

ARCH GU4150 _ARCHITECTURE AND MIGRATION IN NEW YORK

Barnard and Columbia Colleges Architecture Department

Fall 2021, Meetings Tuesdays 4:10-6:00PM

Room TBD

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Jacob Riis, Celebrating the feast of St Rocco in Bandits Roost (1895)



Hank Prussing and Manny Vega, The Spirit of East Harlem, mural (1973-78)

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the role that migrant communities have historically played in the construction of New York as well as the spatial negotiations, frictions, and conflicts derived from their settlement in the city. Architecture and urban strategies have historically participated in the definition of frameworks of belonging for migrant communities. However, they have also been used as tools for the exclusion of minority communities, as an alibi in xenophobic arguments, and as mediators of assimilationist policies.

We will discuss the manifold relations of architecture and migration. Migrant individuals and communities are responsible for the design, transformation, and resignification of different structures and enclaves. We will regard both the spatial, material, and aesthetic properties of these transformations as well as the social and cultural struggles, exchanges, and dislocations that they mediate.

We will also discuss the inextricable connection between New York City and migration. The city historically served as the major port of entry for migrants into the US and continues to be a major attractor for transient populations. We will regard New York simultaneously as a city characterized by its ethnic diversity, and one in which immigrants continue to struggle to secure housing, assert their presence in public space, guarantee their access to resources, and defend their rights.

Architecture and Migration in New York is organized around class discussions and a semester-long project involving historical research, digital mapping, and spatial observation. Students are required to register in the 1.5 credit course Methods in Spatial Research. This course is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of Columbia University's Center for Spatial Research's series of seminars on topics related to spatial inequality.

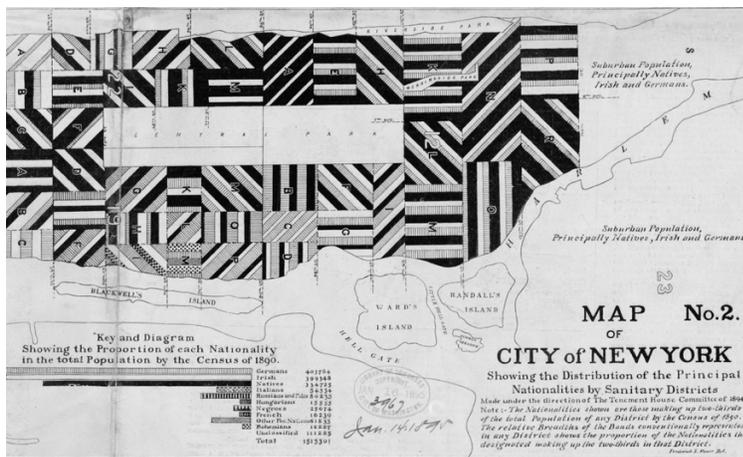
Term project

Throughout the semester, the seminar will collectively work on the development of a city guide. Each student will define a tour that unveils architectural and urban traces of the history of migration in New York City and highlights their relation to the contemporary reality of the city. Students' projects can be framed around specific urban enclaves, they could trace different manifestations of the history of a specific community throughout the city, or could be guided by a topic of concern across different communities. The goal of the tour will be to highlight the way in which the built environment results from the intervention of diverse migrant communities and serves to negotiate their life in the city. It should seek to offer new perspectives on the image of the city, unveil untold histories, and highlight both achievements and struggles of these communities.

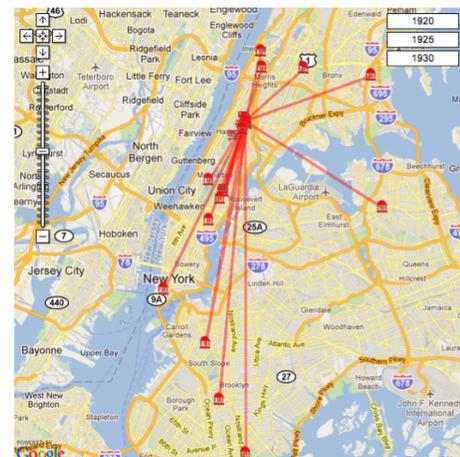
Students taking this course are required to enroll in the 1.5 credit course, Methods in Spatial Research, which will provide technical instruction and ongoing project support. Students will additionally be supported by the New York Public Library Map Division and the Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy. Two workshop sessions will support the work of the students, highlighting specific research techniques relevant to their projects.

By combining diverse mapping techniques (including the visualization of tabular data and the geolocation of historical maps) and diverse forms of direct observation, we aim to contribute to a larger quest of the digital humanities in spatializing historical and social arguments and animating spatial information.

Each tour will consist of a map with at least 5 stops with dedicated descriptions. The map will be developed in coordination with the assignment for Methods in Spatial Research. The total length of the text, including an introduction and the description of each stop, will be between 2,000-3,000 words. All the tours will be combined in a comprehensive digital city guide.



Map of New York showing the distribution of the principal nationality by sanitary districts, fragment (1894)



An individual life, Morgan Thomson, from Digital Harlem (2011)