**Course description:** “New York is a different country,” the entrepreneur Henry Ford once quipped. Throughout its history, the ‘Big Apple’ has been characterized as both an ‘independent space’ in its own right and the epitome of the ‘American Dream.’ It is part of this ambiguous rhetoric that the city has come to symbolize ‘Americanness’ (being the first U.S. capital), but also globalization (‘The World’s Business Capital’). Perhaps more than any other place in the U.S., NYC lends itself to such contradictory projections. This course will investigate a wide range of works based in the city of New York, from the early days of the U.S. republic to the heyday of immigration and the terror of 9/11. We will examine a number of influential texts about the ‘Big Apple,’ including short fiction (Stephen Crane’s *Maggie*, 1893), longer prose (Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer*, 1925), poetry (Walt Whitman’s “Mannahatta,” 1855), comedies (*Annie Hall*, 1977), television shows (*Sex and the City*, 1998–2004), as well as post-9/11 fiction (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 2011). Our discussions will be grounded in scholarly works associated with urban studies and spatial theory (T. Bender, M. de Certeau, H. Lefèbvre, S. Sassen, E. Soja).

**Methods:** This is an interactive course. Participation in group discussions as well as contributions to the discussion forum on the Moodle course site will be part of the final grade.

**Assessment:** Regular attendance; active in-class participation; presentation as part of an expert session with 2-page handout to be distributed in class; at least 8 elaborate entries in the discussion forum; and a final paper of ca. 15 pages.

**Syllabus**

**March 14**  
Introduction: New York – The Quintessential American City?

Basic texts (optional):

**March 21**  
Sizzling New York – Vibrancy and the Melting Pot

Main texts (required):
- Walt Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and “Mannahatta” (poems) (1855-1892).

**March 28, Apr. 4 & 11**  
No class! (Easter Holiday)

Relax and enjoy!

**Apr. 18**  
How the Other Half Lives – New York and its Dark Side

Main text (required):

Additional text (for experts):
- Jacob Riis, excerpts from *How the Other Half Lives* (1890).

Keywords: Ash Can School, Darwinism, Naturalism, Poverty, Prostitution, Sick City, Slums, Tenements.

**Apr. 25**  
The Roaring Twenties – Enthusiasm and Dissillusionment

Main text (required):
- John Dos Passos, excerpts from *Manhattan Transfer* (1925).

Additional text (for experts):

Keywords: Dissillusionment, Immigration, Lost Generation, Metropolis, Success Myth.
May 2

The Harlem Renaissance – Double Consciousness and Urban Black Identity

Main text (required):

Additional text (for experts):

Keywords: Double Consciousness, Ethnicity, Harlem Renaissance, New Negro, Passing, Urban Frontier.

May 9

No class! (Ascension Day)
Relax and enjoy!

May 16

The Music of the City – Ragtime, Jazz, and Nightclubbing

Main text (required):
James Weldon Johnson, ch. 6-8 from Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man (1912).

Additional text (for experts):
Jack Kerouac, “New York Nite Club” (1999 [written ca. 1940]).

Keywords: Billie Holiday, Clubbing, Hip hop, Jazz Age, New York, New York (film), Ragtime.

May 23

Gotham City – Organized Crime, the Urban Jungle, and Noir Aesthetics

Main text (required):
Naked City (dir. Jules Dassin, 1948).

Additional material (for experts):
Episode from CSI: NY (CBS Television, 2004 -).

Keywords: Asphalt Jungle, Batman series, Corruption, Police, Prohibition, Reality Effect.

May 30

No class!
Relax and enjoy!

June 6

The Comical City – Jewish Culture, Diaspora, Humor

Main text (required):

Additional materials (for experts):

Keywords: Brooklyn, Diaspora, Humor, Jewish Community, LA vs. NYC, Art Spiegelman.

June 13

Postmodern New York – Reading and Misreading the “Big Apple”

Main text (required):
Paul Auster, City of Glass (1985), read selectively.

Additional materials (for experts):

Keywords: Anti-Architecture, Detective Fiction, flâneur, Labyrinth, Legibility, Madness, Postmodernism, Textuality.

June 20

The Romantic City – Searching for “Mr. Big”

Main examples (required):
Selected clips from Sex and the City (1998-2004).

Additional materials (for experts):
Joanna di Mattia, “Mr. Big, Mr. Perfect and the Romantic Quest” (2004).

Keywords: ‘Big’, Breakfast at Tiffany’s, Business, Citizenship, Consumption, Fashion, Romanticism, You Got Mail.

June 27

Queer Metropolis – Eroticism and Urban Subcultures

Main examples (required):
Trailer and clip for the movie Shortbus.

Additional materials (for experts):

Keywords: Bohemians, Christopher Street, Diversity, Greenwich Village, Statue of Liberty, Subculture.

July 4

Apocalyptic New York – Fear, Terrorism, and Scenarios of Doom

Main text (required):

Additional materials (for experts):

Keywords: Apocalypse, Falling Man, Global City, Ground Zero, Postmetropolis, Terrorism, Trauma, 9/11.