

**M.A. Seminar**  
**New York: The Cultural Imaginary of a City**  
**HS 2018, Thursday, 16:15-18:00**  
**Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen**

New York City has always been a concrete place as well as a state of mind: Port of entry for immigrants, port of return for war veterans, the place to make a fortune or to lose everything, modernity's realization of urban freedom and postmodernity's fantasy of urban nightmare. As an imaginary site, it has served as the stage par excellence for the American dream to be realized, in all its light and dark shades.

1. (20.09) Introduction: Joan Didion: "Sentimental Journeys"\* (1992)
2. (27.09) Discussion of group presentations, using multi-media formats

**OLD NEW YORK**

3. (04.10.) Walt Whitman: "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"\* (1856); "Mannahatta"\* (1867)  
Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler: *Manhatta* (1921; screening in class)
4. (11.10.) Herman Melville: "Bartleby, the Scrivener"\* (1856)
5. (18.10.) Groups meet to discuss their presentations
6. (25.10.) Edith Wharton: *The Age of Innocence* (1920)

**THE JAZZ AGE**

7. (01.11.) F. Scott Fitzgerald: "My Lost City"\* (1920); "May Day"\* (post.)  
**Group presentation on "New York Modern"**
8. (08.11.) Toni Morrison: *Jazz* (1992)  
**Group presentation on "Harlem Renaissance"**

**POSTMODERN NEW YORK**

9. (15.11.) Martin Scorsese: *Taxi Driver* (1976)  
David Simon: *The Deuce* (2017)
10. (22.11.) Woody Allen: *Manhattan* (1979)  
**Group presentation on "The Cultural Scene I: Visual arts, photography, music, 'new journalism'"**
11. (29.11.) Spike Lee: *Do the Right Thing* (1989)  
Teju Cole: *Open City* (2011)  
**Group presentation on "The Culture Scene II: Bringing in race and gender"**
12. (06.12.) Paul Auster: *New York Trilogy* (1985-1986)
13. (13.12.) Don DeLillo: *Cosmopolis* (2003); *Falling Man* (2007)  
**Group presentation on "1990s – 9/11"**
14. (20.12.) Siri Hustvedt: *What I loved* (2003)

### **Requirements for Class:**

All students must prepare a one-page preliminary discussion for each class session. These are to be posted on Olat (course forum) by Wednesday, 9 am of the respective week. This can entail a thesis, a series of questions, comments or associations. This will count towards your class participation. Writing this preliminary discussion is, thus, compulsory for each session. **Neglecting to hand in 11 thesis papers will result in a fail.**

Given that this seminar is part of a pilot project regarding visual essays in the class room, all students are also required to take part in a group presentation using multi-media formal. Details will be discussed in the first and second class session.

Students taking the class for **9 KP** must also write an essay, to be handed in by **March 1, 2019**. As with any written assignment, it is wise to use the class discussions to test your ideas for your essay. Please discuss an outline of your essay either with Elisabeth Bronfen, or with one of her assistants, Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch) and Hannah Schoch (hannah.schoch@es.uzh.ch).

### **Select Bibliography:**

Thomas Bender. *New York Intellect. A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of our own Time*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

Ric Burns. *New York. An Illustrated History*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Ann Douglas. *Terrible Honesty. Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995.

Rem Koolhaas. *Delirious New York*. Monacelli Press, 1994.

Phillip Lopate (ed.). *Writing New York. A Literary Anthology*. Library of America, 1998.

Mike Marqusee and Bill Harris. *New York. An Anthology*. Little Brown and Co., 1985.

James Sanders. *Celluloid Skyline. New York and the Movies*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.

William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff. *New York Modern. The Arts and the City*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

William Sharpe. *New York Nocturne. The City After Dark in Literature, Painting, and Photography, 1850-1950*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Nathan Silver. *Lost New York*. Houghton Mifflin, 1967.