Philosophies of the City
Columbia University GSAPP
Architecture A6779
Fall 2014

T 11am-1pm
300S Buell Hall

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Office hours: Th 3pm-5pm
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There is much literature available today on the empirical characteristics of the “global city.” A good portion of this literature also offers a cohesive conceptual frame in which to understand these characteristics. But there is relatively little work on cities today that can be described as philosophical, not in the sense of an academic discipline but rather, as a style of critical thought.

Although in the West this tradition runs from Plato to Augustine and beyond, a useful foundation for understanding the city as an object of critical, philosophical reflection was laid in the early part of the twentieth century by a variety of German thinkers concerned with the problem of the modern metropolis.

This reading seminar will review key aspects of early twentieth-century metropolitan thought and follow these forward into the present, confronting them with new historical formations along the way. Special emphasis will be given to the interactions of capitalism and culture, and to the social relations of modernization, including the role of architecture and urbanism therein. The goal is not a philosophical metalanguage but rather, the elaboration of a critical discourse by which urban artifacts and phenomena can be interpreted, even as they contribute to that discourse.
Students are expected to participate in class discussion, present at least one reading to the class, and write a research paper on a subject related to at least one set of readings, the subject matter of which is to be determined in individual meetings during office hours.

All required readings are available on Courseworks, except as follows:

* Required—available at Bookculture

** On reserve in Avery Library

Students with reading abilities in languages other than English are encouraged to read translated texts in the original language, when possible.

Readings

Week 1: Introduction: Capital, Metropolis, and the Global City

9/2


Recommended


Week 2: The Philosophy of Money

9/9

Recommended


Week 3: The “Spirit” of the Metropolis

9/16


Recommended


Week 4: Passages

9/23


Recommended


Week 5: Mass Culture and the Public Sphere

9/30


Week 6: Ideology and Materiality

10/7


Recommended


Week 7: Negative Thought and the City

10/14


Recommended


Week 8: Spectacle and Space

10/21


Recommended


Week 9: Violence

10/28


Election Day

No class 11/4

Week 10: Urban Imaginaries

11/11


*Recommended*


**Week 11: Circulation and the Commons**

11/18


*Recommended*


[http://search.proquest.com/docview/214344086/fulltext/13BD1F5F9B343D088/1?accountid=10226](http://search.proquest.com/docview/214344086/fulltext/13BD1F5F9B343D088/1?accountid=10226)


**Week 12: Visibility and Enclosure**

11/25


*Recommended*


Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Megacity,” *Grey Room* 01 (Fall 2000), 8-23.
Week 13: Utopia or Camp?
12/9


*Recommended*

[http://occupytheory.org/Home.html](http://occupytheory.org/Home.html)


*Final papers due*
12/12 (by 5pm, PDF by Dropbox)