

Geography of New York City Metro Area (Hunter College CUNY)
Geography 357 (Undergraduate) / Geography 709.57 (Graduate)
Scheduled for Fall, 2007 Mondays 5:35-8:15PM
Jack Eichenbaum, Ph.D. instructor, advises

This class first meets on Monday, August 27. There is **NO class on Labor Day**, September 3. The second class meets **Monday September 10 in the field**. The CUNY schedule calls for **NO class on Columbus Day**, Monday, October 8. Two days: Saturday, November 3 and Sunday, November 11, 9-5PM will be reserved for student led field trips, constituting class time, which **all** are expected to attend as well as help organize. (To compensate for this time, other classes are shortened or cancelled.) **Leadership and oral/written presentation of field exploration will make up half the grade, the other half by final exam.** The final exam will be given at the scheduled time, 5:30PM, Monday, December 17. I will arrange to 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*

Informed immersion in NYC is a main objective of this class. The city is your laboratory to complement readings, lectures and discussion. You should emerge from this class with enhanced appreciation of how the whole city is interrelated. Study assignments include keeping a journal of walking assignments as well as readings. Field work focuses on the five boroughs of New York City. **Students will be assigned seven walks to do on their own, in addition to the walks on Sept 10, Nov 3, and Nov 11.** (Students with restricted mobility, inability to use public transportation or who fear unfamiliar neighborhoods should consider before registering.)

Special Class: Monday, September 10, 2006 (Walk #1)

This is an introduction to using the streets of NYC as a laboratory for this class. Meets in the field for a walking tour of East Harlem and the Upper East Side under my leadership. Each part is about a mile. The “parts” are only for the convenience of those who cannot start on time. (Use cell phones to catch up.) Bring clipboard for taking notes.

Part A by 5:20 PM assemble @ 125 St/Lexington Ave (4,5,6, Metro North) in front of Pathmark (125 St side) Like Mom said: “Use the bathroom before you leave!”

Students who are unable to meet at this time should do the following walk on their own time as soon as possible or use directions and call designated cell phone # to catch up. (Refer to AIA Guide and NY@tlas 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)

Part B by 6:40 PM assemble @ Central Park Conservatory Garden 105 St/Fifth Ave (6 @ 103 St) (if closed use benches just inside Central Park 106 St/Fifth)

Walk will end @ 86 St/Lexington Ave (4,5,6) or by darkness, whichever comes first. For those who cannot attend, do on your own time. (Refer to AIA Guide and See NY@tlas pp. 139,142)
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

Geography of New York City Metro Area: Curriculum Overview

- A. Physical setting (relief, shoreline, landfill)
Historical response
- B. Transportation and Technology
Historical response
- C. Demographic process (Immigration, internal migration, intra-urban migration)
Historical outcome
- D. Lines on the land (Jurisdictions, districts, plans, private areas)
Historical unfolding

Required Walks (Pxxx-xxx refer to pages in NY@tlas) Walk No. 1 is the East Harlem/Upper East Side that I led on the second day of class. There are eight walks in all in the first half of the class. Seven you do on your own. These are distinct from the walks we'll do together on November weekends. Possibly another one of the required walks will be done together during class time.

Purpose of Walks: The walks constitute the laboratory for the science of Urban 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 as well as final exam. This class relies on WALKING assignments more than READING assignments, especially at the beginning. 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.

Hints on how to prepare for Walks:

1. Find pages in AIA guide that relate to the particular walk and MAKE COPIES.
2. Find listed pages in NYAtlas and MAKE COPIES .
3. Check sunset time. Usually you can still see well enough for a half hour after sunset. Note that days are getting shorter as the semester continues. In late October, 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..
6. Bring a clipboard and/or bound notebook for notes.
7. Check MTA website for weekend subway diversions.
8. Two walks are listed here. Complete these walks by September 24 when we will discuss them in class. Others are posted on the class website. <http://www.geo.hunter.cuny.edu/courses/geog357/>

RELIEF Here we consider the effect of “mountains” in Manhattan/Bronx and the “glacial moraine” forming the backbone of Queens (and Brooklyn and Staten Island). Are ridges and valleys used differently? What happens when you cross major arteries or RR tracks?

2. Glacial Moraine and Outwash Plain : Jamaica, Queens P338

Long Island and Staten Island are products of the last Ice Age when a continental glacier moved south bringing massive amounts of debris from New England. When the ice melted the debris was left in huge piles. The hilly southern edge of the pile we call the terminal glacial moraine. Further south the land becomes completely flat derived from smaller particles washed off the moraine. The plain was frequently flooded. Between these features, at the foot of the glacier, land is mostly flat but water is still channeled. Streets like Jamaica Ave in Queens, and Hylan Blvd in Staten Island became natural transportation corridors. On this walk note the different roles played by Jamaica Ave and parallel streets: Highland Ave, Hillside Ave, Archer Ave, and 94 Ave.

Begin at rear exit (168 St and Hillside Ave) from F train at 169 St station. Walk north (uphill) on 168 St to Highland Ave. Note new housing and mosque north on 168 St but turn left (west) on Highland Ave. (Who lives here?) Note new housing and highrise apartments at 167 St. (What do you think they replaced?) Enter Tilly Park on the north side of Highland Ave near 166 St. Note Spanish-American War Memorial and Jamaica H.S. beyond the pond. Continue west on Highland and note view of downtown Jamaica at 164 St. Continue west on Highland/as it winds downhill joining Parsons Blvd and then Hillside Ave. (Why doesn't it continue? Where is Parsons Blvd coming from?)

Head south to Jamaica Ave. on Parsons Blvd. where some of the older urban institutions of downtown Jamaica are located. Pass turn-of-the-century row houses and a classy walkup apartment building. View the Catholic Church and Parish Hall, the former Family Court (originally the Queensboro Public Library) the YMCA and formidable 1960's apartment towers. On the last block of Parsons pass the Grace Church Cemetery on the right. Turn right (west) on Jamaica Ave. and stand in front of the church (first building and cemetery date to 1701). Not long after, Jamaica Ave was laid out by the British as a through road designed to defend Long Island.

Across Jamaica Ave note subsidized redevelopment efforts. To the west is a new multiplex and mall, a continuation of the shopping district in that direction. Directly across the street is a Social Security Bldg with a few thousand jobs. Beyond the LIRR tracks is the new campus of York College (CUNY). Continuing west to 153 St, view King Manor, the home of Rufus King (one of the first NYS senators) now a museum and park. Across from the park is the new Family Court building. Turn left (south) on 153 St. along side Family Court. At Archer Ave. go slightly to the right of the subway entrance and walk through the tunnel under the tracks.

On the other side of the tunnel, turn right (west) on Beaver Rd. to 157 St. Note wholesale food markets and ironworks. (Why has the landscape changed so dramatically?) The curve on Beaver Rd traces the shoreline of a beaver pond in colonial times. At 157 St note the tracks of the Montauk line of the LIRR diverging from the main line. Turn right on 94 Ave. At 154 St the separation of tracks has begun with Montauk trains on the lower level. (From what era are the industrial buildings visible along 94 Ave.) Continue on 94 Ave. to 148 St. where (looking south) there are some remnants of middle class houses from the 19th century.

Continue on 94 Ave to Sutphin Blvd. On the SE corner is the remnant of an old wholesale food market. On the NW corner is the terminus of the JFK-Jamaica monorail and a new office building. Further west there is a new hotel. Turn right on Sutphin and view renovations to the LIRR and some specialized food markets.. Use the LIRR or the E/J trains at the Sutphin/Archer intersection to take you where you are going.

3. The Mountains: Upper Manhattan and the West Bronx P159; P214-215

Manhattan and the Bronx (west of the Bronx River) are the southern limits of a mountain range called the Hudson Highlands. The relief is most pronounced from upper Manhattan into Riverdale. Going against the grain, we traverse valleys at or nearly at sea level and ridges, often quite steep, rising more than a hundred feet. Transportation corridors are in the valleys or on flat ridge tops. As in the song, the Bronx is "up" (and the Battery's "down"). Dense residential areas are built on ridges which also guide the flow of drinking water to lower places.

Begin at 207th St and Tenth Ave, (207th St 1,9). Note the commercial signs in the area (Who do you think lives here?) On the west side of the elevated structure, see how 207th St. angles to the northwest with

Inwood Hill Park in the background. (Check your atlas; why is there such a departure from the geometry of the Manhattan grid?) Also note the apartment houses on 207th St and Post Ave (Who were they built for and when?). Walk east on 207th St past the auto-oriented commercial buildings at Ninth Ave and over the University Heights drawbridge to the Bronx. Pause on the bridge to observe Bronx Community College (formerly NYU uptown) to the southeast on “University Heights”. To the south view the Harlem River, the drawbridge support structure, the Metro North Hudson line (and University Heights station), the Major Deegan Expressway (connecting to the NYS Thruway), the Washington Bridge (181 St) and the Alexander Hamilton Bridge (a continuation of the Cross Bronx Expressway). Hamilton lived on an estate, Hamilton Grange, in an area now called Hamilton Heights, near City College. In the rear is the senior arched Highbridge, built to carry the aqueduct from Westchester County into Manhattan. A good eye can follow the Harlem River Drive in the distance making its way up to the George Washington Bridge. To the north see the A train storage yards and the Broadway Bridge into Marble Hill near the site of the 1697 Kingsbridge, the first connection of Manhattan to the mainland.

Walk up Fordham Road. At Hampden Place observe apartment houses with foundations extending an extra four or more stories in the rear, testifying to the steepness of the terrain. (Why is Fordham Road curved?) Note Landing Rd. Where does it go? Attain the heights at University Avenue. Note older dense housing for the upper middle class and the private homes at the northeastern end of Defoe Park.. How did the residents get there? Detour a little onto Aqueduct Walk, following the gradual flow of water from the Westchester reservoirs into New York City and return to Fordham Rd. Contrast the older housing you just saw with the middle class apartment houses on Grand and Davidson Aves built in the 1920’s after the Jerome Avenue elevated train was built. Observe the bustling Fordham Rd. shopping district and compare it to a suburban mall. What does it have, what’s missing? Who shops here? Note the width and malled structure of the Grand Concourse with a retrofitted subway beneath and that Fordham Rd. traffic funnels under it all. The Grand Concourse was designed in the style of the 19th century “Grand Boulevards” of Paris and in the early 20th century Bronx it assumed the status of its ‘Fifth Avenue’. In fact, the Concourse is almost a trans-Harlem River extension of Fifth Avenue but lacks the bridged continuity planned for the Park Avenue and Third Ave rail routes. Turn right on the Concourse to 188 St to see the newly resurrected Loew’s Paradise theater, the largest built in the Bronx. Cross the street for an even better view. (What caused the big movie palaces to fail?) Note the large horizontal commercial structures on this stretch of the Concourse, similar to the daylight factory buildings that characterized modern industrial districts during the same early 20th century decades.

Return to Fordham Rd and continue east to Valentine Rd where the ridge peaks again and the descent into the next valley begins. At the Bryan Park triangle Kingsbridge Rd joins Fordham Rd. (Which is older?) Follow Fordham Rd down to the flat valley marked by the auto traffic on Webster Avenue (US Route #1 turning into Fordham Rd!) astride the Metro North Harlem line and the terminus of Third Ave and its historic elevated train which continued to Gun Hill Rd. A bustling bus plaza adjoins the train station. The relatively new round Fordham Plaza Commercial Center dominates the scene, taking advantage of this mixed-mode transportation junction. To the north, is the well-wooded Rose Hill (the next hill going east!) campus of Fordham University, founded as St. John’s College in 1841. Leave the area by Metro North train (check schedule in advance) or return to the Grand Concourse (Fordham Rd C,D). Local buses eventually connect to other subway lines.

Readings: Geography of the New York Metropolitan Area. Fall 2003

You will use the following reference books continually and they should 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 1998 (or other block-level local atlas)
2. *The AIA Guide to New York* (4th edition) by N. White and E. Willensky, Times Books, 2000

Actual readings are assigned on line geo.hunter.cuny.edu/courses/geog357/readings.html from

1. *The New American Ghetto* by Camilo Jose Vergara, Rutgers University Press, 1997

2. *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities* by Janet Abu-Lughod, University of Minnesota Press, 1999
3. *The Power Broker* by Robert Caro, Random House, 1975
4. *The Future of Us All : Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City* by Roger Sanjek, Cornell University Press, 1998
5. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs, 1968

The following books/atlasses/reports will be on reserve for planning field experiences and preparing written assignments. They are useful references for specific topics.

1. *A Geography of the New York Metropolitan Region* by Edward Bergman
2. *The Vera Institute Atlas of Crime and Justice in New York City* by Lola Odubekun
3. *New York City in the 1980's: A Social, Economic and Political Atlas* by John Mollenkopf
4. *Plan for New York City 1969* New York City Planning Commission
5. *The Newest New Yorkers 1990-1994* Department of City Planning, New York, 1996
6. *New York: An Illustrated History* Ric Burns and James Sanders, 2001
7. *Zoning Handbook* Department of City Planning, New York, 1990
8. *Atlas of the Census: A Portrait of NYC from the 1980 Census* DCP, New York, 1985
9. *The Encyclopedia of New York City* edited by Kenneth Jackson, NY Historical Society, 1995
10. *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* edited by John Manbeck, Citizens Committee, 1998
11. *Crossing the Boulevard* Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan

The Internet offers additional resources. Here are some sites that I like. I expect many of you will be adding 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://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zone/zmapintr.html> View/download neighborhood zoning maps

<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.forgotten-ny.com/Home%20page/index.html> exploration of old, odd and forgotten NYC

<http://www.gothamgazette.com/> Current events in NYC and excellent links for statistical sources and publications (search)

<http://comcarto.com/aboutims.html> Community Cartography is a GIS consulting firm offering a number of free mapped data bases

MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES

The Map Division (Room 117) of the New York Public Library

(5 Ave/41 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 webpages: 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 Room" collection)

6. Brooklyn Historical Society (tours, exhibits, library currently being renovated)
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)

**Learning/Observation in the Field/or with old Maps: Questions to ask and answer
Items in boldface are required!**

1. What route would people use to get here in colonial times (by sail/wagon)?
2. Was there ever a ferry terminal near here?
3. When (if) did rail (train, trolley, El, subway) transport reach here?
4. **When did improved roads (turnpikes, Post Rds, boulevards, local sts., parkways, Xways) arrive?**
5. How did major transportation innovations affect the area?
6. Are elevators, highrise construction, or other special technologies particularly important to this area?
7. **What are the highest and lowest places in this area?**
8. **Where does water flow naturally?**
9. Where do sewers take the water?
10. **Are/were there flooding problems in this area?**
11. Is air pollution unusually high or low in this area?
12. Are/were there special health hazards in this area? (Lead poisoning, mosquito-spread disease, abnormal cancer rate, rape/murder rate etc)
13. When did public infrastructure: parks, schools, police station, fire station, hospital arrive here?
14. Do parks or waterfront retain any indigenous ecology?
15. **Are there very big/very old trees in the area?**
16. When (and what kind) did commercial activity appear in this area?
17. What class/culture(s) are served by current commercial activity?
18. Any industrial activity here? When/what?
19. When were present day commercial structures built (style)?
20. When were present day industrial structures built (style)?
21. Is there some order in the local street pattern?
22. Are there deviations to a typical 'grid'- find reasons for deviant streets.
23. Is there a pattern to the street naming? Were street names ever changed?
24. Are their recurring peculiarities in the boundaries between lots on blocks? Why?
25. **Are there "superblocks" created by closing off streets?**
26. **What are major zoning constraints?**
27. **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**
28. Does the present frontage of similar buildings suggest where previous lot lines were?
29. **Does development appear to be concentrated in one time period, in several, or continual?**
30. What has/does the Community Planning Board, Borough President done/do that affects this area?
31. Are there active Civic groups, Property Owners Assn., BID's, Merchants Assn with influence here?
32. What crime rates are unusually high or low here?
33. Is school performance unusually high or low here?
34. What (mix of) economic classes of people reside here? How has this changed historically?
35. What (mix of) cultures/ethnicities of people reside here? How has this changed historically?
36. What differences are there between those who only live and those who only work here?

37. What kinds of people are leaving the area? ...coming into the area?
38. Any noteworthy people live or work here? Did they leave a legacy for the area?

Other Questions to Research

1. How does this (store, program, agency, firm etc) compare with similar entities elsewhere in NYC?
2. How does this (store, program, agency, firm etc) compare with similar entities in other World Class Cities (Chicago, LA, London, Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong)
3. Who is investing in the neighborhood? (local banks)
4. Who is coming and going where? (realtors, postal carriers, schools)
5. Where do local organizations meet; what do they discuss? (**local newspapers**)

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