

**HHU 2210 LE Between Reality and Imagination: Constructions of Modern Cityscapes
(same as HSS 2210)**

Revised Summer 2016

PREREQUISITES:

WP 1010 Introduction to Academic Writing
WP 1111 Integrated Academic Writing and Ethics

**CATALOG
DESCRIPTION:**

This Honors seminar will offer students the opportunity to study different ways of experiencing and understanding the material (social, political and historic) as well as imaginary dimensions of modern urban spaces. Emphasis upon city imaginaries aims to expose students to various discourses (sociological, aesthetic, literary, etc.) as tools for the study of modern cityscapes.

RATIONALE:

The modern metropolis is experienced and represented both as a symbolic topos and as a purely material site. Urban theory, literature, visual arts and film, construct the modern metropolis in a variety of ways by means of theoretical, literary, artistic and cinematic representations. In employing an interdisciplinary approach, this course invites students to examine the modern city as an 'object of the imagination' as well as the product and producer of a concrete social reality.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of the seminar course, the students will be able to:

1. Explain cultural, sociological and political issues related to constructions of modern cityscapes;
2. Analyze a variety of city imaginaries as presented in philosophical and sociological treatments of the modern cityscapes, in films, literature and modernist art;
3. Examine interrelations between social, cultural, political, and historical dimensions of the modern metropolis;
4. Apply their own interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the modern metropolis and contemporary urban life.

**METHOD OF TEACHING AND
LEARNING:**

In congruence with the teaching and learning strategy of the college, the following tools are used:

- Textual analysis, class discussion, and group work during class meetings.
- Active student-centered teaching approach.
- Film screenings.
- Individual and/or group student presentations.
- Extensive instructor feedback on presentations and essays.
- Individualized assistance during office hours for additional reading, presentations and essays.

- Additional print material, including reproductions of paintings depicting the modern city (paintings and sketches by L. Meidner, G. Grosz, O. Dix, M. Beckmann, L. Feininger, L. Lozowick, E. Hopper, H. Bayer, C.O. Monet, etc.)
- Other relevant educational material placed on reserve in the library.

ASSESSMENT:

Critical essay 40%

A 1,500-2,000-word individual critical essay drawn from the subject of the course. The essay will need to display a concrete understanding of the material discussed in the course, as well as of the relevant bibliography.

Creative project 40%

Students will deploy a creative medium of their choice to apply their insights on concepts and ideas explored in the course. There will be a presentation of the creative project.

Participation 20%

Students' participation in class discussions, work groups, and projects is a prerequisite to the course.

The Critical Essay tests learning outcomes 1 and 2.

The Creative Project tests learning outcomes 3 and 4.

INDICATIVE READING:

REQUIRED READING:

Selection of readings from:

Boyer, C.M. (1996) *The City of Collective Memory*. Cambridge, The MIT Press.

Donald, J. (1999) *Imagining the Modern City*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Frisby, D. (2001) *Cityscapes of Modernity*. London, Polity.

- (1991) 'The Aesthetics of Modern Life: Simmel's Interpretation', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 8(3):73-93.

Kracauer, S. (1995) 'Analysis of a City map,' in T.Y. Levin (ed.) *Siegfried Kracauer – The Mass Ornament*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, pp.41-44.

Lindner, R. (1996) *The Reportage of Urban Culture*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Weiner, H. (1970) "The Cinema and the City," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 3(4):825-831.

Literary Texts:

Poe, E.A. "The Man of the Crowd." E-text

Baudelaire, C. *Fleurs du Mal*. E-text

RECOMMENDED READING:

Aragon, L. *Paris Peasant*. E-text

Blum, A. (2003) *The Imaginative Structure of the City*. London, McGill's-Queens University Press.

Gerlach, N. and Hamilton, S.N. (2004) "Preserving Self in the City of the Imagination: Georg Simmel and Dark City1," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 34(2):115-134.

A. Kaes "Metropolis: City, Cinema, Modernity," in T.O. Benson (Ed.) (2001) *Expressionist Utopias, Paradise + Metropolis + Architectural Fantasy*, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp.146-165.

Kracauer, S. (1995) 'Analysis of a City map," in T.Y. Levin (ed.) *Siegfried Kracauer – The Mass Ornament*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, pp.41-44.

Kracauer, S., Melnitz, W. and Pozner, V. (1947) "Jean Vigo," *Hollywood Quarterly*, 2(3):261-263.

Olsen, D.J. (1986) *The City as a Work of Art*. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Plato (1990) *The Republic*. London. Guild. *** Part IV, pp.177-195, Part VII, 'The Simile of the Cave', pp.316-325 and Part X, 'Art and Illusion', pp.421-431.

Roth, J. (2003) *What I Saw – Reports from Berlin 1920-1930*. London, Granta.

Roth, J. (2004) *The White Cities – Reports from Paris 1925-1939*. London, Granta.

Salzani, C. (2007) "The City as Crime Scene: Walter Benjamin and the Traces of the Detective," *New German Critique*, 100:165-187.

Simmel, G. (1997) "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*, Λονδίνο, Sage, pp.174-185.

INDICATIVE MATERIAL:

(e.g. audiovisual, digital material, etc.)

Films:

Metropolis (1927) by Fritz Lang

Midnight in Paris (2011) by Woody Allen

À propos de Nice (1930) by Jean Vigo

City Lights (1931) by Charlie Chaplin

Dark City (1998) by Alex Proyas

Night on Earth (1991) by Jim Jarmusch

**COMMUNICATION
REQUIREMENTS:**

All written work must be word-processed on Word and adhere to MLA guidelines for manuscript format and documentation.

**SOFTWARE
REQUIREMENTS:**

Microsoft Office

WWW RESOURCES:

The course will use a number of on-line materials, which will be available to the students via the Blackboard template. Students will be encouraged to use the internet to explore representations of modern cityscapes in film, video, art, and pop culture.

INDICATIVE CONTENT:

Utopian Visions of the City

- The City as 'Utopia'
- The City as 'Work of Art' and 'Monument'

Dystopian Images of the City

- The City as Object of Social Criticism
- The City as Crime

The Metropolis as Imaginary Construct

- The City Beyond the City
- The City as Everyday Life