**Who Let Them Build *That*? An Interdisciplinary Investigation of Six Places in New York**

Fridays, 11-1

409 Avery

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In this collaborative seminar, we will focus on a handful of large-scale projects in New York City and ask: Why is it like this and how did it get this way?   
  
In my writing for *New York* magazine and other publications, I come to those questions from the viewpoint of a journalistic critic addressing a large, non-academic readership whose level of expertise and awareness of how the city develops is impossible to predict. I have to educate myself, and my readers, about many areas of expertise that interact and overlap in a dense city. In this class, we will (figuratively) walk around each project and approach it first along one track, then another, then another, and finally try to understand how the architecture and planning have responded to all those concurrent and conflicting forces. The point is to embrace the complexity of each site and understand the way the past, the present, and the future intertwine.

We will start with a list of rubrics for each project (and formulate others), which may touch on fields as disparate as planning, zoning, activism, preservation, politics, social history, performing arts, engineering, and retail. Many other specialized topics also swirl together in New York development, including gentrification, transit, industry, the waterfront, housing policy, climate change, and literature. Although these areas are usually treated and taught separately, in real life they regularly collide and overlap.

We will generally spend two weeks on each project, though that may vary. Students will be asked to research and present several compact, information-filled 10-minute in-class reports on specific topics throughout the semester. The exact number will depend on enrollment; the more participants, the more we can distribute the labor. Then we will try to pull together the various strands of research together in class. Students will be graded on presentations and in-class participation. Attendance is mandatory and crucial.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan. 25 Introduction

Villa Julia (Rice Mansion), 89th St. & Riverside Drive

Feb. 1 Columbus Circle

Feb. 8 New Domino. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS BEGIN

Feb. 15 New Domino, cont.

Feb.22 Lincoln Center

Mar. 1 Lincoln Center, cont.

Mar. 8 Museum of Modern Art

Mar. 15 Museum of Modern Art, cont.

Mar. 22 NO CLASS

Mar. 29 One Vanderbilt

Apr. 5 One Vanderbilt, cont.

Apr. 12 United Nations

Apr.19 United Nations, cont.

**COLUMBUS CIRCLE**

**Reading**:

Herbert Muschamp, “The Secret History of 2 Columbus Circle,” *New York Times*, Jan. 8 2006. Also in *Hearts of the City: Selected Writings of Herbert Muschamp*, p. 789 ff.

Justin Davidson, “The Megamall-Hotel-Condo-Concert Hall that Ate New York City,” *New York*, Jan. 10, 2018.

*New York 1960*, pp, 667-672

*New York 2000*, pp. 746-779

**NEW DOMINO**

**Reading**:

*Greater Gotham*, pp. 3-60

Philip Lopate, *Waterfront: A Walk Around Manhattan*, pp. 400-412.

“The Lading of a Ship,” Harpers’ New Monthly Magazine, Vol. LV, No. 328 (September, 1877), pp. 481-493.

Justin Davidson, “New Plans for the Domino Sugar Complex, Revealed,” in New York magazine (online), Oct. 3, 2017.

**Presentation Topics**

Sugar and slavery in the development of New York City

The Havemeyer Family, Local and National Power

The industrial waterfront in the 19th & 20th centuries

Williamsburg waterfront rezoning during the Bloomberg adminstration

Kara Walker, *A Subtlety*

The Developers: Jed Walentas, Two Trees, and DUMBO

Two master plans: Rafael Viñoly (2010) and SHoP (2014)

Williamsburg demographics

The industrial aesthetic in the post-industrial age

Architectural aesthetics and the megaplan

Domino Park and NYC waterfront landscapes

**LINCOLN CENTER**

**Readings:**

G*reater Gotham*, pp. 382-392.

*New York 1960*, pp. 677-717.

Samuel Zipp, *The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York*, “Lincoln Center,” pp. 157-249.

Committee on Slum Clearance*, Preliminary Report, Lincoln Square Project*, 1956. (<https://archive.org/details/preliminaryrepor00newy_0>)

Jane Jacobs, “A Living Network of Relationships,” 1958, in Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storring, eds., *Vital Little Plans: The Short Works of Jane Jacobs,*” pp. 130-143.

Justin Davidson, “The Illusionists: How Diller Scofidio + Renfro is Changing New York,” in *The New Yorker*, May 14, 2007.

**Topics**

Why did the performing arts need an acropolis?

San Juan Hill and urban renewal

The architects and their collaboration

Carnegie Hall, before and after Lincoln Center

New York City Opera and the pursuit of the perfect house

Thelonious Monk, Jazz, and Lincoln Center

Performing Arts and the Cold War

Acoustics

Modernism and historicism at Lincoln Center

The Diller Scofidio + Renfro renovation: opening the acropolis

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**Readings:**

*New York 1960*, pp. 473-487

*New York 2000,* pp. 586-606

**Topics:**

The museum as architectural influencer: International Style, Machine Art

Forming the modern canon

Early expansions

The evolving midtown context

Rethinking the canon: MoMA QNS and PS1

The museum and the skyline: Museum Tower and 53 West 53rd St.

Yoshio Taniguchi

The Museum of American Folk Art

Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s MoMA

How does MoMA’s approach to defining its mission through architecture and preservation compare to other New York museums?

**ONE VANDERBILT**

Reading:

*Greater Gotham*, pp. 143-178

Anthony W. Robins, *Grand Central Terminal, 100 Years of a New York Landmark*, 2013

Municipal Art Society, *The Accidental Skyline* 2017 ([https://www.mas.org/news/the-accidental-skyline-2017/](https://www.mas.org/news/the-accidental-skyline-2017))

New York City Department of City Planning, “Greater East Midtown” Rezoning Proposal, adopted by City Council Aug. 9, 2017 (<https://www.mas.org/news/the-accidental-skyline-2017/>).

Flint, Anthony, “The Price of Saving Grand Central Station,” *Citylab*, Oct. 17, 2018 (<https://www.citylab.com/design/2018/10/saving-grand-central-40-years-later-cautionary-tale/573208/>)

**Topics**:

Terminal City

New building, old transit: Grand Central, transit improvements. East Side Access

East midtown rezoning efforts in the Bloomberg and De Blasio administrations

The Accidental Skyline (Municipal Art Society campaign)

Urban competitiveness: New York v. London and Hong Kong

Intra-urban competitiveness: East Midtown v. Hudson Yards and WTC

East midtown and the public realm: Vanderbilt Place

The architecture of the 21st century office tower

Preservation issues with East Midtown rezoning

**UNITED NATIONS**

**Readings**:

*New York 1960*, pp. 601-38

E.B. White, “Here is New York,” in Kenneth T. Jackson and David S. Dunbar, eds., *Empire City: New York Through the Centuries*, pp. 695-711.

CarterWiseman and Martti Ahtisaari, *The United Nations at 70, Restoration and Renewal*, 2015.

AdamBartos and ChristopherHitchens*, International Territory: Official Utopia and the United Nations*, 1994.

**Topics**

The idea of world government

42nd Street, boulevard of grand ideals

Modernism and the architecture of peace

The search for a site

The architects and their collaboration

The renovation: security, symbolism, preservation

Preserving the modern

The Rockefellers and New York real estate

The campus as urban catalyst and burden: development, traffic, security

Individual buildings:

Secretariat

General Assembly

Conference Center

Dag Hammarskjold Library

**Bibliography**

While the reading for this course comes from a variety of sources, there are a few books you may find especially useful. I have dealt with some of the sites and issues we will cover, in my book, *Magnetic City*, *A Walking Companion to New York.* The others are expensive books that occupy a lot of bookshelf real estate, so whether or not you buy them is up to you, but I consult them regularly.

Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham, A History of New York City to 1898*.

Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, *A History of New York City from 1898 to 1919*.

Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman*, New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age*.

Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and Gregory Gilmartin, *New York 1930, Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars*.

Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman*,* *New York 1960, Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial*.

Robert A.M. Stern, David Fishman, and Jacob Tilove*, New York 2000: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Bicentennial and the Millennium*.