vision. Thus, we will consider the ways in which cinematography, acting, directing, and other aspects of filmmaking are used to tell a story about New York

City's social spaces. The course posits landscape as an idea to evaluate the visual representation of New York City as a sight/site. Throughout the course we will explore the ways in which space, place, and landscape are socially constructed through various eras of New York City's cinematic history. Moreover, the course is a critical geographic investigation into the multiplicity of social worlds that comprise, and collide within, New York City. Some topics to be considered are utopia/dystopia, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, art, immigration, houselessness, and gentrification. The course follows three main themes: 1. How the filmmaking process (camera movements, lighting, dialogue, acting, etc.) is used as a method to describe space (filmmaking as a geographic method). 2. How various genres of film have been used to portray the social geography of New York City (the geography of film). 3. The relationship between the viewer's "place" and the places portrayed in the film (communication geography). Finally, through this cinemagraphic exploration of New York City's visual representation, we will also consider how our personal sense of place towards New York City has altered throughout the course.

Course Purpose: The course is designed for students to investigate the ways in which social issues as well as places are portrayed on film. We will watch documentaries, narratives, and documentary/narrative hybrids to better analyze the complexities of representing social spaces through filmmaking. Students are expected to be critical about how film represents (or misrepresents) urban space and social issues. Students will also learn about the social history and transformation of New York City, which are profoundly shaped through the processes of American capitalism. Thus readings each week will draw from social/urban geography, film studies, as well as other closely related fields.

In Class Films:

The Cruise (1998; documentary)
Naked City (1948; narrative)
Rear Window (1954; narrative)
Midnight Cowboy (1969; narrative)
Taxi Driver (1976; narrative)
Manhattan (1979; narrative)
Wild Style (1983; scripted documentary)
Ghost Busters (1984; narrative)
Fatal Attraction (1987; narrative)
Coming to American (1988; narrative)
Do the Right Thing (1989; narrative)
Paris is Burning (1990; documentary)
The Fisher King (1991; narrative)
SUBWAY STORIES: Tales from the Underground (1997; narrative shorts)
Dark Days (2000; documentary)



E-mail: rdlemon@gmail.com

Office Hours: 12:00-14:00 Tuesdays or by appointment.

Lectures: 16:00-18:00 c.t. Mondays and Wednesdays
Location: Stucco Room, Heidelberg Center for American Studies

Prerequisites: All majors are welcome and no prerequisite courses are required! However, it may be helpful if you have already taken lower level geography courses.

Visiting Discussants:

The course will on occasion have visiting discussants that are filmmakers/ actors/ screenwriters/ directors / film critics from New York City, Chicago, or Los Angeles. Students should look them up on IMDb and come prepared to class with questions for these film and acting professionals. Questions should stem from readings and material covered throughout the course.

Tom Provost (Los Angeles) – Director / Screenwriter

Peter Allen Stone (New York City) – Actor / Director/ Play writer

Mark Millhone (New York City / Los Angeles) – Director / Screenwriter

Skyler Cooper (Los Angeles / San Francisco) – Actor / Director / Screenwriter

Matt Fagerholm (Chicago) – Film Critic

Scripts:

The movie scripts for the films we view in class will be made available on our course website. It is not required that you read the movie script, but it is strongly encouraged that you skim through the movie scripts to get a better sense of how the film came to fruition.

Before a movie can be made, it must ignite with an idea, a story; it must start with a script. The movie scripts may be helpful when organizing course discussions and/or selecting scenes to review when leading a class discussion, writing your paper, and/or making a journal entry.

***WARNING, Viewer Discretion Advised:** Many of the films have strong language, sexually graphic images, or violent content. For some people, there may be scenes one finds disturbing. Because this is a course where the subject is film, it is expected that you watch all the films in their entirety. It is also expected that each student will come to class and view the film from beginning to end with his or her full attention (i.e. DO NOT work, play, or text on mobile devices, laptops, etc.). Part of the film experience will be to watch the films together as a class. Finally, this course deconstructs and scrutinizes films' meanings and the way they are constructed. This course could potentially spoil you from being able to simply watch movies without analysis. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable with any of these criteria, please reconsider taking the course. If there are

any other sensitive issues pertaining to the subject matter of this course, please make an appointment to meet with the professor in person.

Course Structure:

Course meets Mondays and Wednesdays from 16:00 – 18:00 c.t.

We will normally watch films on Mondays and discuss the films on Wednesdays. This could be subject to change. Regardless, you are expected to attend all classes. Please also NOTE: Some films are longer than 1.5 hours, and we will need more time to watch the film than the class time allows. Thus we may start the film earlier, and it may end later than the class time. (Students to discuss in class what works best for them for movies that exceed 1.5 hours.)

Office Hours

Tuesday: 11:00-13:00 or by appointment.

Required Readings will be posted to the Course Webpage.

Assignments:

1. Two (2) Film Making Exercises (10%)
2. Film Journal (40%)
3. Paper (35%)
4. Lead class discussion. (15%)

Film Making Exercises (10%)

Two short exercises on screen writing and film production will be assigned midway through the course. The objective is not to evaluate your creative screenwriting talents, or your filmic creativity, but rather to expose you to part of the process of visual story telling. It is easy to criticize film from an audiences' perspective without understanding the work it takes to produce a film. Viewers become a bit more cognizant and appreciative of the art of filmmaking when exposed to the challenges of the filmmaking process. These short assignments are designed for you to appreciate such complexities.

Film Journal (40%)

Students will keep a weekly (electronic) journal throughout the course. Each week the professor will assign one (1), two (2) or three (3) journal prompt(s) in class, or via email. Students will write at least a (1) one-page response to the prompt(s). (Times New Roman, 12pt font, double spaced, and 1.25-inch margins) The response to the prompts should incorporate the weekly readings as applicable. The prompts assigned most often will stem from the in class discussions. Therefore it is imperative that students attend class regularly and keep up with the readings. The professor will ask to read the journal entries

periodically throughout the course (either by email or on printed paper). Completed journals should be turned in digitally on the last day of class.

Paper (35%)

Paper topics will be assigned on the 5th or 6th week of class. Part of the assignment will be to compare and contrast a film we watch together in class to another film set in NYC. A detailed outline or rough draft of the paper is due the Monday before Christmas break (December 21st). The draft/ detailed outline is 10% of the 35% of the paper's grade. The final draft of the paper is due on Monday, January 25th. The following list of films are recommended for the comparison/contrast aspect of the paper:

On the Bowery (1956; documentary)
Needle Park (1971; narrative)
Klute (1971; narrative)
The Godfather (1972; narrative)
Mean Streets (1973; narrative)
Serpico (1973; narrative)
The Taking of Pelham One Two Three (1974; narrative)
Annie Hall (1977; narrative)
Kramer vs. Kramer (1979; narrative)
Cruising (1980; narrative)
Brooklyn Bridge (1981; documentary)
Trading Places (1983; narrative)
The Muppets Take Manhattan (1984; narrative)
Once Upon A Time in America (1984; narrative)
Moscow on the Hudson (1984; narrative)
King of New York (1990; narrative)
Six Degrees of Separation (1993; narrative)
Crooklyn (1994; narrative)
The Squid and the Whale (2005; narrative)
Man push Cart (2005; narrative)
Devil Wears Prada (2006; narrative)
The Visitor (2007; narrative)
Man on Wire (2008; documentary)
Tiny Furniture (2010; narrative)
Bill Cunningham's New York (2010; documentary)
Central Park Five (2012; documentary)
My Brooklyn (2012; documentary)

Lead class discussion for 50-60 minutes. (15%)

Students will work in pairs to lead a class discussion. This is a significant percentage of the grade and should be taken very seriously. Students leading the discussion should have read the assigned readings for the week thoroughly; have a solid understanding of the material; and then have prepared at least 10 to 15 questions to help guide the discussion.

Students must email a list of the discussion questions to the professor at least 24 hours prior to the discussion time. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the professor the week they present to better help them prepare.

Late Assignments will not be accepted unless the student has a valid excuse, accompanied by some documentation, and has notified the instructor ahead of time that they cannot turn the assignment in on time.

Excuses that are NOT valid:

“My computer isn’t working”

“My computer is being fixed this week so I can’t work on anything”

“My printer ran out of ink”

Assignments will not be accepted by email. A hardcopy must be turned in before class starts on the day the assignment is due. It must be stapled with a title, your name, and page numbers or you will lose points.

GRADING:

--

Grades will be computed on the following scale:

A = 93% and up.

A - = 89% and up but less than 93%.

B + = 86% and up, but less than 89%

B = 83% and up, but less than 86%

B - = 79% and up, but less than 83%

C + = 76% and up, but less than 79%

C = 73% and up, but less than 76%

C - = 69% and up, but less than 73%

D = 60% and above, but less than 69%.

F = 0% to less than 60%

Fractional values will be rounded to the nearest integer.

OTHER INFORMATION

Rules and Regulations

1. IPADS and Electronic Tablets are allowed only if they are used to read/annotate assigned readings and are being used in class for discussion purposes. (Laptops and Mobile phones are not allowed. Laptop screens physically impede the discussion dynamics of the table. And mobile phones simply appear distracting to others in a discussion setting; they are also too tempting to text and play with)

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/08/AR2010030804915_2.html?sid=ST2010030805078

<http://www.thebigmoney.com/articles/diploma-mill/2010/04/20/blackboard-versus-keyboard>

<http://www.mndaily.com/2010/05/02/journalism-professor-asks-students-unplug>

2. Office Hours and E-mail:

Many students/TAs/professors prefer to use email as a form of communication instead of going to office hours. If you need to communicate with me, feel free to email me if your question requires a yes or no answer. If it is a question that a fellow student can answer, don't ask me, ask them. Any other questions should be asked in person during my office hours.

Any question regarding grades sent by email will not be answered, you need to come to office hours and talk to me.

Finally, going to office hours is a good way to develop a relationship with your Professors. The more we know about you, the better we can assist you in your academic development. Often if we know you, we are more likely to help you out in terms of offering advice, correcting papers, or sending you information about something of interest.

3. Classroom Collegiality and Expectations:

The classroom should be a safe place where all ideas can be expressed freely and openly. Please be open to listening to me and to other students and also feel free to share your ideas, thoughts, feelings and doubts with others. At the same time, please be supportive and constructive in your responses to me and to others. That said, don't be afraid to disagree! It is not disrespectful or rude to disagree with another student or even with your instructors or your professor. Usually, the most interesting and provocative conversation are between people who have different opinions about a particular issue. Engaging with people who think differently from ourselves allows us to move beyond our own

stereotypes and ideas and challenges us to think about why we think about things in a certain way.

4. Academic Honesty

If there is evidence that you have been involved in any form of academic dishonesty (intentional or unintentional), you may receive a failing grade for the assignment and possibly for the course. A report will be provided to the student judicial services.

The examples below do not include all possible violations of the university's expectations, but they do give a good idea of behavior that can result in grade reduction, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the university.

Plagiarism: Copying homework answers from your text to hand in for a grade; failing to give credit for ideas, statement of facts, or conclusions derived from another source; submitting a paper downloaded from the Internet or submitting a friend's paper as your own; claiming credit for artistic work (such as a music composition, photo, painting, drawing, sculpture, or design) done by someone else.

Taking Information: Copying graded homework assignments from another student; working together on a take-home test or homework when not specifically permitted to do so by the instructor; looking at another student's paper during an examination; looking at your text or notes during an examination when not specifically permitted to do so by the instructor.

Providing Information: Giving your work to another to be copied; giving answers to another student during an examination; after taking an exam, informing another student in a later section of questions which appear on that exam; providing a term paper to another student.

Misrepresentation: Having another student take your exam, or do your computer program or lab experiment; lying to an instructor to increase your grade; submitting a paper that is substantially the same for credit in two different courses without prior approval of both instructors involved; altering a graded work after it has been returned and then submitting the work for re-grading.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a learning disability or any other disability that the professor of the course should be aware of to better facilitate your needs, please see me within the first two weeks of class.

Religious Holy days: A student who misses a quiz, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, provided that she or he has properly notified the instructor. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work

assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**** I reserve the right to make reasonable and responsible changes to the syllabus based on our progress, and any special requirement that may arise as the semester progresses. You will be notified about these changes well in advance. As such, the schedule is tentative; some topics may take longer/shorter than slotted in the schedule below.***

Course Schedule:

Week 1:

Monday Oct 12 – Course Introduction / The Cruise (1998; documentary)

Wednesday Oct 14 – Discussion

Readings:

Aitken, Stuart C., and Deborah P. Dixon. "Imagining Geographies of Films." *Erdkunde* 60, no. 4 (December 20, 2006): 326–36.

Lukinbeal, Chris, and Stefan Zimmermann. "Film Geography: A New Subfield." *Erdkunde* 60, no. 4 (December 20, 2006): 315–25.
doi:10.3112/erdkunde.2006.04.02.

Week 2:

Monday Oct 19 - Naked City (1948; narrative)

Wednesday Oct 21 – Discussion

Readings:

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall. Third Edition edition. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011. (Part III "Spatial Practices" and Chapter IV)

Ford, Larry. "Sunshine and Shadow: Lighting and Color in the Depiction of Cities in Film. In Aitken, Stuart C., and Leo E. Zonn, eds. *Place, Power, Situation and Spectacle*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994.

Domash, Mona (1988), "The symbolism of the skyscraper: Case studies of New York's tallest buildings," from Kenneth Foote et al (eds.) (1994), *Re-Reading Cultural Geography*, pp. 48-63

Week 3:

Monday Oct 26 - Rear Window (1954; narrative)

Wednesday Oct 28 – Discussion

Readings:

Fawell, John. *Hitchcock's Rear Window: The Well-Made Film*. 1st edition. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001. (Chapter 2 and 3).

Kennedy, Christina, and Christopher Lukinbeal. "Towards a Holistic Approach to Geographic Research on Film." *Progress in Human Geography* 21, no. 1 (February 1, 1997): 33–50.

Peruse:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 10 edition. New York, N.Y: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012. (Chapter 2: The Significance of Film Form)

Visiting discussant:

Tom Provost, Director/ Screenwriter (IMDb: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0699103/>)

Week 4:

Monday Nov 2nd – *Midnight Cowboy* (1969; narrative)

Wednesday Nov 4th – Discussion

Readings:

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1995. (Chapter 5: Policing of the City of Bachelors)

Floyd, Kevin. *Closing the (Heterosexual) Frontier: "Midnight Cowboy" as National Allegory*. *Science & Society*. Vol. 65, No. 1, Color, Culture and Gender in the 1960's (Spring, 2001), pp. 99-130

Peruse:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 10 edition. New York, N.Y: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012. (Chapter 3: Narrative Form; Chapter 4: Mise-en-Scene).

Week 5:

Monday Nov 9th – *Taxi Driver* (1976; narrative)

Wednesday Nov 11th – Discussion

Readings:

Escher, Anton. "The Geography of Cinema - a Cinematic World." *Erdkunde* 60, no. 4 (December 20, 2006): 307–14.

Peruse:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 10 edition. New York, N.Y: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012. (Chapter 5: The Shot Cinematography; Chapter 6: The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing).

Visiting discussant:

Peter Allen Stone, Actor/ Play Writer (Personal Website: <http://peterallenstone.com> / IMDb: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3161330/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1)

Week 6:

Monday Nov 16 – Manhattan (1979; narrative)

Wednesday Nov 18th – Discussion

Readings:

Bender, Thomas. *The Unfinished City: New York and the Metropolitan Idea*. New York: NYU Press, 2007. (Chapter 7: Modernist Aesthetics and Urban Politics.)

Shiel, Mark. Cinema and the City in History and Theory in Shiel, Mark, and Tony Fitzmaurice, eds. *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*. 1 edition. Oxford ; Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001.

Peruse:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 10 edition. New York, N.Y: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012. (Chapter 9: Film Genres).

Visiting discussant:

Mark Milhone, Director/ Screen Writer (IMDb:
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0589623/>)

Week 7:

Monday Nov 23rd - Wild Style (1983; scripted documentary)

Wednesday Nov 25th – Discussion

Readings:

Cresswell, Timothy. 1992. "The Crucial 'Where' of Graffiti: A Geographical Analysis of Reactions to Graffiti in New York." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (3): 329–44.

Forman, Murray. *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*. 1st edition. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan, 2002. (Chapter 2: "Welcome to the City" Defining and Delineating the Urban Terrain.)

Peruse:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 10 edition. New York, N.Y: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012. (Chapter 10: Documentary, Experimental, and Animated Films).

Week 8:

Monday Nov 30th - Ghost Busters (1984; narrative)

Wednesday Dec 2nd – Discussion

Readings:

- Pile, Steve. *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life*. 1 edition. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2005. (Chapter 4: The Ghostly City)
- Lukinbeal, Chris. "Cinematic Landscapes." *Journal of Cultural Geography* 23, no. 1 (September 1, 2005): 3–22.

Week 9:

Monday Dec 7th - Fatal Attraction (1987; narrative)

Wednesday Dec 9th – Discussion

Readings:

- Bromley, Susan, and Pamela Hewitt. "Fatal Attraction: The Sinister Side of Women's Conflict about Career and Family." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 26, no. 3 (December 1, 1992): 17–23.
- McArthur, Colin. "Chinese Boxes and Russian Dolls" in Clarke, David, ed. *The Cinematic City*. 1 edition. London ; New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Duncan James and Dunca, Nancy. Aesthetics, Abjection, and White Privilege in Suburban New York. From *Landscape and Race in the United States*. 2006. 1 edition. New York: Routledge.

Week 10:

Monday Dec 15th – Do the Right Thing (1989; narrative)

Wednesday Dec 16th – Discussion

Readings:

- Harvey, David. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso Books, 2012. (The Right to the City) <http://newleftreview.org/II/53/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>
- McKelly, James C. *The Double Truth, Ruth: Do the Right Thing and the Culture of Ambiguity*. African American Review. Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp. 215-227.

Visiting discussant: Skyler Cooper, Director/ Screenwriter/ Actor (IMDb: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1728229/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1)

Week 11:

Monday Dec 21st – Coming To America (1988; narrative) / Paper Draft Due.

**Wednesday Dec 23rd Christmas break begins –
January 6th Christmas break ends**

Week 12:

Monday January 11th - Paris is Burning (1990; documentary)

Wednesday January 13th – Discussion

Readings:

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1995. (Chapter 9: Building Gay Neighborhood Enclaves: The Village and Harlem)

Hooks, Bell. *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. Psychology Press, 1996. (Chapter 20: Is Paris Burning?).

Week 13:

Monday January 18th – The Fisher King (1991; narrative)

Wednesday January 20th – Discussion

Readings:

Aitken, Stuart and Lukinbeal, Chris. “Of Heroes, Fools and Fisher Kings: Cinematic Representations of the Street Myths and Hysterical Males.” In Fyfe, Nicholas. *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control in Public Space*. Routledge, 2006.

Mitchell, Don. “Homelessness, American Style.” *Urban Geography* 32, no. 7 (October 1, 2011): 933–56.

Visiting discussant: Matthew Fagerholm, Film Critic, Assistant Editor at Ebert Publishing and a member of the Chicago Film Critics Association. (Website: <http://www.rogerebert.com/contributors/matt-fagerholm>)

Week 14:

Monday January 25th – SUBWAY Stories: Tales from the Underground (1997; narrative shorts)

Wednesday January 27th – Discussion

Readings:

Bruno, Giuliana. “Motion and Emotion: Film and the Urban Fabric” in Webber, Andrew, and Emma Wilson, eds. *Cities in Transition: The Moving Image and the Modern Metropolis*. London: Wallflower Press, 2007.

Cresswell, Tim. "Towards a Politics of Mobility." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 1 (2010): 17–31.

Week 15:

Monday February 1 - Dark Days (2000; documentary)

Wednesday February 3 – Discussion/ Course Recap

Readings:

Mitchell, Don. "The Annihilation of Space by Law: The Roots and Implications of Anti-Homeless Laws in the United States." *Antipode* 29, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 303–35.