

The City in American Literature and Culture

Syllabus

PS 32 110, Tue, 14-16, John F. Kennedy-Institute, Room 203, Summer term 2004

Dozent: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, sbrandt@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Course description: It is a curious quality of cities that they are both physical and imaginary places. Cities loom over their inhabitants with the monumental force of their physical presence. Yet, at the same time, they are by nature artificial. "The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, and nightmare," Jonathan Raban says, "is as real, maybe more real than the hard city one can locate on maps, statistics, monographs on urban sociology, demography and architecture" (1984). The course will discuss, among others, the following questions and aspects: 1.) What is the "real" city? Is it the "hard" city of material fact or the "soft" city of imagination? 2.) The differences between American and European cities; 3.) The rapid growth and development of American cities and the role of industrialization and immigration in that growth; 4.) The city as a storehouse of images; 5.) The nature of urban desire; 6.) The decline of American cities; and 7.) The postmodern metropolis. The seminar will be held in English.

Occasional film screenings: Tue, 16-18, Room 319

Credit requirements: Regular attendance, active (!) participation in class, an oral presentation, a mid-term paper and a final paper (à 3-5 pages). There will also be a few quizzes meant as an encouragement to keep track with the assigned reading.

Required reading: A course reader is available in the copy-shop at Königin-Luise-Str.

- 13. April 2004:** Introduction
- 20. April 2004:** What Is a City?
Texts: Warren I. Susman, "The City in American Culture" (from: *Culture as History*) (1984)
Howard Gillette, Jr., "The City in American Culture" (from: *American Urbanism: A Historiographical Review*) (1987)
Lewis Mumford, "The City" [1922] (from: *The American City*) (1997)
- 27. April 2004:** Cities of the Future
Lecture: Vivian Sobchack (University of California, Los Angeles):
"Cities at the Edge of Time: The Urban Science Fiction Film"
- discussion -
Text: Brian Jarvis, "Mapping the City of the Future: *BLADE RUNNER*" (1998)
- 4. May 2004:** American Megalopolis
Texts: Robert E. Park, "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment" [1922] (1971)
Hans Blumenfeld, "The Modern Metropolis" (from: *American Urban History*) (1969)
Lewis Mumford, "The Disappearing City" & "Megalopolis as Anti-City" [1956] (from: *The American City*) (1997)
Extra Screening: BLADE RUNNER (Ridley Scott 1982) (Tue, 16-18, Room 319)
- 11. May 2004:** Fictional Metropolis: Ridley Scott's BLADE RUNNER (1982)
Text: Scott Bukatman, "The Metropolis" (from: *Blade Runner*) (1997)

18. May 2004:

Texts:

Why Aren't Our Cities Like That?

Carl Breidenbaugh, "One Hundred Years of Urban Growth" [1938] (from: *American Urban History*) (1969)
Witold Rybczynski, "Why Aren't Our Cities Like That?" (from: *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World*) (1995)
Jean-Paul Sartre, "American Cities" (from: *The City*) (1971)

25. May 2004:

Texts:

Industrialization and Urban Growth

Leon S. Marshall, "The English and American Industrial City of the Nineteenth Century" [1937] (from: *American Urban History*) (1969)
Ralph E. Turner, "The Industrial City: Center of Cultural Change" [1940] (from: *American Urban History*) (1969)
Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" [1856] (from: *The American City*) (1997)

— Mid-term paper —
Late papers *will* be graded down!

01. June 2004:

Texts:

How the Other Half Lives

Jacob Riis, "How the Other Half Lives" [1890] (from: *The American City*) (1997)
America & Lewis Hine: Photographs 1904-1940 (1977)

08. June 2004:

Texts:

Urban Frontiers

Ralph Ellison, "Prologue", from: *Invisible Man* [1952]
Robert Butler, "The City as Psychological Frontier in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*" (from: *The City in African-American Literature*) (1995)
James Baldwin, "The Harlem Ghetto" [1948] (from: *The American City*) (1997)

Extra Screening:

DARK CITY (Alex Proyas 1997) (Tue, 16-18, Room 319)

15. June 2004:

Texts:

Cities of Illusion

Nicholas Christopher, "Night and the City" (from: *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City*) (1997)
Christine Bolt, "The American City: Nightmare, Dream, or Irreducible Paradox?" (from: *The American City*) (1997)

22. June 2004:

Texts:

The Beat City

Jack Kerouac, from: *The Town and the City* (1950)
Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" and "Footnote to Howl" (1956)
William Carlos Williams, "Perpetuum Mobile: The City" (1971)

Extra Screening:

ANNIE HALL (Woody Allen, 1977) (Tue, 16-18, Room 319)

29. June 2004:

Text:

Modern Urbanity

Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City" (1993)

Extra Screening:

Sex and the City: "I Love NY" & "Anchors Away" (HBO 2001 & 2002) (Tue, 16-18, Room 319)

06. July 2004:

Text:

Postmodern Lifestyles

Mike Featherstone, "City Cultures and Postmodern Lifestyles" (from: *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*) (1991)

13. July 2004:

Text:

Final discussion: New York after September 11

Robin Morgan, "New York City: The Day After" (from: *September 11, 2001*) (2002)

— Final Paper —
Late Papers *will* be graded down!