

Cultural Capital: Media and Arts in New York City

New York University

Media, Culture, and Communication

Instructors: Kouross Esmaeli and Carlin Wing

“Those who arrive at Thekla can see little of the city beyond the plank fences, the sackcloth screens, the scaffoldings, the metal armatures, the wooden cat-walks hanging from ropes or supported by sawhorses, the ladders, the trestles. If you ask, “Why is Thekla's construction taking such a long time?” the inhabitants continue hoisting sacks, lowering leaded strings, moving long brushes up and down, as they answer, “So that its destruction cannot begin.” And if asked whether they fear that, once the scaffoldings are removed, the city may begin to crumble and fall to pieces, they add hastily, in a whisper, “Not only the city.””

- Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Short Course Description

New York City has been long imagined as one of the cultural capitals of the world. Over the years great material and creative resources have gone into developing and fashioning the city as such. This course offers a broad introduction to understanding New York's role as a cultural and economic hub for media and the arts, highlighting the relationship between the city's role as a center of finance capital and its role as a center of cultural production. Classroom instruction and readings are supplemented by site visits, guest lectures, and field research to develop an appreciation of the ways that media and the arts have shaped the work and leisure of life in New York City for the past one hundred years. How has conscious planning provided a framework for the City's role as a cultural capital? How do large and small institutions symbiotically survive (or fail) in the city? How have independent artists and media makers defined the city's art and mediascapes? What are the roles of the market and the state? What are the valences of and relationships between the production of culture and the production of capital? Who are the winners and losers in this cultural capital?

Student Learning Objectives

- Describe and analyze the emergence and current configuration of the media and the arts as core activities in New York City;
- Achieve basic understanding of the economics of the media and creative arts;
- Explore issues related to the working lives of media practitioners and artists;

- Understand current issues relating to challenges and opportunities for media and the arts in New York City;
- Develop skills in field research and creative and critical thinking.

CLASS SCHEDULE

**Readings are due in class on the day they are listed. They are subject to change.

**** Dates in RED/underline are field trips off-campus, please allow extra time to arrive promptly**

Week 1:

Tuesday July 7 Introduction to course

READING: Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of*

New York, (pp.5-21)

Gutman, "Equipping the Public Realm" (pp.72-83)

Thursday July 9 Trip to Natural History Museum/Central Park/Metropolitan Museum

READING: Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" (pp. 20-64)

Week 2:

Tuesday July 14 Walking through the City/introduce game engine and discuss
Sound Walk sites

READING: Horowitz, "The Sound of Parallel Parking, (pp.211-240)

Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity"

Sister Corita, "Rules"

Listen: <http://www.wnyc.org/story/169066-subway/>

ASSIGNMENT: Make your own Sound Map for a cultural site of your

choosing (DUE: Aug 3)

Thursday July 16

Whitney visit (with tour from Jennie Goldstein)

READING: Fraser, "An Artist Talk" (pp2-15)

Turner, "Family of Man and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America" (pp 55-84)

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/04/19/arts/artspecial/new-whitney-museum.html>

Week 3:

Tuesday July 21

Television as form and content

READING: Postman, "Now.... This" (pp.99-113)

Gergen, *Mobile Communication and the Transformation of the Democratic Process*

Thursday July 23

CNN TOUR

READING: Gans, *News & the news media in the digital age*

Week 4:

Tuesday July 28

Didi Halleck/Paper Tiger Television @ 339 Lafayette, Buzzer #9

READING: Halleck, *Hand Held Visions*

Anderson, *Deliberative, Agonistic and Algorithmic Audiences*

Wednesday July 29 Visit the public art work *caesura: a forum* in Harlem followed by

Amateur Night at the Apollo

READING:

Baraka, "Harlem, Black Creativity, Black Consciousness" AND

Neal, "Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture" from *Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing: How the Apollo Theater Shaped American Entertainment*

Thursday July 30 *caesura* artist and architects in class

READING:

Kramer, "Whose Art Is It?" (pp. 1- 37)

Reread Miwon Kwon "One Place After Another"