

**HIST-UA 828: Urban Modernism
January Term 2019**

**MTWR 9.30-12.25
KJCC 701**

Professor Ortolano
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KJCC 420
Office hours: Immediately after class

Description

This course examines “urban modernism” (c.1920-1980) in a range of national contexts throughout the twentieth century. The goal is to understand the ideas and ambitions behind developments that subsequently became notorious. Cities examined include St. Louis, Brasília, Sheffield, Chandigarh, Los Angeles, New York, and London; figures considered include Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier, Jane Jacobs, Reyner Banham, and J. G. Ballard. By the end of the semester, students will be able to identify, explain, and assess the ruins of urban modernism that continue to persist all around us. The course consists primarily of seminar discussions, and assumes no prior study or knowledge.



*Le Corbusier's 1925 plan to redesign
Paris around a series of tower blocks.*

Evaluation

- 33% Participation (includes presentation)
- 33% Writing exercises (includes revisions)
- 33% Research paper (about 8 pages)

Course policies

1. Academic integrity. Intellectual integrity is the university community's fundamental commitment. Plagiarism will be penalized to the fullest extent, without warning or exception. A helpful rule of thumb is to be polite: when you draw upon somebody's work or ideas, thank them in the form of a footnote. For further details on NYU policy, see:

➤ <http://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html>

2. Attendance. You are permitted one absence without discussion; a second absence will be reflected in your participation; no student with three absences will pass the course. *These policies take effect from the first day of the semester, regardless of when you personally enroll.*

3. Writing. All written assignments must be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and numbered pages, and submitted in hard copy. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of one full letter grade per day: a B paper, submitted the morning after it was due, will receive a C. All work must be properly documented, according to any standard reference system; if you are not familiar with any system, use the following:

➤ http://chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

4. Computers. While you are permitted to bring laptops or electronic readers to class, you are asked to disable the internet connection before class begins. **Any student who engages in electronic communication of any kind – including casual web browsing – during class will be regarded as absent.**

5. Religious holidays. NYU accommodates observances of religious holidays. In order to receive this accommodation, notify the instructor of any planned absences during the first week of the term. Details on NYU's policies may be found at:

➤ <http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html>

I: ORIGINS

Monday, January 7

St. Louis and the End of Urban Modernism

- View and discuss *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (2011).

Tuesday, January 8

The Dream of Urban Planning

- Peter Hall, "The City of Dreadful Night: Reactions to the Nineteenth-Century Slum City: London, Paris, Berlin, New York, 1880-1900," *Cities of Tomorrow* (2002), pp. 13-47.
- Leif Jerram, "Building Utopia: How Cities Shaped our Lives and our Minds," *Streetlife: The Untold Story of Europe's Twentieth Century* (2011), pp. 317-384.

Wednesday, January 9

Ebenezer Howard and the Garden City

- Robert Fishman, "Ebenezer Howard," *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century* (1977), pp. 23-88.
- Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1902), excerpts.

II. MODERNISMS

Thursday, January 10

Le Corbusier and CIAM

- Fishman, “Le Corbusier,” *Urban Utopias*, pp. 163-263.
- Le Corbusier, *The Athens Charter* (1933), excerpts.

Monday, January 14

The (Very) High Modernist City

- John Grindrod, “Sheffield’s Streets in the Sky (1957-61),” *Concretopia* (2013), pp. 167-182.
- Peter Hall, “The City of Towers: The Corbusian Radiant City: Paris, Chandigarh, Brasilia, London, St. Louis, 1920-1970,” *Cities of Tomorrow*, pp. 218-261.
- James C. Scott, “The High-Modernist City: An Experiment and a Critique,” *Seeing Like a State* (1998), pp. 103-146.

Tuesday, January 15

Jane Jacobs and New York Modernism I

- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), excerpts.
- View and discuss “Citizen Jane” (2016).

Wednesday, January 16

Robert Moses and New York Modernism II

- Robert Caro, “The City Shaper,” *New Yorker*, 5 January 1998.
- Hillary Ballon and Kenneth Jackson, *Robert Moses and the Modern City* (2007), excerpts.

Thursday, January 17

NYU Modernism

- Walking tour of NYU modernism.

III. CRITICISMS

Tuesday, January 22

Reyner Banham and the Rise of LA

- Edward Dimendberg, “The Kinetic Icon: Reyner Banham on Los Angeles as Mobile Metropolis,” *Urban History* 33:1 (2006): 106-125.
- Reyner Banham *et al.*, “Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom” (1969).
- Sam Wetherell, “Freedom Unplanned” (2016).
- View and discuss “Rayner Banham Loves Los Angeles” (1972).

Wednesday, January 23

The Turn against High Rise

- Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat* (2006), 585-604.
- J. G. Ballard, *High-Rise* (1975).

Thursday, January 24

The Ruins of Urban Modernism

- Peter Hall, “Planning Turned Upside-Down,” *Cities of Tomorrow*, pp. 378-403.
- Tom Wolfe, “From Bauhaus to Our House,” *Harper’s*, July 1981, pp. 40-59 (online).
- John Grindrod, “The Dream Has Gone but the Baby is Real,” *Concretopia* (2013), pp. 431-440.
- View and discuss “Robin Hood Gardens: Requiem for a Dream” (2014).