Vauban’s military urbanism

How did warfare shape the Early Modern City (ca. 1500-ca.1800) and how are its theories of "military urbanism" still relevant today? Vauban’s creations, made at the turning point between Renaissance and Enlightenment, embody both the promise and shortcomings of his time. We will study how their design reflected the strict geometries of siege warfare, absolutist power relations, and made utopic promises for a humane professionalized war and a secure frontier. Generations following him would emphasize the irrational and violent underside of these designs and the darker nature of combat theorized as "total war" by Carl von Clausewitz. In the last sessions we will make spatial and philosophical comparisons with forms of current warfare such as the use of drones, the global threat of terrorism, cyber warfare, and systems of urban surveillance methods as cities once again become military targets.

At the center of this investigation is the pivotal figure, Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633-1707), military engineer to France’s King Louis XIV. Vauban’s oeuvre condensed and catalyzed political and planning trends in all European cities that had been developing since the mid-fifteenth century. France was arguably the most important military and political force of the latter part of this period. Vauban, heretofore seen as a master of the art of attacking and defending bastioned fortifications, was also an accomplished and prolific "urbanist" in the modern sense of the word. He built an exceptionally large and unified corpus of fortified cities: nine new towns and one hundred sixty cities in total. This course sheds new light on how key urban designs in Paris and Versailles were created in dialogue with military innovations made on the borders of France. The French model was an important influence on European urban culture of the Enlightenment that radiated to other capital cities, princely cities and to the colonies. Vauban’s urban vocabulary and his ideals are still very present today.

The structure of each seminar session will be part lecture and part reading discussion. It is hoped that the sessions will be lively and that students will bring their own viewpoints as historians and contemporary designers to the table. Readings have been selected both for their informational content, their historical importance and their methodological diversity. All readings will be in English but additional bibliography in French will be provided.

Students are expected to do all assigned readings and come to class prepared with brief written answers (approximately one page total) to directed thematic reading questions available in class the prior week. In the last two classes, they will present a final research project on a topic of their choosing in order to share their findings with the seminar members and get feedback. They will then write this presentation up as a research paper (15 pages of text not including footnotes, bibliography and illustrations). All assigned readings listed below are in English but additional sources in French will be provided. At least half of their papers should focus on pre-1750 material but they can also make trans-historical comparisons.

Grading:
Class participation, attendance and presentation: 50%
Final paper: 50%
Class Schedule and Readings

1. **Sept. 4:** Introduction. History, historiography and methodology
   -- Courseworks: Resources. Q: *What was the experience of war in this period?*

2. **Sept. 11:** Warfare, violence and the "Military Revolution" of the Early Modern period
   -- Courseworks: Resources. Q: *What was the experience of war in this period?*

3. **Sept. 18:** The technology of fortifications and siege warfare: theory and reality
   - Jamel Oswald, "The Perfect Siege of Ath", and "Implementing the Paradigm Siege", in Vauban under Siege: Engineering Efficiency and Martial Vigor in the War of the Spanish Succession History of Warfare, Volume 41, Brill, 2007, ch. 2 and 5, pp. 21-45; 123-172. EBOOKS" Courseworks: Library Reserves

4. **Sept. 25:** Military urbanism in Early Modern Europe

5. **Oct. 2:** New Towns, Military Camps, Utopia and Dystopia


6. Oct. 9: The Panopticon

7. Oct. 16: Power struggles and the case of Lille and Paris

8. Oct. 23: (Mid-Term review week) Field trip to Governor’s Island and lower Manhattan. No reading due.

9. Oct. 30: Military urbanism in the 18th and 19th Centuries
pp. 1-61. Courseworks: Library Resources. AA1045 P185
• Carl von Clausewitz, On War, pages TBA

10. Nov. 6 Military urbanism in the 20th and 21st Centuries. Please read at least two of the following:
• Greg Elmer and Andy Opel, "Pre-empting panoptic surveillance: surviving the inevitable war on terror," in David Lyon, ed., op. cit., ch. 7 pp. 139-160. Avery Reserve Desk.

11. Nov. 13 and 20: Student presentations.
12. Dec. 11: Papers Due and Make up Class

Bibliography (See Courseworks: Avery Reserves)
• Anne Blanchard, Vauban, Paris, Fayard, 1996.
• _____, Dictionnaire des ingénieurs militaires 1691-1791, Montpellier, Université Paul Valéry, 1981.
• David Buisseret, Ingénieurs et Fortifications avant Vauban: l'organisation d'un service royale aux XVle-XVIIe siècles, Paris, Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche, Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, c2002.
• André Charbonneau, Yvon Desloges, Marc LaFrance, Québec, the Fortified City: from the 17th to the 19th century, Ottawa, Parks Canada, 1982
• Christopher Duffy, Fire and Stone: the Science of Fortress Warfare 1660-1860, Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1975
• _____, The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great 1660-1789, London and Boston, Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1985 -- Seminar Shelf AA4485 Eu74 D87
• _____, The Military Experience in the Age of Reason, Athenaeum, New York, 1988
• Quentin Hughes, *Military architecture: the art of defence from earliest times to the Atlantic Wall*, Liphook, Hants, Beaufort, 1991, seminar shelf
• Antoine Picon, dir., *La ville et la guerre*, Editions de l’imprimeur, 1996. -- Seminar shelf
• Isabelle Warmoes and Victoria Sanger, dir., Vauban, bâtisseur du Roi-Soleil, Somogy, Cité de l'architecture, Musée des Plans-reliefs, Paris, 2007 – Avery AA497 F8 V46363 Seminar shelf
• Eyal Zeizman, Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation, Verso, 2007

Publications by Vauban
• Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, De l'attaque et de la defense des places: par Mr. de Vauban, La Haye, P. de Hondt, 1737, Google Books, Avery Classics, AA490 V46