

ENGL-UA 59.001

# Digital Literary Studies: Novel Maps of New York

<http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017>

Moacir P. de Sá Pereira

[mds17@nyu.edu](mailto:mds17@nyu.edu)

Autumn 2017. xxx

MW 12:30–13:45

Office hours: 244 Greene, 506, T 15:00–16:30

## Course description

How does the geography of New York City shape the literature of New York City? Does the literature shape the geography in return? In this course, we aim to understand the spatiotemporality of the Big Apple through novels of the 20th and 21st centuries that recreate and react to it. Not only will we read spatially, however, but we will also create spatially. Students will make maps that launch projects of geographical storytelling as a mode of literary analysis. More concretely, we will build online data repositories and exhibits (using JavaScript and HTML) that synthesize our reading and mapping practices. No previous programming knowledge is needed, but a curiosity and interest in puzzle solving is.

## Goals of the course

- to make you better readers and writers by
  - introducing you to
    - \* thinking about the city as a setting and object;
    - \* technologies to help shape your own work;
    - \* novels about New York City;
  - developing your skills in
    - \* writing web pages with JavaScript, HTML, and Markdown;
    - \* using the Atom text editor;
    - \* versioning with git;
    - \* making maps with Leaflet;
    - \* reading literary texts carefully and analytically;
    - \* summarizing and presenting texts in class;
    - \* getting lost on purpose;
    - \* developing critical projects that are cogent and syncretic, making use of the various methods on hand.

## Books

- Cole, Teju. *Open City* (2009)
- Crockford, Douglas. *JavaScript: The Good Parts* (2008) [optional]
- Hardwick, Elizabeth. *Sleepless Nights* (1979)
- Haverbeke, Marijn. *Eloquent JavaScript* (2011)
- McKay, Claude. *Amiable with Big Teeth* (1941)
- Messud, Claire. *The Emperor's Children* (2006)
- Robinson, Kim Stanley. *New York 2140* (2016)
- Slesinger, Tess. *The Unpossessed* (1934)
- Whitehead, Colson. *Zone One* (2011)
- Woodson, Jacqueline. *Another Brooklyn* (2016)

## Course requirements & policies

### Assessment

#### Participation

**25%** The success of any course is directly related to the levels of engagement brought both by the instructor and the students. As such, class participation is vitally important. Similarly, though attendance is logically required for class participation, it is not sufficient. This class requires active participation both inside the classroom and outside.

You can miss up to three meetings without penalty, and you can use these opportunities tactically, to provide space and time to either fulfill other obligations or recuperate from the previous night. I don't care why you didn't come. I start to care with the fourth absence, and I start to require documentation. Repeated unexcused absence quickly gobbles up the class participation component of the grade and begins to threaten your ability to even *pass* the course.

In a discussion-oriented class, "active participation" involves the following components. All of these are necessary to receive maximum points for participation:

- being in class on time and staying in the classroom,
- arriving having done the reading for that day,
- having considered the reading and found points of entry into class discussion via questions about specific passages,
- participating in class discussion in ways that build upon contributions from others, and
- refraining from the use of electronic devices.

#### JavaScript Homework

**15%** Every week, for the Wednesday class, the respective problem set for that week in *The JavaScripting English Major* will be due. The answers should be emailed to me before class on Wednesday, and you should bring your homework to class on Wednesday as well.

## Dérives

**20%** You will undertake two dérives during the semester. In both, you will get lost in Manhattan (and beyond?), while also documenting and tracking yourself. In order to direct your dérive, you will use either an app for your smartphone or a set of cards printed out ahead of time. In order to track the dérive, you are required to trace your path and take notes on a Field Papers atlas and, if possible, track yourself using GPS.

During the course of the dérive, which can last hours, you should reflect on the readings we have already done for the class, both in what you observe while getting lost, but also in the process of getting lost itself.

At the end, you will write up a short (1,100–1,250 words) report for each dérive, including textual references from our readings. The report will be joined by the original Field Papers atlas with notes. You can and are encouraged to use other forms of media to supplement the report.

Finally, you will create a Leaflet map tracing your two dérives, to be hosted on GitHub.

## Presentation

**10%** You will give a short presentation on one of the novels we are reading. This presentation should be about five minutes long and introduce another writer's views on the novel. Usually, this means looking up a book review. Most of the books will have been reviewed by at least one of the *New York Times* or *New York Review of Books*, but you can look for other reviews from newspapers and magazines. The presentation should summarize the review and include your thoughts on the review having read (at least some of) the novel in question.

## Final project

**30%** Throughout the semester, you will be building a project based on one of the novels in the class and its relationship to New York City. This project will be a website, hosted on GitHub. Because it must contain at least one Leaflet map, thematically the project will benefit from tracing certain geographies in the novel of your choice and reproducing them online. The result of the project should not be a fixed conclusion, but, rather, a new series of questions prompted by your thinking about the novel geographically. That is, what does the map you create tell you about the novel that you did not previously know? What kinds of future avenues of inquiry open up because of it?

You should be thinking about the project as early as possible, even considering from the discussion on the first day which novel you may want to choose for your focus and jumping ahead on it. Right before Thanksgiving, you will send me a short outline of the project, a précis, that describes the structure of the site, the content, and what kinds of questions you will be investigating. During the last week of the course, we will have time in class to troubleshoot technical problems, and on the last class, you will give a quick, five-minute presentation about your project. Over the next week, you will complete the project.

Hitting every deadline is crucial, so being late on any of these three points (précis, presentation, final submission) will hurt your final grade.

## Policies

### Assignments

The assignment instructions, though detailed in the syllabus, may be enhanced or supplemented during the course. If you have any questions about an assignment, you should ask for clarification early. The assignments are due on the dates noted in the syllabus.

The writing can be submitted electronically, *except* for the second essay and its rewrite, which must be submitted in paper form. I prefer 2up (two pages per sheet), two-sided printing. Documents should be formatted sanely: 12pt type and double-spaced.

Late assignments jeopardize both your and my rhythms in the class, so they will be penalized. I will give you feedback and will happily discuss any work with you, but grades should be considered final.

### Attendance

As indicated above, attendance is required. Three absences will be excused without supplemental documentation, and I encourage you to use these tactically. Catching up is your responsibility.

Subsequent absence requires formal documentation. Otherwise it begins to harm your final grade. Though class participation is only part of the final grade, extreme absenteeism (more than six meetings missed) will put your ability to pass the course at risk.

Please show up on time to class, as well.

## Electronics

Our time in class is meant as a sanctuary from the distractions of the rest of the world. Additionally, our class relies on discussion and engagement, and the front of a laptop screen is a brilliant shield behind which a student can hide, even unintentionally. During our meetings, then, there can be no use of electronic devices. Please also set whatever devices you have but aren't using to silent mode.

## Communication

Communication is vitally important to the pedagogical process, and this course depends on clear communication in both directions. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, the best course of action is to come visit me during my office hours as noted at the top of this document. If your questions, etc., cannot wait until then, then clearly you can also email me. I should respond within 48 hours, but please write again if I do not.

This is a new course, meaning that there will be even more unfinished edges ready to scratch someone than in a typical course. We have a collective goal of learning, however, so if the unfinished edges get to be overwhelming, I'll adjust the parameters of the course appropriately. I'm not out to catch you, nor is this course a process of grotesque punishment. Please don't treat it as such.

Once more, with feeling: *communication is vitally important to the pedagogical process*. If you have concerns or worries, please let me know about them sooner rather than later.

## Disabilities

If you have a disability, you should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities ([mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu); 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, 212.998.4980), which can arrange for things like extra time for assignments. Please inform me *at the beginning of the semester* if you need any special accommodations regarding the assignments.

## Academic integrity

Please look at NYU's full statement on academic integrity<sup>1</sup>. Any instance of academic dishonesty will result in an F and will be reported to the relevant dean for disciplinary action. Remember that plagiarism is a matter of fact, not intention. Know what it is, and don't do it.

## Syllabus

This syllabus is available at the course webpage<sup>2</sup>. A pdf version is also available<sup>3</sup>. The source code and documentation for this document is available at its Github repository<sup>4</sup>. The syllabus is ©2017, Moacir P. de Sá Pereira. It is licensed as Creative Commons 3.0 by-nc-sa, giving you permission to share and alter it in any way, as long as it is for non-commercial purposes, maintains the license, and gives proper attribution. Further information regarding the license, the history of the document, and influences can be viewed at the Github repository.

---

<sup>1</sup><http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>

<sup>2</sup><http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017>

<sup>3</sup><http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017/syllabus.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><http://github.com/muziejus/novel-maps-of-ny-2017>

## Schedule

Required readings indicated with quotation marks (“”) will be available as pdfs. *They should be printed out for use in class.* The texts for presentations, save the Du Bois, are also available as pdfs.

The list of references at the end of the pdf version of the syllabus provides bibliographic details for all the texts for the course.

### 1. Who is it?

In the first section of this course, we begin by thinking about how literature can describe a person in the world and how that has changed over time.

- Monday, 23 Jan: Introductions.
- Wednesday, 25 Jan: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* through ch. 6.
- Monday, 30 Jan: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* to end. Presentation: Du Bois, “Of our Spiritual Strivings” and “The Sorrow Songs.”
- Wednesday, 1 Feb: From S/Z: “Evaluation,” “Interpretation,” “Reading, Forgetting,” “Step by Step,” “The Starred Text,” “The Broken Text,” “How Many Readings?,” “(1),” “(2),” “(3),” and “The Five Codes”; *The Book of Margery Kempe* through ch. 25.
- Monday, 6 Feb: *The Book of Margery Kempe* through ch. 77. Presentation: White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality.”
- Wednesday, 8 Feb: *The Book of Margery Kempe* to end.
- Thursday, 9 Feb; Friday, 10 Feb: Carolyn Dinshaw **plenary**.
- Monday, 13 Feb: **Library visit**; *They Say / I Say* to p. 105.
- Wednesday, 15 Feb: *The Tempest* through Act III. Presentation: Foucault, “Preface” and “Las Meninas.” **First essay due.**
- Monday, 20 Feb: **No class.**
- Wednesday, 22 Feb: *The Tempest* to end. Presentation: “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”

### 2. Life during wartime

Next, we look to the role literature plays in the scope of war.

- Monday, 27 Feb: “You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming;” *They Say / I Say* to p. 144.
- Wednesday, 1 Mar: “Prayer in the Furnace” & “War Stories.”
- Thursday, 2 Mar; Friday 3 Mar: Patrick Deer **plenary**.
- Monday, 6 Mar: From *U. S. A.*: “Newsreel XIV,” “Emperor of the Caribbean,” “The Camera Eye (20),” “Newsreel XXII,” “The Camera Eye (30),” “Randolph Bourne,” “Newsreel XXIII,” “Newsreel XXIX,” “The Camera Eye (36),” “Meester Veelson,” “Newsreel XXX,” “Newsreel XXIV,” “The House of Morgan,” “Newsreel XXXV,” “The Camera Eye (39),” “Newsreel XLIII,” “The Body of an American,” “Newsreel LXVIII,” “The Camera Eye (51).” Presentation: Martí, “Our America.”
- Wednesday, 8 Mar: *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*.
- Friday, 10 Mar: **Second essay due** in my mailbox in 244 Greene St. by 5 p.m.
- Monday, 13 Mar: **Spring Break.**

### 3. Around the world

What does it even mean to speak of “English” literature? Is this distinction important?

- Monday, 20 Mar: *Green-Eyed Thieves* through p. 125. Presentation: Dimock, “Genre as World System: Epic and Novel on Four Continents.”
- Wednesday, 22 Mar: *Green-Eyed Thieves* to end. Presentation: Cheah, “Missed Encounters: Cosmopolitanism, World Literature, and Postcoloniality.”
- Monday, 27 Mar: *Migritude* through p. 72.
- Wednesday, 29 Mar: *Migritude* to end.
- Thursday, 30 Mar; Friday, 31 Mar: Jini Kim Watson **plenary**.

### 4. Who will survive in America?

Finally, how does the world reconstruct itself in an American milieu?

- Monday, 3 Apr: “The White House,” “A Capitalist at Dinner,” “The Tropics in New York,” “If We Must Die,” “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “The Weary Blues,” “White Man,” and “Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria.” Presentation: Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism.” **Second essay rewrite due.**
- Wednesday, 5 Apr: “kitchenette building,” “obituary for a living lady,” “the mother,” “the soft man,” “when Mrs. Martin’s Booker T.,” and *Riot*. Presentation: Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village.”
- Monday, 10 Apr: *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (selections). Presentation: Fernández Retamar, “Caliban: Notes towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America.”
- Wednesday, 12 Apr: *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (selections). Presentation: Anzaldúa, “La Prieta.”
- Monday, 17 Apr: *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* through p. 59. Presentation: Cheng, “The Melancholy of Race.”
- Wednesday, 19 Apr: *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* to end. Presentation: Berlant “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency).”
- Monday, 24 Apr: “Native Sons” & “A Confession.” Presentation: Baldwin, “Me and My House.”
- Wednesday, 26 Apr: “Waterfalls” & “The Call of Blood”
- Thursday, 27 Apr; Friday 28 Apr: Jess Row **plenary. Final précis due.**
- Monday, 1 May: Debrief.
- Wednesday, 3 May: **No class.**
- Wednesday, 10 May: **Final essay due.**

## Calendar

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
4 Sep	<b>No Class</b>	(Office Hours)	Introductions / Whitehead
11 Sep	Messud	(Office Hours)	Messud HW 1 & 2
18 Sep	Messud	(Office Hours)	Messud, Debord HW 3
25 Sep	Messud	(Office Hours)	Messud derive 1 due HW 4
2 Oct	Slesinger	(Office Hours)	Slesinger HW 5
9 Oct	<b>No Class</b>	(Office Hours)	Slesinger, De Certeau HW 6
16 Oct	Slesinger	(Office Hours)	McKay HW 7
23 Oct	McKay	(Office Hours)	McKay derive 2 due HW 8
30 Oct	Cole	(Office Hours)	Cole HW 9
6 Nov	Woodson	(Office Hours)	Woodson HW 10
13 Nov	Hardwick	(Office Hours)	Hardwick derive leaflet due HW 11
20 Nov	Whitehead final project précis HW 12	(Office Hours)	<b>No Class</b>
27 Nov	Whitehead	(Office Hours)	Whitehead HW 13
4 Dec	Robinson	(Office Hours)	Robinson HW 14
11 Dec	Robinson	Robinson, Workshop makeup class	Robinson, Project presentations
HW 15			
18 Dec		(Office Hours)	<b>Final Project Due</b>