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History 190A, spring 2006
Hum 116, Tu, Th 2-3.20
Office Hours: Tu 4-5,
Wed 2-3, or by apptmt.

THE MAKING OF “THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD”: A GLOBAL HISTORY OF NEW YORK CITY

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INTRODUCTION

Author and poet E.B. White (yes, the author of *Charlotte’s Web*) famously referred to New York City as “The Capital of the World” in his 1948 essay, *Here is New York*. Recently the phrase has been widely used as the semi-official title of the United States’ largest metropolis. It is a large claim, rich with hubris, and to be sure it is subject to challenge by the equally proud residents of London and Paris. At the least, though, we can identify New York as *A* Capital of the World, one of the leading international centers of commerce, ideas, and culture both high and popular.

“Gotham” (a nickname first used to refer to New York by Washington Irving) is one of the most ethnically diverse cities on earth—the borough of Queens alone contains among its residents representatives of over one hundred ethnicities. The headquarters of the United Nations are located in Manhattan—in fact, it was the decision in 1947 to base the UN in New York that inspired E.B. White to offer his encomium to New York. It contains a staggering array of museums and other collections, at least two of which, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, are arguably unparalleled. New York is one of the most filmed and photographed cities in the world, containing an array of instantaneously identifiable icons like the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, the Brooklyn Bridge and, until its destruction in 2001, the World Trade Center. Indeed, New York has been at the center of global attention in both good times and bad, serving as a symbol at various times of (among other things) inter-ethnic comity, sleek cultural sophistication, urban decay and menace, the apex (or nadir, depending on one’s perspective) of “blue state” liberalism, and Western vulnerability to catastrophic terrorism. And of course there is the central tension between New York’s outward-focused cosmopolitanism and its vaunted provincialism—remember Saul Steinberg’s famous 1976 *New Yorker* cover that depicts a comically skewed map of the world as seen from Ninth Avenue, with the regions west beyond the Hudson River, from New Jersey to Asia, reduced to tiny, featureless tan patches (http://www.comicsreporter.com/index.php/steinberg_among_top_40_covers/).

There are many ways to approach the history of New York City—one could, for example, easily devote an entire course to the city’s immigrants and ethnicities, or its class issues and labor movements, or its intellectual and cultural currents. This course will be interrogating the question of how New York has become one of the top tier of “global cities,” to use political economist Saskia Sassen’s term for those few preeminent urban nodes of financial, intellectual, cultural and political power. No apologies are made here for subjects left uncovered; as the historian Ernest

May once told a group of graduate seminar students on the first day of class, “History is the art of deciding what to leave out.” We will consider New York as both a key product and a key agent of “globalization,” the process over time and space of expanding networks of interconnectedness, interactivity and interdependence on a multi-continental scale. Of course, none of this was pre-ordained or in any way inevitable; but it was the result of a unique confluence of circumstance, plan, and sheer dumb luck in the context of the unique American republican experiment, and hence arguably could not have occurred anywhere else on earth.

READING LIST

Assigned texts for this class are available for purchase at the campus book store. Additionally, one can obtain them through Amazon.com, Barnes&Noble.com, and in some cases used through Abebooks.com or Powells.com. Hence, don’t feel you must buy all the books at once.

Ric Burns, et al., *New York: An Illustrated History* (2003)

Joyce Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730* (1994)

Thomas Kessner, *Capital City: New York City and the Men Behind America's Rise to Economic Dominance, 1860-1900* (2003)

John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (1978)

E.B. White, *Here Is New York* (1948)

William B. Scott, Peter M. Rutkoff, *New York Modern: The Arts and the City* (2001)

Art Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004)

SYLLABUS

Week One (1-24, 1/26): Course Introduction; The Idea of the Global City

Week Two (1/31, 2/2): New Amsterdam: Roots of Gotham
Burns, chapter 1, section on New Amsterdam

Week Three (2/7, 2/9): New York from 1664-1800
Goodfriend, introduction, chapters, 1, 3-4, 6-7, conclusion (reaction paper: 2-2.5pp, due 2/9))

Burns, chapter 1--Berkin interview on Alexander Hamilton

Required exhibit visit: “Slavery in New York,” New York Historical Society (170 Central Park West, NYC) before Thursday class meeting—bring ticket and exhibit guide handout to class

Week Four (2/14, 2/16): The Making of a World Financial Center—and Urban Colossus—in the 19th Century

Kessner, chapters TBA (reaction paper 2-2.5pp, due 2/16)

Weeks Five and Six (2/23, 2/28, 3/2): Waves of Immigration in the 19th-early 20th Centuries
Burns, chapter 2 (recommended: chapters 3-4)

Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, 1917, at <http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/cahan/rdl.htm>

Excerpts: Book I, chapter 1

Book V, chapters 1-3

Book VI, chapter 4

Book VII, chapter 1

Book XIV, chapter 7

Kasson, *Amusing the Million*

Short film: “Arrival of Emigrants [i.e. Immigrants], Ellis Island,” 1906, at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field\(NUMBER%2B@band\(lcmp002%2Bm2a13402\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field(NUMBER%2B@band(lcmp002%2Bm2a13402)))

Essay Assignment: 3.5-4pp—due 3/6 (yes, Monday, at the History Dept.)

Week Seven (3/7, 3/9): New York Gets Syncopated, Sophisticated, and Skyscrapers, 1900-1930s

Burns, chapter 5

Scott and Rutkoff, chapters 4-6 (reaction paper 2-2.5pp, due 3/9)

Short film, “Skyscrapers of New York,” 1906, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field\(NUMBER%2B@band\(lcmp002%2B05386s3\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field(NUMBER%2B@band(lcmp002%2B05386s3)))

(See Website, “The Celluloid Skyline” for more films of New York at the turn of the 20th century, at <http://www.celluloidskyline.com/main/home.html> --click on “Early Actuality Films”)

Photograph by Lewis Hine, “Lunch Time and Smoke” [view from the Empire State Building under construction], c. 1930-31, at

http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc/m198501560003_ful.html#topofimage

Image from *King Kong*, 1933, at

http://www.us.imdb.com/gallery/mptv/1204/Mptv/1204/3963_0006.jpg?path=gallery&path_key=0024216

Painting by Stuart Davis, *New York Waterfront*, 1938, at

<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/davis/davis.NY-waterfront.jpg>

Required Museum Visit: Museum of Modern Art, 53rd St. between 5th-6th Ave., before Thursday class meeting—bring your ticket stub and floor plan; concentrate on the 5th floor

Week Eight (3/14, 3/16): New York in the Mid-20th Century: Consolidation of the World Metropolis (I): It's Robert Moses' City—You Just Live In It
Burns, chapter 6

White, all (reaction paper 2-2.5 pp.)

Sharyn Elise Jackson, “International Participation in the New York World’s Fair, 1964-1965,” 2005, at <http://www.nywf64.com/intpar00.02.shtml>

Week Nine (3/21, 3/23): New York in the Mid-20th Century: Consolidation of the World Metropolis (II): Center of Postwar Global Culture
Scott and Rutkoff, chapters 9-11 (reaction paper 2-2.5pp)

Painting by Jackson Pollack, *One: Number 31, 1950*, at http://www.moma.org/collection/printable_view.php?object_id=78386

Miles Davis Official Website: Listen to excerpt from “Summertime” (1958) on intro page, at <http://www.milesdavis.com/>

Allan Ginsberg, *Howl*, 1956, at <http://www.frostyland.com/ginsberg.html>

Required visit to either the Guggenheim Museum (5th Ave. at 89th St.) or back to the Museum of Modern Art (concentrate on the 4th floor); bring your ticket stub to Thursday’s class!

Week Ten (3/28, 3/30): New York in the 1970s-80s: From “Fun City” to “The Bronx is Burning”—But Down Is Not Out, By a Long Shot
Burns, chapter 7: Philip Lopate Essay

Film excerpts (in-class showing)

Week Eleven (4/4, 4/6): The “New” Immigrants Arrive at JFK, Not Ellis Island
The Newest New Yorkers: Briefing Booklet: Immigrant New York in the New Millenium, at http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/nyy_briefing_booklet.pdf, all (reaction paper 2-2.5pp)

Week Twelve (4/18, 4/20): Regeneration in the 1990s: Hooray for Rudy G., Carrie Bradshaw, et al.

Rudolph Giuliani, “Remarks to the Conference of Mayors on Restoring Accountability to City Government,” May 9, 2000, at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/rwg/html/2000a/innov.html>

Todd R. Clear and Jeffrey Fagan, “The Big Idea: The Broken Windows Breakdown,” *City Limits Monthly*, September-October 2001, at <http://www.citylimits.org/content/articles/articleView.cfm?articlenumber=633>

Rafal Olbinski, *New York: Capital of the World*, 1995 (official NYC poster, 1995), at <http://bertc.com/subfour/olbinski-10.htm>

Heather Cross, Discussion of “The Real *Sex and the City*” Tours, at <http://gonyc.about.com/cs/sightseeingtours/a/sexandthecity.htm>

Week Thirteen (4/25, 4/27): The Island at the Center of the World in the Early 21st Century: Global Bulls-Eye

Spiegelman, all (reaction paper, 2-2.5 pp.; one point to address is how do the author/artist’s reactions compare with your own on September 11, 2001 and in the aftermath?)

Burns, Epilogue

“Terror Attacks Hit U.S.,” CNN news story, September 11, 2001, at <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/worldtrade.crash/index.html>

Rick Meyerowitz/Maira Kalman “Newyorkistan” *New Yorker* cover, Dec. 2001, at <http://cartome.org/york2.jpg> (accompanying *NYT* article at <http://cartome.org/newyorkistan.htm>)

Michael Judge, “He Saw It All,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 16, 2002, at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110002142>

Week Fourteen (5/2): Summing Up

****Take Home Final Exam Essay: 5.5-6pp—No In-Class Exam****

*****Please note that this syllabus may be subject to modification during the course of the semester as the instructor sees fit.*****