Digital Literary Studies: Novel Maps of New York

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

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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) [optional]

- McKay, Claude. *Amiable with Big Teeth* (1941)

- Messud, Claire. *The Emperor's Children* (2006)

- Robinson, Kim Stanley. *New York 2140* (2016) [optional]

- Slesinger, Tess. *The Unpossessed* (1934)

- Whitehead, Colson. *Zone One* (2011) [optional]

- Woodson, Jacqueline. *Another Brooklyn* (2016)

Course requirements & policies

Assessment

Participation

10% 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

20% Every week, for the Wednesday class, the respective problem set for that week in *The JavaScripting English Major*[1] 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, where we will correct it as a group.

The JavaScripting English Major is a course I am preparing, so your feedback is very useful. Most of the chapters dovetail with the chapters in *Eloquent JavaScript*, and if my description of a feature is insufficient, please look to the Haverbeke text for more information. Crockfor's is more for reading on the side, if you find the programming aspects of the course especially interesting.

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[1]http://the-javascripting-english-major.org

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

20% 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. For guidelines on giving a good presentation, see my webpage on presentation tips[2].

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.

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[2]http://moacir.com/courses/presentation-tips/

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; 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[3]. 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[4]. A pdf version is also available[5]. The source code and documentation for this document is available at its Github repository[6]. 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.

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[3]http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity
[4]http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017
[5]http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017/syllabus.pdf
[6]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 the presentations 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.

HW n refers to the homework in the *n*th chapter of *The JavaScripting English Major*[7].

- Wednesday, 6 Sep: Introductions, Whitehead, "City Limits."

- Monday, 11 Sep: Cole, *Open City* through ch. 10.

- Wednesday, 13 Sep: Cole, *Open City* through ch. 20; HW 1 & 2

- Monday, 18 Sep: Cole, *Open City* to end.

- Wednesday, 20 Sep: Debord, "Theory of the Dérive"; HW 3.

- Monday, 25 Sep: McKay, *Amiable with Big Teeth* . 59.

- Wednesday, 27 Sep: McKay, *Amiable with Big Teeth*; dérive 1 due; HW 4.

- Monday, 2 Oct: McKay, *Amiable with Big Teeth* to end.

- Wednesday, 4 Oct: De Certeau, "Walking in the City"; HW 5.

- Monday, 9 Oct: No class

- Wednesday, 11 Oct: Slesinger, *The Unpossessed*; HW 6.

- Monday, 16 Oct: Slesinger, *The Unpossessed*

- Wednesday, 18 Oct: Slesinger, *The Unpossessed* ; HW 7.

- Monday, 23 Oct: Slesinger, *The Unposessed*

- Wednesday, 25 Oct: Slesinger *The Unposessed* ; dérive 2 due; HW 8.

- Monday, 30 Oct: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* . 15.

- Wenesday, 1 Nov: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* ; HW 9.

- Monday, 6 Nov: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* . 8.

- Wednesday, 8 Nov: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* ; dérive leaflet due; HW 10.

- Monday, 13 Nov: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* to end.

- Wednesday, 15 Nov: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* ; Final project précis due; HW 11.

- Monday, 20 Nov: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* ; HW 13.

- Wednesday, 22 Nov: No class □

- Monday, 27 Nov: Messud, *The Emperor's Children* to end.

- Wednesday, 29 Nov: Woodson, *Another Brooklyn* ; HW 13.

- Monday, 4 Dec: Woodson, *Another Brooklyn* tbd.

- Wednesday, 6 Dec: Woodson, *Another Brooklyn* to end; HW 14.

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[7] the-javascripting-english-major.moacir.com

- Monday, 11 Dec: Hardwick, *Sleepless Nights* through part 6.

- Tuesday, 12 Dec: Hardwick, *Sleepless Nights* to end; Project studio

- Wednesday, 13 Dec: Presentations; `HW` 15.

- Wednesday, 20 Dec: Final Project Due □

References

Cole, Teju. *Open City: A Novel*. New York: Random House, 2012.

Crockford, Douglas. *JavaScript: The Good Parts*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2008.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Debord, Guy. "Theory of the Dérive." Translated by Ken Knabb. *Les lèvres nues*, November 1956. `http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html`.

Hardwick, Elizabeth. *Sleepless Nights*. 1979. New York: NYRB Classics, 2001.

Haverbeke, Marijn. *Eloquent JavaScript, 2nd Ed.: A Modern Introduction to Programming*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: No Starch Press, 2014. `http://eloquentjavascript.net`.

McKay, Claude. *Amiable with Big Teeth: A Novel of the Love Affair between the Communists and the Poor Black Sheep of Harlem*, edited by Jean-Christophe Cloutier and Brent Hayes Edwards. 1941. New York: Penguin Classics, 2017.

Messud, Claire. *The Emperor's Children*. New York: Vintage, 2007.

Slesinger, Tess. *The Unpossessed: A Novel of the Thirties*. 1934. New York: NYRB Classics, 2002.

Whitehead, Colson. "City Limits." In *The Colossus of New York: A City in Thirteen Parts*, 3–11. New York: Anchor Books, 2004.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Another Brooklyn: A Novel*. New York: Amistad, 2017.

Calendar

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