

Writing and Walking the Global City (ENGL 4418)

MW 4.00-5.15 pm CST | Fall 2020 | Office Hours: W 5.15-6.30 or by appt.

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What does it mean to be modern? This course poses this question by turning to the eternal protagonist of urban life: the *flâneur*. Call him a dandy, fop, artist, idler, or observer—this figure, long associated with nineteenth-century Paris, was in fact a universal feature of the global metropolis. But should we consider bicycling through Mexico City or driving through Tehran as forms of *flânerie*? Is *flânerie* always the privilege of the upper class, or can it include the deliveries of service workers as well? Does *flânerie* describe a narrative style, or even a mode of argumentation, in addition to a form of literal walking? Is the *flâneur* always afflicted by the melancholic *spleen* of Charles Baudelaire or the nostalgic *hüzün* of Orhan Pamuk, or can he experience joy? To what extent is *flânerie* gendered—can we have, in other words, a *flâneuse*? Canvassing the various ways that streetwalkers have historically taken up space in metropolises old and new, East and West, this course explores the potential, and the limitations, of global modernism in fiction and film. Weekly discussion posting to T Learn (by 9pm each Tuesday), one creative assignment, one short essay (3 pp.), and one final essay (8 pp.) are required. Authors include Virginia Woolf, Valeria Luiselli, Sadeq Hedayat, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Sophie Calle, Marilynne Robinson, and Teju Cole.

Required Texts

- 1) Valeria Luiselli, *Sidewalks* [[Coffee House](#)]
- 2) Ahmet Midhat, *Felâtn Bey and Râkim Efendi* [[Syracuse](#)]
- 3) Sadeq Hedayat, *The Blind Owl* [[Grove](#)]
- 4) Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double* [[Vintage](#)]
- 5) Teju Cole, *Open City* [[Random House](#)]
- 6) W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* [[Modern Library](#)]
- 7) Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* [[Picador](#)]

Assessment

- 1) Attendance, participation, & weekly discussion posts [30%]
- 2) 4-5 page Creative Assignment [20%]
- 3) 3-page essay [20%]
- 4) 7-8-page essay [30%]

Course Schedule

Unit One: What is Flânerie?

8/26: Introduction

8/31: Poe, "The Man of the Crowd"; Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life"

9/2: Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting"; Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust* (ch. 1);
Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life"

9/7: Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century." Selected convolutes
from *The Arcades Project*.

9/9: Benjamin, continued.

*Guest lecture by Henry Sussman (Prof. Emeritus of German, Yale)

Unit Two: East/West Crossings

9/14: Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double* (pp. 1-87)

9/16: Dostoevsky (finish). Marshall Berman, "The Modernism of Underdevelopment"

9/21: Ahmet Midhat, *Felâtn Bey and Râkim Efendi* (pp.1-75)

9/23: Midhat (finish, including “Afterword.”)

9/28: Sadeq Hedayat, *The Blind Owl*.

9/30: Hedayat, continued. Raymond Williams, “When Was Modernism?”

10/4: First essay (3 pp.) due at midnight.

Unit Three: Flâneuse

10/5: Jean-Luc Godard, *Vivre sa vie*. [\[Trinity\]](#). Poe, “The Oval Portrait.”

10/7: Susan Buck-Morss, “The Flâneur, Sandwichman, and the Whore”
Elizabeth Wilson, “The Invisible Flâneur?”

10/12: Valeria Luiselli, *Sidewalks*

10/14: Luiselli (continued).

10/21: Sophie Calle, *The Address Book*
Nancy Armstrong, excerpt from *Desire and Domestic Fiction*

Unit Four: Interiority

10/26: Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping*

10/28: Robinson, continued.

11/2: Teju Cole, *Open City* (pp. 1-146). Excerpt from Watt, *Rise of the Novel*
*With guest Karan Mahajan (novelist, Assistant Prof., Brown)

11/4: Finish Cole.

Unit Five: Socratic Walking

11/9: Plato, *Republic*, Books II, VI & VII

11/11: Plato, *Republic* (continued).

Creative assignment/outline due 11/13 at midnight

Unit Six: Historical Memory

11/16: W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (pp. 1-100).

11/18: Sebald, continued (pp. 100-200). Listen to radio [interview](#).

11/30: Finish Sebald (200-end).

Unit Six: Exteriority (in film)

12/2: Chantal Akerman, *News from Home*.

Ja'far Panahi, *Taxi*. [Both on [Trinity](#)]

Excerpt from Michel de Certeau ("Walking in the City").

Unit Seven: Walking Outside the City

12/7: Henry David Thoreau, "Walking"

Final class! Share thesis statements for final essays with class.

12/13: Final essay (7-8 pp.) due at midnight