CINEMA AND THE CITY



**Art History 275**

**Professor Carla Yanni**

Office Hours

Carla.yanni@gmail.com

This 200-level class will present a visual and historical analysis of urban space as seen through the medium of cinema. This is primarily an architectural history class, but the subject goes beyond individual buildings--the subject here is the city and its representation. Movies illustrate theories of urban planning; on-location shooting can reveal aspects of urban life, and fanciful set designs can expose the unrealistic goals of some architects. Themes to be explored include: city vs. country *(Sunrise*), the social construction of the metropolis (*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*), the city as a disciplinary space of social control (*Metropolis*), utopian and dystopian cities (Bladerunner), the city as a modernist totality (*Playtime*), the hyper-real world of New Urbanism (*The Truman Show*) and climate change and sustainability (*Wall-E*.)

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

Each week will include two 80-minute classes. One will be a lecture (with opportunity for discussion) that introduces the student to themes in architectural and urban history for that week. The other class will be focused on a film. Students will screen a movie outside of class time, we will watch a clip of the film during class time, and we will hold a discussion.

**LEARNING GOALS**

The course is conceived as an introduction to the major ideas of urbanism in the twentieth and twenty-first century. An important goal is for students to build skills that will enable them to "read" cities in terms of their shaping factors. Analyzing a film is one skill, but there are others: students will learn to interpret plans and drawings, and many of the readings will be primary sources. Assessment of the above learning goals will be accomplished through the Art History Department's 3-year assessment plan for upper-level undergraduate courses in the major.

**EVALUATION**

This course requires active class participation (20%). Students are expected to attend all lectures and be prepared for discussion at each meeting. There is one group project (20%). There is a midterm (30%) and a final (30%).

**TEXTBOOKS**

Le Gates, Richard T. and Frederic Stout, The City Reader, 4th ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). 0-415-11901-4 (pbk.)

Nezar AlSayyad, Cinematic urbanism : a history of the modern from reel to real (New York ; London : Routledge, c2006) 0415700493 (pbk.)

**Week 1. Introduction to Cinema and the City**

Lecture on major themes: How do architectural historians, geographers, and social historians look at and understand the city?

Films for Discussion:

*Screen in class Manhatta (1921, Strand and Sheeler)*

*Screen clip in class King Kong (1933, Cooper and Schoedsack)*

Read: Mumford, Lewis, “What is a City?“ in *City Reader*, 85-89.

**Week 2.**  **The Great City**

Lecture on the Growth of Cities in the 19th Century (Paris, London, New York, Vienna and Berlin)

Film for Discussion*: Berlin: Symphony of a City (1927, Ruttmann)*

Read: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, "Tracks in the City," The Railroad City (Sakai)

Sabine Hake, "Urban Spectacle in Walter Ruttmann's Berlin: Symphony of a City," in Thomas Kniesche and Stephen Brockman, eds, *Dancing on the Big Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, 127‑143

**Week 3.**  **City vs. Country**

Lecture: Industrialization and the Birth of the Industrial Metropolis; Rise of Suburbs in the 19C

Film for Discussion: *Sunrise (1928, Murnau)*

Read: Friedrich Engels, "The Great Towns" from The Condition of the Working Class in England, excerpted in City Reader, pp. 50-58

Anthony Sutcliffe, "The Metropolis in the Cinema," in Metropolis: 1890-1940, 147-171

Lars Larsson, "Metropolis Architecture," in Metropolis: 1890-1940, 191-220

**Week 4. Social Control and Power in the City**

*Screen* *Metropolis (1926, Fritz Lang)*

Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp in the Machine: Fritz Lang's Metropolis," New German Critique 1981-2

Dietrich Neumann, "Before and after Metropolis: Film andArchitecture in Search of the Modern City," in *Film Architecture: Set Design from Metropolis to Bladerunner* (Hereafter, *Film Architecture*)

**Week 5. Two lectures on Modernism in Architecture**

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," (1903) available on-line

**Week 6. The Modernist City : Conquering Time and Space**

*Film for Discussion: Things to Come (1936, Menzies)*

H.G.Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, introductory remarks, 9‑16

Le Corbusier, "The City for Three Million Inhabitants,” (1923) in *City Reader*

Synopsis of "Things to Come" in *Film Architecture*, 118-121

**Week 7. The City as Modernist Totality**

*Film for discussion: Playtime (1957, Jacques Tati)*

Read: Adolf Loos, “Ornament and Crime,” (1909)

Joan Ockman, "Architecture in a Mode of Distraction: Eight Takes on Jacques Tati's Playtime," in ANY, no. 12, 20-28

Synopsis of Playtime in *Film Architecture*, 140-147

**Week 7: Syncopated Cities**

Clips from musicals, including *On the Town* and *42nd Street*

Bukatman, “Syncopated Cities**”**

**Week 8. Film Noir**

*Film for Discussion: Sweet Smell of Success (1957, MacKendrick***)**

**Week 9. Los Angeles and the Exhaustion of the Modernism**

*Film for Discussion, Point Blank (1967, Boorman)*

Lecture on concrete in modern architecture

LeGates and Stout, *City Reader,* Lewis Mumford, "The Disappearing City," and "Yesterday's City of Tomorrow," Architectural Record, 1962, reprinted in The Urban Prospect

**Week 10.** **Narratives of Decay and Blight: Urban Renewal in the 1960s**

Lecture: New York in the 1950s and Urban Renewal of West Side (focus on Lincoln Center area)

*Film for Discussion: West Side Story (1961, Wise and Robbins)*

**Week 11. Delirious and Dangerous: The Postmodern Condition**

*Film for Discussion: Bladerunner (1982 Ridley Scott)*

Read Bukatman, *Bladerunner*

**Week 12.** **Race relations and 80s New York**

*Film for Discussion, Do the Right Thing (1989, Spike Lee)*

Read Elsayyad, “Do the Right Thing,” Chapter 3

**Week 13. New Urbanism**

Lecture: Theories of New Urbanism, Rejection of Modernist City

*Film for discussion The Truman Show*

Read Jane Jacobs, “Uses of Sidewalks,” *City Reader, 103-108*

Read Andres Duany, “New Urbanism bites back”, 2000 (Sakai)

**Week 14. Sustainable Cities**

*Wall-E (2008, Andrew Stanton)*

Read Laura Sevier, “Building sustainable houses from rubbish,” The Ecologist, 2010

**Additional Bibliography**

The Cinematic City by David Clarke Paperback

Cities in Transition: The Moving Image and the Modern Metropolis by Andrew Webber Paperback

Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context by Mark Shiel Paperback

Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space (Reaktion Books - Locations) by Stephen Barber Paperback

Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences in Film (Culture and the Moving Image) Paperback by Paula J. Massood

Celluloid Cities, by James Sanders

**Current Academic Integrity Policy**: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

THE **FINAL EXAM** WILL BE HELD ON

http://finalexams.rutgers.edu/

**Students with disabilities** requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the

University **absence reporting** website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for

your absence. An email is automatically sent to us. More than two absences will seriously impact your

final grade.

**Sample Test Question**

Students may bring an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper (double-sided) with notes to the test.

Students will watch a clip from one of the films we have discussed in class. Students will be asked to identify the director, the year, and the city depicted. The student will write a 15-minute essay based on a prompt. For example, if the student is shown a clip from *Things to Come*, s/he might be given the following prompt: How does the set design reflect the goals of modernism in art, architecture and planning, especially as related to the works of Fernand Léger, Le Corbusier and László Moholy-Nagy? (This will have been covered in lecture.)

+++++

Short description for catalog

Cinema and the City

Urbanism and architecture as read through film, urban planning and social history associated with 20th-century cities.