**LIB 2205ID LEARNING PLACES: UNDERSTANDING THE CITY**

1 classroom hour, 4 lab/studio hours, 3 credits

**Course Description:** This special topics course offers an interdisciplinary approach to investigating our built environment using a case study focused on a specific place each semester. This course combines physical examination with information research and data collection using methodologies developed in multiple disciplines. Students from a variety of departments engage in on-site exploration and in-depth research of a location in New York City. In this section of the course, students will explore several sites along the waterfront in south Brooklyn and examine issues related to ecology, urban planning, and social justice.

**Course context:** This special topics course is an Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts and Sciences Course that applies toward the BTech/BS General Education Common Core College Option requirements.

**Prerequisites:** ENG 1101 and any Flexible Core Course

**Instructors:** Nora Almeida

**Required Supplies:** notebook, pens, pencils for sketching and taking notes, digital camera or smartphone. This course uses ZTC (Zero Cost Textbook) materials. Instead of buying books, students will use open or freely available materials, including library licensed online resources, which will be made available through OpenLab.

**OpenLab site:** <https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/groups/lib-arch2205id-almeida-sp21/> (in progress)

**Land Acknowledgement:** New York City is built on unceded land of the Lenape people–past, present, and future. The New York City College of Technology is among the thousands of institutions and businesses in this city that were founded upon exclusions and erasures of indigenous people, including the Lenape who were displaced from this land. This acknowledgement demonstrates a commitment to beginning the process of working to dismantle the legacies of settler colonialism. During this course we will learn about, critically examine, and intervene in the conditions in which colonial politics and capital industry have thrived. (adapted from statement: <http://landacknowledgements.org/>)   

## **Course Structure:** This course combines a series of seminars with fieldwork, site visits, and on and off campus research. Combinations of individual and group assignments as well as class participation are the basis for the final grade. The culmination of the weekly assignments is a collaborative research project that takes the form of a podcast or public performative intervention.

**Grading:** Final grade will be determined according to the breakdown below. All assignments, due dates, and rubrics will be reviewed and discussed in class.

15% Citizenship

45% Site Documentation Reports (3)

5% Final Project: Proposal

10% Final Project: Annotated Bibliography

10% Final Project: Performance or Podcast

10% Final Project: OpenLab Project Site

5% Final Project: In-Class Presentation

**Course Policies**

## **Citizenship:** Every class matters, every person in this class matters, and every discussion matters. This course relies on your participation in class discussions, research activities, presentations, group projects, and field visits. Therefore, you should plan on attending every class meeting, arriving on time, and participating fully. *Missed class time will impact your citizenship grade and grades on activities and assignments that require you to be present and participate.*

**Academic Integrity:** Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the college recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension and expulsion.

**Accessibility:** This class only works if it works for everyone and I will do my very best to make content accessible and engaging to all students regardless of learning style or ability. City Tech is committed to supporting the educational goals of students with disabilities in the areas of enrollment, academic advisement, tutoring, assistive technologies and testing accommodations. If you have or think you may have a disability or if you are ill, you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments. You may also request services for temporary conditions or medical issues

under certain circumstances. If you have questions about your eligibility or would like to seek accommodation services or academic adjustments, please contact the Center for Student Accessibility <http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/accessibility/>

**Outline of Class Meetings**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Topic** | **Assignments due** |
| Week 1 | Course themes and key terms introduced; films, readings, and discussions |  |
| Week 2 | Guest lecture: land use and urbanism (Jason Montgomery, Architectural Technology Dept); field visit assignment overview; developing research questions |  |
| Week 3 | Site visit #1 Cadman Plaza and MetroTech Commons; spatial rules; ownership of space; intro to place based research |  |
| Week 4 | Guest lecture: Brooklyn waterfront (Susan Phillip, Hospitality Dept); ecology and industry; finding and evaluating sources | Field report 1 |
| Week 5 | Site Visit #2 Gowanus walking tour; urban development and civic engagement; ethnography and observation |  |
| Week 6 | Performance and disruption; media making and performance activities; land use research | Field report 2 |
| Week 7 | Site Visit #3 Red Hook facilitated performance and ecological activities; the anthropocene |  |
| Week 8 | Guest Lecture: spatial subversion, protest and occupation (Ben Shepard, Human Services Dept); archival research | Field report 3 |
| Week 9 | Site Visit #4: Interference Archive; Final Project: Theme / Site Selection + Group Formation |  |
| Week 10 | Research Seminar: Annotated Bibliography; Group Work: research and analysis |  |
| Week 11 | Group Work: research and analysis; Annotated Bibliography | Final project proposal |
| Week 12 | Podcast / performance workshop development; media making | Annotated bibliography |
| Week 13 | Group work: final project |  |
| Week 14 | Group work: final project editing and documentation |  |
| Week 15 | Final project presentations & reflections | Final projects |

**General Education Learning Outcomes / Assessment Methods**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Assessment Methods** |
| Upon successful completion of this course the student shall be able to: | To evaluate the students’ achievement of the  learning objectives, the professor will do the  following: |
| 1. Develop, purposefully connect and integrate knowledge from a range of architectural, urban studies, information science, and other disciplinary perspectives presented in the course. | 1. Review the final assignment to evaluate integrative, multidisciplinary thinking. |
| 2. Utilize skills in inquiry/analysis to derive meaning from experience as well as gather information from observation. | 2. Review the students’ site documentation report,  research notes, and diagrams |
| 3. Demonstrate and apply information literacy aptitude by gathering, interpreting, evaluating and applying information discerningly from a variety of sources. | 3. Review the students’ research methodology proposal, annotated bibliography, and team research assignments to evaluate critical thinking and analysis across disciplines. |

**Interdisciplinary Learning Outcomes / Assessment Methods**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Assessment Methods** |
| Upon successful completion of this course the  student shall be able to: | To evaluate the students’ achievement of the  learning objectives, the professor will do the  following: |
| 1. Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems. | 1. Review student reflections and final projects to evaluate integrative, multidisciplinary thinking. |
| 2. Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries. | 2. Review student reflections and the final  assignment to evaluate integrative,  multidisciplinary thinking |
| 3. Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems. | 3. Review the students’ research methodology proposal, and bibliography to evaluate critical thinking and analysis across disciplines. |
| 4. Think critically, communicate effectively, and  work collaboratively | 4. Review the students’ class citizenship and research notes and diagrams; review the final assignment to evaluate critical thinking, effective communication, and effective collaboration. |
| 5. Become flexible thinkers. | 5. Review the students’ site documentation report, notes, sketches, and photographs to evaluate the discovery process. |

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes / Assessment Methods**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Assessment Methods** |
| Upon successful completion of this course the  student shall be able to: | To evaluate the students’ achievement of the  learning objectives, the professor will do the  following: |
| 1. Use the city as a laboratory for learning. | 1. Review the students’ site documentation reports, notes, sketches, and photographs to evaluate the care of observation and the reflection of important issues discovered. |
| 2. Develop a methodological approach to research. | 2. Review the students’ research methodology proposal, annotated bibliography, and team research assignment to evaluate critical thinking and analysis across disciplines. |
| 3. Understand the cultural, social and economic processes that guide the physical development of the built environment. | 3. Review the students’ research notes and diagrams; Review the team research assignment and the final report assignment to evaluate integrative, multidisciplinary thinking. |
| 4. Use analytical skills to investigate places | 4. Review the students’ site documentation report, notes, sketches, and photographs to evaluate the care of observation and the reflection of important issues discovered. |
| 5. Develop, document, catalogue, and organize information to make it accessible to the public. | 5. Review the students’ site documentation report, notes, sketches, and photographs to evaluate the care of observation and the reflection of important issues discovered; review the final report to evaluate integrative, multidisciplinary thinking. |
| 6. Apply observational skills to research and analysis. | 6. Review the students’ notes, sketches, and photographs to evaluate the care of observation and the reflection of important issues discovered. |

**Course Readings / Bibliography**

Architecture / Urbanism / Land Use

Angotti, Tom. “Top-Down Comprehensive Planning Will Further Empower Those on Top.” (op-ed) *City Limits.* Jan 13, 2021. https://citylimits.org/2021/01/13/opinion-top-down-comprehensive-planning-will-further-empower-those-on-top/

Ching, Francis D.K. *Design Drawing*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley, 2010. (Excerpts)

Crowe, Norman, and Paul Laseau. *Visual Notes for Architects and Designers*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2012. (excerpts)

Jacobs, Jane. “The Uses of City Neighborhoods.” The Death and Life of Great American Cities.

Leatherbarrow, David. “Architecture’s Unscripted Performance.” in Kolarevic, Branko, and Ali Malkawi, eds. *Peformative Architecture: Beyond Instrumentality*. Routledge, 2005. 5-20.

Mahler, Jonathan. “How the Coastline Became a Place to Put the Poor.” *New York Times.* Dec 04, 2012. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/04/nyregion/how-new-york-citys-coastline-became-home-to-the-poor.html

My Brooklyn (film). Director: Kelly Anderson. 2013.

NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (Draft). https://www.waterfrontplan.nyc/draft-goals-and-strategies

New York City’s Publicly Owned Private Spaces. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/pops/pops.page

“ULURP Explained.” City Limits: https://citylimits.org/zonein/ulurp-explained/

Ecology / Sites

“Artists Evicted in Gowanus.” Radio Free Gowanus, Episode 3 (podcast): http://www.radiofreegowanus.org/episodes/2015/11/15/episode-3-artists-evicted-in-gowanus-9th-st-2nd-ave

Alexiou, Joseph. “Prologue.” *Gowanus : Brooklyn’s Curious Canal*. NYU Press, 2015.

Baker, Kevin. “Where our New World Begins: Politics, Power, and the Green New Deal.” *Harpers*. May 2019.

[Brendlen](https://www.brooklynpaper.com/author/kbrendlen/), Kirstyn. “Simon, Velazquez say Gowanus Rezone needs Work.” *Brooklyn Paper*. Sept 10, 2021. https://www.brooklynpaper.com/simon-velazquez-gowanus-rezoning/

Curtis, Kimberly. “Climate Refugees Explained.” UN Dispatch, April 24, 2017.

Gowanus Neighborhood Plan. NYC Planning Commission. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/gowanus/gowanus-framework.page

LaViolette, Linda, Miranda Sielaff and Nora Almeida. “Opinion: Welcome to Gowanus Green--Brookyn’s Own Love Canal.” BKLYNER. Mar 9, 2021 https://bklyner.com/opinion-welcome-to-gowanus-green-brooklyns-own-love-canal/

LES Community Gardens (Audio Interference Podcast): https://interferencearchive.org/audio-interference-47-lower-east-side-community-gardens/

Del Signore, John. “Spotting Signs of Life on the Poisoned Waters of Newtown Creek.” Gothamist, May 1, 2018.

Duggan, Kevin. “Brooklyn residents make voices heard at hybrid Gowanus rezoning hearing.” *amNY.* June 4, 2021. https://www.amny.com/news/locals-turn-out-of-hybrid-gowanus-rezoning-hearing/

Geberer, Raanan. “Contentious Gowanus rezoning plan paused again.” Brooklyn Daily Eagle. May 20, 2021. https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2021/05/10/contentious-gowanus-rezoning-plan-paused-again/

McLaughlin, John. “Newtown Creek Restoration Ecology.” [Presentation]. NYC Office of Ecological Services. Feb 2014.

Newkirk II, Vann R. “Trump’s EPA Concludes Environmental Racism is Real.” *The Atlantic*. Feb 28, 2018.

Newtown Creek Vision Plan. *Riverkeeper*. 2018. https://www.riverkeeper.org/campaigns/restore-nyc-waterways/newtown-creek-vision-plan/

Oder, Norman. “CityViews: Distorting Downtown Brooklyn’s Past Can Only Obscure Its Future.” *City Limits.* March 1, 2016. https://citylimits.org/2016/03/01/cityviews-distorting-downtown-brooklyns-past-can-only-obscure-future/

Shepard, Peggy. “Building Justice: NYC’s Sacrifice Zones and the Environmental Legacy of Racial Injustice.” *City Limits*. 10 Oct 2016.

Zaveri, Mihir, Brad Hamilton, and Jo Corona. “Why this Toxic Canal Zone is a Litmus Test for NYC Development.” *NYTimes.* April 9, 2021.

Performance / Social Justice

Boal, Augusto. “Invisible Theater,” in Cohen-Cruz, Jan, ed. *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology* (121-124). London: Routledge, 2008.

Boyd, Andrew, and Dave Oswald Mitchell. *Beautiful Trouble : A Toolbox for Revolution*. New York: OR, 2012. Ebook. (Library Login required for off-campus access)

“Bread and Puppet Cheap Art Manifesto:” http://breadandpuppet.org/cheap-art/why-cheap-art-manifesto

“Bread and Puppet Theater Podcast” (Audio Interference): https://interferencearchive.org/audio-interference-46-bread-and-puppet-theater/

Cohen-Cruz, Jan. “Introduction.” *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology* (1-6). London: Routledge, 2008

Reeves, Carolyn. “Climate Change Theatre is LIT: A Study on the Performing Arts and Climate Change Engagement.” *Howlround.* 27 March 2019.

Reverend Billy Videos:

* Exorcism of Monsanto
* Freakstorm: Future of the People’s Climate March
* Freakstorm: Climate Changes Reverend Billy

Smith, Phil. *Counter-Tourism: The Handbook*. Devon: Triarchy, 1993. Ebook. (Library Login required for off-campus access)

van Heeswijk, Jeanne. “The Artist Will have to Decide who to Serve,” in Phillips, Fulya and Cruz, eds. *Actors, Agents and Attendants; Social Housing–Housing the Social: Art, Property and Spatial Justice*. 2012.

Waller, Marguerite. “Border Boda or Divorce Fronterizo?” in Cohen-Cruz, Jan, ed. *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology* (86-89). London: Routledge, 2008.