Dangerous & Intermingled: WASP New York & Its Others
Fall 2015, Fridays 12:30-6:10 pm, 8 credits
Waverly #570, check WordPress site for weekly rendezvous sites

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In the world of Calvinists and fundamentalists, intermingled New York has and still represents the epitome of danger and evil about the ongoing American experiment—the public mixture of classes, genders, races, sexualities, spiritualisms, and the-devil-knows-what-else!? We’ll immerse ourselves in the multiple presents, pasts, and futures of this global metropolis, this historical center of cultural and economic meaning-making.

As elite Protestants created a refined European-affected and rigid "high brow" politics and culture, they also created myriad "others"—a transgressive, lowly polyglot city of shadows, “miscegenation,” and impurity. This intensive, immersive 8 credit one-semester course will examine the historical formation of both sides of this constructed, problematic yet foundational binary in the built cityscape, the streets, in the archives, and in the “artifacts” of Manahata.

WASP NY focuses on the colonization and romance of Manahata from Lenape coastal communities to Kieft's War, from Henry James' Washington Square to Ayn Rand's Wall Street 1%. The rise of wealthy white Anglo American Protestants from port trade becomes the basis for an unresolved, striving elite culture constantly moving uptown away from intermingled, non-WAAP others and from it's own repressive self-disciplining.

The core focus of the course is on how this othering process creates disenfranchised subalternal New Yorkers. This focus flips the gaze of power to the vantage of various othered contesting and claiming their right to the city and more democratic participation and rights. The docks, the Bowery, The Five Points, Greenwich Village, LES/Loisaida, Chinatown, Harlem, youth and LBGT subcultures were all forged against the repressed imaginings of the powerful and the distinguished. This peoples’ Gotham, this disdained intertwined underworld of music, slang, jokes, songs, stories, foodways, and marvels of people will be the focus of this advanced research seminar.

With an intensive dialogue-driven seminar approach, students will learn how to conduct case studies diving into the research of primary sources. The course will
feature research walks led by Noah Fuller, co-founder of the Below The Grid Project, and urban mapping sessions led by Michelle Esteva, also of the BTG Project. This is a foundational humanities and urban studies research seminar preparing you for primary research in history, humanities, and social-cultural analysis.

Whose Point of View?
I take a dialogue-driven & chronotopic approach towards learning. Active participation is the expectation. And, to become aware of how our points of views have been formulated and constitute our sense of knowing ourselves and our worlds, what feminists of color call our “subject position,” is foundational. In order to understand what we “choose” as an artifact, we also have to understand ourselves better in the dance of the self and other. While we explore the complexity of our fascination with your chosen artifact, we necessarily also need to explore our own subjective and objective selves. We need to explore those many “intersectional” layers and facets and consciousnesses of our positionality at home (wherever that may be), at NYU, at work, in societies, etc. How are we “hailed” into an identity by others, and how do we identify, counter-identify and dis-identify with normative ideology? We, as a research community will need to be reflexive about this dance of all those fascinating others and fascinating selves. Over the term we’ll be challenged by Maori critic/researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s philosophical and practical challenge to Eurocentric, colonialist knowledge production. Her indigenous, feminist critique is useful, I believe, for all of our work.

Each of us actually represent composite selves, highly mixed and layered with influences by many "others." Our goal is to gain more critical awareness of these mixtures and layers as we also triangulate with NYC and our various artifacts. Individually and collaboratively we will gain more critical, rigorous perspectives about yourselves and our artifacts.

Talking across our differences, honest analysis, rethinking, and the process of re-searching buried artifacts and fragments are some of the tools we’ll be using to deconstruct and reconstruct, decode and recode a more critical knowledge. Method and form have to be flexible to effectively probe the phenomenon and origins of subaltern New York. Our re-search will be collaborative, dialogue driven, personal and political, reflexive and ongoing. I won't provide “answers” for you to regurgitate. We'll all be formulating provisional questions and provisional answers with the goal of improving our approximations of understanding what this phenomenon has and is about.

Let’s not take any meanings for granted. Typically, for example, we take measures of time and place as fixed and essential. But are they?!?

Time, contrary to Greenwich Mean Time scientism, is a cultural historical construct that has been infinitely meaningful and manipulated. What is the “Present”? “Past”? “Future”? at any given moment? Place, contrary to British imperial measures of
longitude (also from Greenwich as point zero) and the earlier Western invention of latitude, is also so constructed. What about topos? “Home,” a learned set of dispositions and relations to a place, what French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls a form of “habitus” is part of the cultural cartography of here/there, insider/outsider, us/them, citizen/alien, etc.

Since the creation of the 1811 Commissioner’s Plan grid on Manhattan Island, real estate development paralleled the formation of a white Anglo American Protestant political culture. The material, cultural, and political culture was literally and symbolically fixed into the grid-flattened landscape. In the spaces created, there has been a constant contestation over defining the lives, values, and meanings each building, block, neighborhood, and streetscape, as they shift from era to era. Chrono-topo: Chronos or time and topos or place. A chronotope, therefore, is the culturally bound meanings we tie to a specific artifact and how it is located in time and place. The fragments and artifacts of subaltern New York will be examined as chronotopic case studies. You’ll be situating them in time and place from our vantage of the here and now of our seminar.

But the grid is not all-powerful.  
What happening despite the grid?  
Under the grid? Sideways from the grid?  
And in the grid?

The best way to understand the city is by actually walking in the city, while studying it. It’s best to feel its scale and particularities of each block while trying to keep a sense of the city as a whole and as part of global flows. This interlinked process of being in the city and researching it will be key for developing a history and perspective to our walking practice. We’ll be getting out into the streets as much as practicable and as much as the weather allows w/o all getting sick!

Expectations  
There will be weekly assignments and comments that will include:
- choosing your research artifact project completing a final project
- researching and contributing to each cycle of digital mapping
- work in research teams
- present in panel w/group chosen thematic
- write critical self-evaluation for mid-term and final

Digital Mapping  
Each unit will contain a digital mapping exercise, alternating between a collaborative class project and an independent mapping related to their final research project. Each mapping project will showcase new and more complex features of CartoDB, allowing students to get comfortable with the basics in the first half of the semester before building final project maps.
The initial mapping will be a class effort focused on the Seward Park Urban Renewal Area (SPURA), working with the Cooper Square Committee to help locate former residents, map their former addresses with a short oral history and photos, and use the information to help them make claims for the new low- and moderate-income housing being constructed.

Each of the four mapping exercises will be integrated into a common class CartoDB map, showing the links between each of the students’ research. The final map with final research projects will be synthesized by Noah Fuller in early January 2016 and shared publicly.

**Archival Research**
Central to the Below the Grid project is using historical and archival resources to inform the digital mapping process. The first three units will include a short archival workshop or site visit that builds on these skills.

In the first unit students will learn how to use government documents such as the census and tax records to locate individuals and find information on them through newspaper archives. In the second unit students will visit the Municipal Archives to experience archival digging first hand.

**Creative Technology**
Beyond the mapping of basic text and photos students will have the option of mapping sound recordings, video, and other non-traditional media. The class will offer a series of optional after-class workshops on the basics of audio and video recording.

**Evaluation and Project Assessment Plan**
We've received a Teaching with Technology grant from The Gallatin School. Required as part of that process is to conduct an evaluation. We will use a version of the "inductive assessment approach" tailored for qualitative fieldwork, organized with a series of group discussions.

**Project Timeline**
Dangerous is defined by four units of 3-4 week cycles that build students digital mapping, archival research and basic creative technology skills through a series of workshops integrated into the curriculum and class projects.

**Unit 1 - Migrant New York (September 11—October 2)**
- Group Mapping Project #1
- Research Workshop #1
- Optional audio field recording workshop
- Selection of student artifact research projects
- Walking tours with digital maps and smart devices begin

**Unit 2 - Enslaved NY (October 9--October 23)**
• Independent Artifact Project Mapping #1
• Research Workshop #2
• Optional video recording workshop
• Group Mapping Project #1 integrated into class CartoDB map

Oct 30 – Midterm evaluation

Unit 3 - Indigenous NY (October 30--November 13)
• Group Mapping Project #2
• Research Workshop #3
• Midterm evaluations of student progress
• Student selection of final project form
• Independent Artifact Project Mapping #1 integrated into class CartoDB

Unit 4 - Activist NY (November 20--December 11)
• Independent Artifact Project Mapping #2
• Group Mapping Project #2 integrated into class CartoDB map

Three-person panel discussions of final projects (finals week)

Final individual artifact projects due Saturday, December 19.

Website Launch (March 2016)
• A Below the Grid website that’s centered around the student mapping and independent research projects.

Grades & Self-Evaluations
I don’t believe in grades but am required to give them. I believe in effort, engagement, cultivating insights, and sustained work. Where did you start the term and how much did you learn by the end of the term? I believe in regular self-evaluations and giving feedback. And getting feedback from “others” is essential. So, attendance is important. So is working collaboratively. And honest engagement with each other, yourself, and yours truly is imperative. We are all en-culturated within various powerful culturally normative systems and our senses are habituated to find comfort and meaning within them. Yet, meaning cannot just be found in the “head” but must integrate “heart” and “soul,” smell, taste, touching with the Western “higher” senses of sight and sound, right and left, upper and lower, and in how we live our lives and practice our theories. This, to me, is what critical cross-cultural researchers are made of.

Practical stuff
In addition to weekly postings and comments on Ning, you’ll be required to produce two tangible products as markers of what you’ve discovered: a reflective personal/political mapping essay and the artifact project. I’ll explain the former in the next couple of weeks. Typically the latter is in the form of a research essay paper, but depending on your passions and skills this could be any kind of original
research work—a performance, a series of poems, an activist project, an exhibition...whatever.

Whatever the agreed upon final form, the project will need to embody careful and thoughtful research, drafts, comments, and a final version by exam week. I’m more concerned about concision, quality, depth...not length.

Field Notebook.
Please keep all your notes and fieldnotes in one bound volume. Ideally, get a bound, hardcover 100 page or more composition-like notebook just for this project/class. If you have notes from somewhere else or a scribble on a piece of paper, just tape it into the notebook. When you read, write your notes into this. This will be the primary, low-tech research/field notebook.

Weekly assignments.
To build up to the project, you’ll need to quickly identify some subaltern family of artifacts that you are fascinated with and fixated on. I’ll assign a series of weekly decoding exercises to squeeze every bit of insight and historical context you can out of that chronotope. These assignments will contribute to the research and formulation of your project.

Research assistance.
Andrew Lee, Bobst history librarian extraordinaire, has agreed to help us formulate and pursue research questions and develop your artifact projects. You can meet with him directly and/or email him, he’ll also have access to our WordPress site and make suggestions.

Events.
Here we are in NYC with so much going on all the time. I want to encourage you to attend and write short reviews of three plus activities related to your project. In the case of a more involved event like a film festival, you can pick one film and any discussion that related to it. This will count as extra credit work and help offset any bad days.

Group networking
WordPress & CartoDB are user-friendly collaborative and social media sites we will link. It has robust interactivity and puts more choice in your fingertips than the top-down design of NYU Classes. You’ll be required to post your assignment each week and comment on fellow seminar-mates postings. We want to cultivate a collaborative learning community in seminar as on Ning as an extended seminar space.