COL 5044H A Journey from Petersburg to Los Angeles

Comparative Literature Seminar Room
Isabel Bader Theatre (Victoria Campus)
93 Charles Street West, 3d floor

Tuesday 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Instructor: Thomas Lahusen

* E-mail: thomas.lahusen@utoronto.ca
* Office: 319N Munk Centre
* Telephone: 416-946-8966
* Office hours: TBA

The course examines the notion of “displacement,” signifying processes of change in and among places of dwelling, flight, production, and exchange through works of fiction, film, literary/cultural theory, and history. Recent theoretical works on place, space, cultural geography, literary and cinematographic archaeology will be examined through novels, films, and scholarly monographs. Starting from the point inside a series of concentric circles, from which “surges and swarms the printed book” of Andrei Bely’s Petersburg (1913-14), our journey moves then to a series of texts displaying urban and rural spaces in Russia, China, Europe, and North America. We visit: an utopian/dystopian landscape of revolutionary Russia; Paris of Benjamin’s Arcades project; the post-socialist space of a Romanian village; the ruins of fordism of the rust-belt city of Detroit; and end in the polycentric and fragmented urban space of Los Angeles. Other stations of displacement are framed by Chen Kaige’s 1984 film Yellow Earth, Hou Hsiao-Hsien’s 1989 City of Sadness (two traumatic renegotiations of official history in the space of “one country, two systems”); the post-Soviet “decollectivization” film Outskirts (Okraina), by the late Petr Lutsik (1998), and Thom Andersen’s “film essay” Los Angeles Plays Itself.

Readings include, in addition to a number of articles and book chapters (see course outline): Tim Cresswell, Place: A Short Introduction; Henri Lefebvre, Rhythmanalysis; Susan Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project; Thomas J. Sugrue, The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar
The course is designed for students of comparative literature, history, film studies, and cultural geography.

Course organization and requirements

Meetings take place every week. The readings for all sessions are required. Presentations: one or several students are responsible for facilitating the discussion along with the instructor. The presenters prepare discussion questions on the readings, to be sent by e-mail to the entire class at least 2 days before the discussion. Presenters are responsible for the assigned reading plus additional materials, listed under “further reading” in the course outline. In the week of the presentation, they should be the experts on the assigned readings and should be among the most active participants.

The grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Active class participation (25%). Mere physical presence during the seminar will earn you no more than 50 percent of this grade.

2. One seminar presentation/moderation (25%)

3. One final 30 page (double-spaced) research paper. (50%).

The topic for the final paper is to be chosen in consultation with the instructor. It should specifically relate to the notions of place and space, and other theoretical concepts used in the course. An outline with a bibliography will have to be submitted no later than week 8 of the course. Each outline and bibliography must be approved by the instructor before the student continues with the project.

Papers must follow the Chicago Manual of Style format (Humanities style). For a quick guide, see: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

The papers must be submitted in hard copy to the History Department (100 St. George Street). An electronic version of the papers must also be submitted to: thomas.lahusen@utoronto.ca

Penalty for lateness: 2% per day

Reading assignments
A. Books on order at the Toronto Bookstore
A number of books will be on short-term loan but access cannot be guaranteed.

B. A number of book chapters and articles: see course outline.

Course Outline

Session 1 (11 January) ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Session 2 (18 January) PLACE, SPACE & TIME


Session 3 (25 January) THE SYMBOLIC CITY: PETERSBURG
Reading:
1. Andrei Bely, *Petersburg* (1913-14);
Introduction: http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i7897.html


Session 4 (1 February) RHYTHMANALYSIS
Reading: Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life* (London-New York: Continuum, 2004); a power point presentation on Lefebvre (available on Blackboard).

Session 5 (8 February)   SPACES OF HIGH-MODERNISM


Session 6 (15 February)   CINEMASPACES
Films: *Yellow Earth* [Huang tudi] (Chen Kaige, 1984); *City of Sadness* [Beiqing Chengshi] (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1989).

Screenings of these films have to be organized prior to class by the students at the Audiovisual Media Commons at Robarts Library. Copies of these films will be made available for this screening only and cannot be checked out.

Reading:

Further reading: Bérénice Reynaud, *A City of Sadness* (London : BFI, 2002); Fredric

22 February: Reading Week

Session 7 (1 March)   DIALECTICS OF SEEING

Session 8 (8 March)   POSTFORDIST SPACE

Further reading: [http://detroityes.com/home.htm](http://detroityes.com/home.htm)

Session 9 (15 March)   POSTSOCIALIST SPACE

Film: *Outskirts (Okraina)*, Petr Lutsik, 1998.  
For a short introduction to the film, see: [http://www.rusfilm.pitt.edu/1999/border.html](http://www.rusfilm.pitt.edu/1999/border.html)

The screening of this film has to be organized prior to class by the students at the Audiovisual Media Commons at Robarts Library. A copy of the film will be made available for this screening only and cannot be checked out.

**Session 10 (15 March) **  
**INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS ON STUDENTS’ PROJECTS.**

Meetings will take place in my office, 319N Munk Centre. Please sign up by email.

**Session 11 (22 March) **  
**POSTMODERN SPACE**


**Session 12 (29 March) **  
**Film: Los Angeles plays itself (Thom Andersen, 2003)**

Interview with Thom Andersen: [http://www.reverseshot.com/summer04/andersen.html](http://www.reverseshot.com/summer04/andersen.html)

The screening of this film has to be organized prior to class by the students at the Audiovisual Media Commons at Robarts Library. A copy of the film will be made available for this screening only and cannot be checked out.

**Session 13 (5 April) **  
**PRESENTATION OF FINAL PAPER PROJECTS**

Due date for research paper: TBA