FALL 2009  
GEOG 357/709.57  
Geography of New York City Metro Area  
Jack Eichenbaum, Ph.D. instructor  
Mondays 5:35-8:15PM – HN 1022

A. Objective
Informed immersion in NYC is a main objective of this class. You will learn by exploration and observation more than by media! The city is your laboratory to complement readings, lectures and discussion. You should emerge from this class with enhanced appreciation of the entire city. Study assignments include keeping a journal of walking assignments as well as readings. Field work will focus on the five boroughs of New York City. (Students with difficulties in walking or using public transportation or who have phobias regarding unfamiliar neighborhoods should consider this before registering.)

B. Calendar
This class first meets on Monday, August 31, 2009. The next class meets in the field on Monday, September 14 (see below). We return to the classroom on Monday, Sept. 21. The CUNY schedule calls for NO classes on Monday, September 7 (Labor Day), Monday, September 28 (Yom Kippur) and Monday, October 12 (Columbus Day). But, classes meet on Tuesday, September 29 and Wednesday, October 14.

Saturday, November 7 and Sunday, November 15, 9-5PM will be reserved for student led field trips, constituting class time. All are expected to attend as well as help organize. (To compensate for this time, other classes are shortened or cancelled.) Classroom time will be available for discussion of student projects and other matters. Where possible, information pertaining to this class will be disseminated via email. My email address is jaconet@aol.com

Monday, September 14, 2009, the class meets in the field for a walking tour of East Harlem and the Upper East Side led by the instructor. By 5:20 PM assemble @ 125 St/Lexington Ave (4, 5, 6, Metro North) in front of Pathmark. Use the bathrooms before you leave! We start walking at 5:30 PM. This is Walk #1.

Students who are late should note tour directions below. Call other students’ cell phone number to catch up. If necessary, do the walk on your own time ASAP. (Refer to AIA Guide and NY@tas pp. 142,150).

125 St-Madison Av- 121 St - Sylvan Court- 121 St- Third Ave- 116 St- Park Ave –115 St- internal walkways in Taft houses (between Park/Madison)- 112 St- Madison Ave-110 St-Ellington-Circle-Central Park (parallel to Fifth Ave-106 St) Fifth Ave-103 St-(thru walkway and under viaduct)-Park Ave (East side)-95 St-Third Ave-96 St-Third Ave- 91 St-Third Ave-86 St-Lexington Ave

C. Required Independent Walking Assignments
There are seven additional assigned walks which you will do on your own time. I suggest you do these as early in the semester as possible when the days are longer and the air is warmer! The directions for each walk can be accessed from the Department of Geography GEOG 357/709.57 web site. Walks #2 and #3 must completed for the September 21 class. It would be a good idea to do others early!
#2 Topography: The Glacial Moraine in Jamaica, Queens
#3 Topography: The Hudson Highlands in Inwood and the West Bronx
#4 Lower Manhattan Waterfront and Landfill
#5 Brooklyn Waterfront and Brooklyn Heights
#6 Long Island City Waterfront and Queensboro Plaza
#7 Mott Haven (Bronx) and Harlem River
#8 Staten Island Ferry and St. George
**Purpose of walks:** Exploration is the laboratory for the science of Geography. You are also living and working in the lab! Take notes around the general themes for each walk as well as anything else that seems remarkable. Notes will be needed for later classes/lectures. This class relies on WALKING assignments more than READING assignments, especially at the beginning. Learn to READ the environment. Each walk should take 1-2 hours including note-taking and curiosity but not including transportation to/from. Follow street to street directions given but feel free to diverge and return. Walks #4 and #5 are easily done consecutively if you can plan for the time needed.

**Hints on how to prepare for walks:**

The instructions for the walks are on the Geography 357/709.57 web site.

1. Find pages in AIA guide that relate to the particular walk and MAKE COPIES.
2. Find listed pages in NY@tлас (or other atlas) and MAKE COPIES.
3. Check sunset time. Usually you can see well enough for a half hour after sunset. Note that days are getting shorter as the semester continues. In early November, daylight savings time ends, making sunset effectively an hour earlier.
4. Weekend mornings are least crowded times.
5. Walks can be made into family excursions or even dates. You are also encouraged to walk together with other students.
6. Bring a clipboard for taking notes and referring to copied material.
7. Check MTA website for weekend subway diversions.

**D. Curriculum Overview**

1. **Topography**
   - Relief
   - Navigable water
   - Biodiversity
   - Historical settlement
   - Place Naming
   - Recreation

2. **Transportation and Technology (eras approximate)**
   - Sail-Wagon-Canal 1625-1840
   - Steamboat-Iron Horse (1820-1860)
   - Steel Rail (1860-1910)
   - Bridges-Tunnels-Subways-Parkways (1900-1940)
   - Expressways-Airports-Containers (1940-2010)
   - Infrastructure geography as a response to transportation and technology

3. **Demography**
   - Assignment on family migration history
   - Immigration to NYC 1625-1925
   - Immigration to NYC 1965-present
   - Internal migration to NYC
   - Intra-urban migration within NYC
   - Class and Ethnic patterns

4. **Lines on the land (Political Geography of NYC)**
   Macro-political (Dutch, British, Commissioner’s Plan, Land use and building regulation, Annexation, Consolidation, Zoning, City planning, Federal programs, Robert Moses)
   Micro-Political (BIDs, Historic Districts, Landmarks, Property Owners Assoc.)
E. Grades
Grading for this class is based on four expressions of your comprehension:

1. **45%-- Leadership and oral-written presentation of a field experience in NYC**
   You will co-lead a field segment with another student on either Saturday, November 7 or Sunday, November 15. Field assignments will be made on the first day of class. More information on requirements for this presentation is discussed elsewhere in this document.

2. **45%-- Final Exam: Take home essay format. Will require some field work.**
   More on that later.

3. **10%-- Short answer quiz on lecture concepts and assigned walks.**
   This concerns facts pertinent to lecture content through mid-October and all assigned walks. It will be given in late October and graded in class.

Maximum grades will sum to 1000 points. Letter grade will follow CUNY standards.

4. **Classroom review of required walks or required reading.**
   You are the teacher for 20 minutes. These voluntary assignments will be made on the second day of classroom classes. Walks will be reviewed earlier than the readings. Successful presentations raise grade by one level (example. B to B+ or B+ to A-)

F. Readings: GNYC Fall 2009
You will use the following reference books continually and they can prove to have value well beyond the scope of this class. You should get your own copy. Both books are often available at The Strand at substantial discount.

1. *The NY@tlas*, by Stephan VanDam, VanDam Inc (or other block-level local atlas. (Hagstrom atlases are useful also but are designed more for driving than walking.)

Readings are assigned on line [geo.hunter.cuny.edu/courses/geog357/readings.html](http://geo.hunter.cuny.edu/courses/geog357/readings.html) from


The following books/atlas/reports will be on reserve for planning field experiences and preparing written assignments. They are useful references for specific topics.
- *A Geography of the New York Metropolitan Region*, by Edward Bergman
- *The Vera Institute Atlas of Crime and Justice in New York City* by Lola Odubekun
- *New York City in the 1980’s* by John Mollenkopf
- *Plan for New York City 1969*, New York City Planning Commission
- *New York: An Illustrated History* Ric Burns and James Sanders, 2001
- *Crossing the Boulevard* Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, 2003

The Internet offers additional resources. Here are some sites I like. I expect many of you will add to this list during the semester. (Send email to all if you find something generally useful!)

http://www.nyc.gov Official NYC website and link to all NYC government agencies
http://nycserv.nyc.gov/nycproperty/nynav/jsp/selectbbl.jsp Display parcel assessment information by borough-block-lot or by address
http://www.oasisnyc.org/ Oasis displays integrated Block/lot, Census, Aerial photo, Open space info
http://www.nycsubway.org/ Unofficial site bursting with subway history etc.
http://www.nycroads.com/roads/ History and geography of NYC’s expressways and parkways
http://www.gothamgazette.com/ Current events in NYC and excellent links for statistical sources and publications (search)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X6CbnC7hzs (for transportation unit)

G. Miscellaneous Resources

The Map Division (Room 117) of the New York Public Library (5 Ave/41st St) is an extremely valuable resource for this class, particularly for information related to field projects. Specialized maps, guidebooks and other information, including some of the materials above, are accessible here. The librarians are municipal treasures and the setting is regal and inspirational. See the website
http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/map/map.html

Other Venues (see web pages: may require appointments, membership, permission)
1. Museum of the City of New York (photographs, prints, exhibits, tours, store)
2. New York Historical Society (library, prints, architectural drawings, exhibits, store)
3. Municipal Art Society (Urban Center bookstore, tours, “Information Exchange”. “Place Matters”, exhibits, advocacy, lectures, walking tours.)
4. Queens Museum (The New York City Panorama 1/1200 scale model of NYC)
5. Queensboro Public Library (Jamaica- “Long Island Division” collection)
6. Brooklyn Historical Society (tours, exhibits, library)
7. Bronx, Queens, Staten Island Historical Societies (limited collections, exhibits, tours, experts, leads to other knowledgeable people)
8. Neighborhood Historical Societies-particularly Queens (local areas info, knowledgeable people)
9. Community Planning Boards (some data, leads to local experts)
10. Borough offices of Dept of Finance (property), Buildings, City Planning (Manhattan bookstore) (some data, some expertise)
H. Guide to Field Work for November presentations
Learning/Observation in the Field/or with old Maps/or relate to class work: (Boldface questions are required; others strongly suggested where applicable.)

- What route would people use to get here in colonial times (by sail/wagon)?
- Was there ever a ferry terminal near here?
- When (if) did rail (train, trolley, El, subway) transport reach here?
- When did improved roads (turnpikes, Post Roads, boulevards, local streets, parkways, Xways) arrive?
- How did major transportation innovations affect the area?
- Are elevators, high-rise construction, or other special technologies particularly important to this area?
- What are the highest and lowest places in this area?
- Where does water flow naturally?
- Are/were there flooding problems in this area?
- Are/were there special health hazards in this area? (Lead poisoning, mosquito-spread disease, abnormal cancer rate, rape/murder rate etc)
- When did public infrastructure, i.e., parks, schools, police station, fire station, hospital arrive here?
- Are there very big/very old trees in the area?
- When (and what kind) did commercial activity appear in this area?
- What class/culture(s) are served by current commercial activity?
- Any industrial activity here? When/what?
- When were existing commercial structures built (style)?
- When were existing industrial structures built (style)?
- Are there deviations to a typical ‘grid’- find reasons for deviant streets.
- Is there a pattern to the street naming? Were street names ever changed?
- Are their recurring peculiarities in the boundaries between lots on blocks? Why?
- Are there “super-blocks” created by closing off streets?
- Is there evidence of slum clearance; public housing construction; other subsidized housing projects; Urban Renewal; condemnation of property for roads, schools or other public works; Model Cities program; private planning; restrictive covenants; large uniform developments
- Does the present frontage of similar buildings suggest where previous lot lines were?
- Does development appear to be concentrated in one time period, in several, or continual?
- What has/does the Community Planning Board, Borough President done/do that affects this area?
- Are there active Civic groups, Property Owners Assn., BID’s, Merchants Assn with influence here?
- What crime rates are unusually high or low here?
- What (mix of) economic classes of people reside here? How has this changed historically?
- What (mix of) cultures/ethnicities of people reside here? How has this changed historically?

Other Questions to Research

1. How does a particular (store, program, agency, firm etc.) compare with similar entities elsewhere in NYC?
2. Who is investing in the neighborhood? (local banks)
3. Who is coming and going where? (realtors, postal carriers, schools)
4. Where do local organizations meet; what do they discuss? (local newspapers)