

NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW YORK CITY: A SPATIAL HISTORY

Sophomore seminar – Spring 2017

Weekly seminars – W 10:10-12:00

GIS labs – M 10:30-12:00

Course number: BC3504

Instructor: Prof. Gergely Baics (gbaics@barnard.edu)

Office hours: Th 12-2PM

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Office hours: TBA

Course description (short):

History of 19th-century New York City with a focus on spatial history. We explore three major themes, including the city's rapidly changing built environment, its social environment, and urban metabolism. Methodologically, we focus on spatial analysis, especially historical Geographic Information Systems.

Course description (long):

Thematically, this seminar introduces students to key issues of 19th-century New York City history. We examine the economic, social, and spatial processes that propelled Gotham's rise from a major Atlantic port to America's first metropolis, with weekly readings focusing on three consecutive themes: the city's rapidly changing built environment, its social environment, and basic metabolic functions that sustained residents. Methodologically, we approach each of these themes through the lens of spatial historical analysis, interrogating how the physical and social geography of 19th-century New York transformed under the pressures of modern urbanization. The class therefore includes a significant methodological component: in addition to weekly seminars, students attend four lab sessions at the Empirical Reasoning Center (ERC) to learn basic methods of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping. Assignments focus on acquiring essential GIS skills and performing spatial historical analysis. As their final project, students write an original research paper with a significant mapping component.

Prerequisites: None

Learning objectives:

Students who complete this class will be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate a well-rounded understanding of the key problems and debates of 19th-century New York City history.
- 2) Demonstrate a critical understanding of spatial historical analysis of the urban built and social environment.
- 3) Demonstrate interdisciplinary thinking by engaging with the ongoing dialogue between history and the social sciences in both reading and research.
- 4) Conduct original mapping research and analysis by learning technical skills of GIS, acquiring critical skills of empirical reasoning, as well as gaining familiarity with spatial theories and approaches.
- 5) Apply key techniques of historical research, including formulating historically grounded questions, identifying relevant sources and data, and developing historical arguments in writing.

Course assignments and evaluation:

Please note: Failure to complete ANY one of the course assignments will result in an overall F in class.

1) Seminar participation (25%)

- *Seminar participation*—weekly session: W 10:10-12:00
- *Lab participation*—Feb 5, Feb 26, March 26, April 9: M 10:30-12:00

This class consists of weekly seminar meetings and four 90-minute lab sessions at the ERC. Your participation grade will reflect active participation in both.

#1: You are expected to come to each seminar meeting with thoughtful questions and well-reasoned arguments based on the assigned material. Active participation in seminar work—including discussions, brief presentations of mapping assignments, taking field notes, and attending two fieldtrips—will comprise one component of your participation grade.

#2: The course also includes four ERC lab sessions. Three will focus on building specific historical-GIS skills using freelance QGIS software and one will be devoted to introducing students to designing maps in Adobe Illustrator. The ERC develops the content of each lab session specifically tailored for this class in consultation with the instructor. Lab sessions are mandatory. In addition, the ERC assigns a designated fellow to support students' mapping analyses all through the semester. Active participation in ERC sessions is expected, and it will comprise the other component of your participation grade.

2) Writing and research assignments (75%)

- *Mapping assignments* (10% each): 30%

#1: Overlaying the Past & Present City—Geo-Referencing Historical Maps.
Set of maps with short explanatory paper (about 3 pages) due in class on week 5, representing 10% of your final grade.

#2: Tracing the Built Environment—Creating Layers.
Set of maps with short explanatory paper (about 3 pages) due in class on week 8, representing 10% of your final grade.

#3: Exploring the Social Environment—Working with Tabular Data.
Set of maps with short explanatory paper (about 3 pages) due in class on week 11, representing 10% of your final grade.

Each of the three mapping assignments will consist of a 1) set of maps, demonstrating competence in the specific mapping skills acquired in the ERC lab session, and a 2) short analytical paper (about 3 pages), which explains the specific h-GIS methods used to create the maps along with a brief analysis of the spatial relationships explored.

The mapping assignment will be graded on the following criteria:

- 1) Technical skills. Has the student demonstrated competence in the h-GIS methods

- developed in the relevant lab session?
 - 2) Quality and clarity of the maps. Has the student produced maps that successfully demonstrate the h-GIS skills acquired and the analytical points argued? Remember, the maps are an essential part of the assignment. You need to design them with care.
 - 3) Analysis of the spatial relationships explored. Has the student developed an insightful analysis of the spatial relationship examined with the maps?
 - 4) Organization. Is the mapping assignment, including maps and explanatory paper, well structured? Does it develop logically from one point to the next?
 - 5) Writing style.
- *Research paper* (about 12 pages): 35%

Your main written assignment, due at the end of the semester, is to write an original research paper (about 12 pages plus maps) on a topic of your choice on 19th-century New York City spatial history. By week 6, you need to identify your topic, and submit a brief topic proposal (1 page plus list of secondary sources). Since h-GIS is central to the class, your final paper needs to have a significant mapping component. All through the semester, we will work toward building your h-GIS skills. The mapping assignments are designed to support both h-GIS proficiency and to make progress on the mapping analysis of your final paper. Ideally, you should be able to integrate your mapping assignments into your research paper.

To produce a successful piece of urban spatial historical research you will need to: 1) define an appropriate urban historical question; 2) use relevant secondary literature to situate the topic within the broader historical and historiographic contexts; 3) acquire basic proficiency in h-GIS mapping; 4) find, build and analyze relevant h-GIS data; 5) design and produce maps that convey your arguments; 6) develop and formulate historical arguments persuasively in writing; 7) cite all your sources properly.

The research paper will be graded on five criteria:

- 1) Quality of the spatial analysis. Has the student developed an insightful spatial analysis of the research question explored? Does the paper have an interesting and well-supported thesis?
 - 2) Historical positioning. Has the student clearly established the historical and historiographic contexts, including how the research contributes to the scholarly debate on the topic?
 - 3) Quality and clarity of the maps. Has the student produced maps that successfully convey the spatial arguments made?
 - 4) Organization. Is the paper, including the maps, well structured? Does it develop logically from one point to the next?
 - 5) Writing style.
- *Presentation of research paper* (15 min each): 10%

In addition to writing an original research paper, you will also have to present your paper to the rest of the class. Each presentation will take about 15 minutes, and therefore we will devote the last two seminar meetings to paper presentations. Since the papers are due only

at the end of the semester, you will present material that is work in progress. Still, it should contain the key research questions that you explore, the core of your arguments, as well as a set of GIS maps that provide the foundation for your mapping analysis.

The presentation will be graded on the following criteria:

- (1) Content quality. Did the presentation have a clear and interesting central point supported by the student's original research?
- (2) Organization. Was the presentation coherent and well organized? Did it develop logically from one point to the next?
- (3) Delivery. Was the delivery dynamic and engaging? Was there a good use of supporting visuals, in particular GIS maps?

Honor code:

We will use as a guide the Barnard College Honor Code, established 1912, updated 2016. The Code states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

Wellness statement from Committee on Instruction:

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself—your own health, sanity, and wellness—your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <http://barnard.edu/counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- [Stressbusters Support Network](#)

Disabilities:

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you must visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for assistance. Students requesting eligible accommodations in their courses will need to first meet with an ODS staff member for an intake meeting. Once registered, students are required to visit ODS each semester to set up new accommodations and learn how to notify faculty. Accommodations are not retroactive, so it is best to register with ODS early each semester to access your accommodations. If you are registered with ODS, please see me to schedule a meeting outside of class in which you can bring me your faculty notification letter and we can discuss your accommodations for this course. Students are

not eligible to use their accommodations in this course until they have met with me. ODS is located in Milbank Hall, Room 008.

Readings:

Readings for this class come from articles, book chapters, and historical documents. All of these materials will be available on Canvas in PDF. You are responsible for downloading and printing the material. Please note: changes to the reading list might be made via email or announcement in class. You will be responsible for any such changes.

READING LIST (Subject to Change)

Week 1 [Jan 17]—Introduction

PART 1: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Week 2 [Jan 24]—Urban Morphology

Readings:

- James E. Vance, Jr., *The Continuing City: Urban Morphology in Western Civilization* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1990), 3-39 [especially, 4-11, 17-26].
- Sam Bass Warner and Andrew Whittemore, *American Urban Form: A Representative History* (MIT Press, 2013), 1-5, 18-98.

Workshop—NYC historical maps analysis, 1609-1924:

- [NYPL MAP Warper](#) [Login: email: gbaics@barnard.edu; password: NYCSpaceHistory]
Four maps: 1776 Ratzer Map; 1857-62 Perris Fire Insurance Atlas; 1897 Bromley Atlas; 1924 Aerial Map

Week 3 [Jan 31]—Manhattan Street Grid: Planning for Growth

Readings:

- Hilary Ballon, ed., *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811-2011* (Columbia UP, 2012), selections.
- Museum of the City of New York, [The Greatest Grid Online Exhibition](#).
Examine relevant sections, corresponding to the assigned readings, but especially:
1) *Before the Grid*: Goerck Plan of the Common Lands, 1796; Mangin-Goerck Plan, 1803; Ground Conditions: British Headquarters Map; Randel Map Gallery; Randel Composite Map; 2) *The 1811 Plan*: Interactive 1811 Map (explore closely); 3) *Other Grids*: Earlier Grids
- Jason M. Barr and Gerard Koepfel, “[The Manhattan Street Grid Plan: Misconceptions and Corrections](#),” *The Gotham Center for New York City History Blog*, 2017.
Read: [Myth #2: The Commissioners as Visionaries](#); [Myth #4: The Grid Plan Created Manhattan’s Small Lots](#); [Myth #5: The Grid Plan Leveled Manhattan](#); [Myth #6: The Grid Plan Caused Too Much Density and Rampant Land Speculation](#)

Workshop—Walking the Manhattan grid: field notes, four groups / four areas:

- Area 1—around Houston St: where the grid meets the pre-grid city; Area 2—around Gramercy Park, Union and Madison Sq, Madison Ave: where the grid was first altered; Area 3—along Broadway from midtown to Columbus Circle: where the grid meets the diagonal road; Area 4—above 155th St: beyond the grid

Week 4 [Feb 5]—ERC Lab Session #1: Overlaying the Past & Present City—Geo-Referencing Historical Maps

Week 4 [Feb 7]—Land Use: Code beneath the City

Class meets at New-York Historical Society: exploring the 1857-62 Perris Atlas

Readings:

- Sonia Hirt, *Zoned in the USA: The Origins and Implications of American Land-Use Regulation* (Cornell UP, 2014), 1-16, 110-132.
- Gergely Baics and Leah Meisterlin, “Zoning before Zoning: Land Use and Density in Mid-Nineteenth-Century New York City,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 106, 5 (2016): 1152-75.
- David M. Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Temple UP, 2002), 55-133.
- *Perris Fire Insurance Atlas*, 1857-62. Available at: [NYPL MAP Warper](#) [Login: gbaics@barnard.edu / NYCspaceHistory]

Week 5 [Feb 14]—Mapping Analysis #1: Overlaying the Past & Present City

MAPPING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

No reading for this week

Workshop:

- Presentations of mapping assignment #1

PART 2—SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Week 6 [Feb 21]—Immigrant Metropolis

PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE

Readings:

- Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (U of Illinois Press, 1987), 41-129, 171-216.
- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890), 48-70, 104-58, 196-209.
- Museum of the City of New York: [Jacob Riis illustrated lecture, 1891](#) ; [Riis photographs collection](#)

Workshop:

- Discussion of research paper topics

Week 7 [Feb 26]—ERC Lab Session #2: Tracing the Built Environment—Creating Layers

Week 7 [March 3 Saturday]—Tenement Evil: The Social Problem of Housing

Visit to the LES Tenement Museum

Readings:

- Citizens’ Association of New York. Council of Hygiene and Public Health, *Report of the Council of Hygiene and Public Health of the Citizens’ Association of New York upon the sanitary condition of the city* (1866), selections.
- Robert W. De Forest and Lawrence Veiller, *The Tenement House Problem* (Macmillan Co., 1903), selections.

Week 8 [March 7]—Mapping Analysis #2: Tracing the Built Environment

MAPPING ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

No reading for this week

Workshops:

- Presentations of mapping assignment #2

Week 9—No regular class meeting on March 21, but instead individual paper consultations on Thursday (March 22) and Friday (March 23)

PART 3: URBAN METABOLISM

Week 10 [March 26]—ERC Lab Session #3: Exploring the Social Environment—Working with Tabular Data

Week 10 [March 28]—Food Access

Readings:

- Gergely Baics, *Feeding Gotham: The Political Economy and Geography of Food in New York, 1790-1860* (Princeton UP, 2016), 1-7, 155-91.
- Cindy Lobel, *Urban Appetites: Food and Culture in Nineteenth-century New York* (U of Chicago Press, 2014), 103-38.
- Lawrence Veiller, *Report of the Mayor's Pushcart Commission: The City of New York, 1906* (New York, 1906).

Workshop:

- How would we GIS pushcart markets, drawing on the maps and tables in the Pushcart Commission's report?

Week 11 [April 4]—Mapping Analysis #3: Exploring the Social Environment

MAPPING ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE

No reading for this week

Workshops:

- Presentations of mapping assignment #3

Week 12 [April 9]—ERC Lab Session #4: Designing Maps in Illustrator

Week 12 [April 11]—Park Access

Readings:

- Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City* (Harvard UP, 2014), 175-223.
- David M. Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Temple UP, 2002), 217-50.
- Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rosenzweig, "The Park and the People: Central Park and Its Publics," in Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske eds., *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870-1930* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1994), 105-34.

Workshop:

- Images of park use in 19th-century NYC (NYPL digital collections): [New York City -- Central Park -- 1899 & Earlier](#); [New York City -- Central Park](#); [Historical Postcards of New York City -- Central Park](#); [Stereoscopic Views of Central Park set 1](#), [set 2](#); [Central Park \(NY\)](#); [Old NYC — Mapping Historical Photos from the NYPL](#)

Week 13 [April 18]—Presentation of Research Papers

Week 14 [April 25]—Presentation of Research Papers

RESEARCH PAPER DUE: by May 6 at midnight via email, by May 7 in hardcopy