

IDSEM-UG1810
Art and Politics in the City: New York and Buenos Aires
New York University
Gallatin School of Individualized Study

Instructors: Profs. Florencia Malbrán and Alejandro Velasco

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Hours: TBA

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Spring 2015: Term

Bobst LL 141: Location

TH 2:00-4:45PM (NYC): Time Pre 3/8

TH 4:00-6:45PM (BsAs)

TH 2:15-4:55PM (NYC): Time Post 3/8

TH 3:15-5:55PM (BsAs)

Course Description

This course brings together students in New York and Buenos Aires to examine how urban arts and politics intersect in the Americas: How are art and politics understood and expressed differently and similarly in these two American metropolises and why? How do shared aesthetic features of public art in the city reflect the global circulation of urban creative modes? What do we learn about local politics from looking at the art and writing on a city's public spaces? Teams of students in both cities will conduct field work in selected neighborhoods to help create an archive of murals, graffiti, performances, and installations. Then, drawing from readings in history, art criticism, and urban studies, as well as from census and electoral data and using GIS technology, we will analyze how social and political processes like gentrification, inequality, and planning generate and reflect creative political expression as captured in our database, culminating in transnational, collaborative projects that explore what the art and writing of city streets reveals about urban life in 21st century America.

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about the contested meanings of “public art,” examining through both an aesthetic perspective and a place-based perspective what constitutes art and how specific contexts inform different appreciations of the works in question.
- By engaging with art criticism and developing a practice of discussing public art pieces through layers of production, location, context, medium, intent, and others, students will learn how to “read” public art.
- By reading contemporary histories of both New York and Buenos Aires, in particular how both government and non-government actors have made use – whether through cooptation or elimination – of public art, students will learn to integrate historical process into their analysis of contemporary phenomena.
- In reading urban political theory, students will learn about the politicization of space and how “right to the city” language has come to shape contemporary debates on the balance between public and private, and how artistic expression contributes to that debate.
- Students will also learn about the impact on public expression of laws and planning priorities on what constitutes “public space,” and how legality alternately constrains some forms of creative expression and promotes others, while providing new opportunities for political engagement and understandings of citizenship in urban contexts.

- Students will learn to use social scientific methods of collecting and interpreting demographic and electoral data, as well as data visualization tools for the purposes of conducting multi-layered analyses of place, politics, and population.

Grading/Requirements

Participation/Attendance	throughout	20%
Street/Public Art Documentation	weekly	5%
Public Art Analysis essay (individual)	varies per student	30% (10% x3)
Local history/culture/politics essay (group)	9 March	15%
Group Presentation	7 May	10%
Comparative Analytic Essay (group)	14 May	20%

The full class (both the NYC and BA sections) will meet via internet once weekly, and each session will consist of two parts. One part will be devoted to discussing shared reading assignments in a plenary session, and students will be graded on their individual participation in these plenary discussions.

During the other part of the weekly class session, five student groups of four people each – two students in both NYC and BA respectively – will meet in the assigned classroom via skype, google chat or a comparable platform and spend about 45 minutes collaborating on the major research project for the course. Namely, students will produce a course website cataloging street art and graffiti and analyzing their intersections with local politics in both cities. The final 20-30 minutes of each session will be reserved for the groups to provide updates to, summarize findings for, raise questions to, or solicit feedback from the plenary.

Each group will choose a geographically finite area, previously determined by the instructors, in both NYC and BA. (So that each group will be responsible for two areas, one in each city; these may be neighborhoods or parts of neighborhoods.) Once they have determined their area of focus, each group will generate the following content and be assessed both as a group and individually based on the strength of their contributions:

- **Local history, culture, and politics:** This 10-12 page paper asks each group to conduct research on the areas or neighborhoods that they have selected (so each four person group will produce two 10-12 page essays). It will include locating and reading city guides, sections of monographs, academic journal articles, or newspaper/magazine articles specifically addressing that neighborhood/area, if available. In addition, students will also engage in unstructured, casual conversations with area residents, businesses, and visitors to develop a sense of the area as it currently exists, as well as to develop an idea of what major or minor issues seem to be most in the minds of area residents and others. Finally, by conducting web searches of city newspapers about their area or neighborhood, and by developing a habit of periodically reading local press, students will report on both city wide political context and any local political happenings. In particular, by researching the most recent local elections, students will identify the various political parties, candidates, and issues at stake. The idea is for the pair of students who is not in either NYC or Buenos Aires to serve as the target

audience/reference/peer reviewer for the other pair of students. So while the entire group will be responsible for both essays and be graded collectively as a group, each paper will be mainly researched and written by the pair of students in the respective city.

- **Street/Public Art documentation:** Student pairs in each group (one in NYC and one in BA) will alternate bi-weekly to discuss with the other pair of students time-stamped images of street art/graffiti that they will periodically upload onto the web based platform above. This will require students to habitually walk around their selected area/neighborhood not just documenting street art/graffiti that they see, but registering (through updates on the platform) any changes to street art/graffiti they have seen. For instance, if an item is painted over, or a new one goes up they had not seen before in the same area. Additionally, students will research past public art projects that were installed on their selected area/neighborhood but are no longer on view due to their ephemeral nature (e.g. Rachel Whiteread's *Water Tower* in SoHo – 1998; Pipilotti Rist's *Open my Glade* in Times Square 2000; Marta Minujín's *Partenón de Libros* in downtown Buenos Aires – 1983; and Leandro Tartaglia's *La esquina indicada* in Chacarita, Buenos Aires – 2010-12).
- **Individual essays:** Over the course of the semester, students will individually produce three short (approx three-page) analytic essays on a piece of street or public art that they have documented in their area, considering in particular its aesthetic features vis-à-vis others in the area, its production (authored or anonymous), its status (legal or illegal), its message (abstract or direct), its political content (explicit or implicit), and its context (demographic, political, etc). Students will also ask passers-by for their opinion on the piece, and incorporate those reflections into their analysis as pertinent.
- **Group Presentation:** On May 7, each team of four students will have 20 minutes to present to the class as a whole, and to receive feedback on, their preliminary analyses of how art and politics intersect in their respective geographic areas. This presentation should draw on the various elements that have gone into the construction of the database corresponding to your designated city area – street/public art documentation, history/culture/politics essay, individual essays. What connections, relationships, correlations do you see when you visualize the data? What patterns if any did you find? What proved surprising in the data? What proved predictable? Also, what questions linger in your mind (and in particular, what advice do you have for the next group of students who will document your designated area focus on)? Indeed, you should frame your presentation less as a finished product and more as an invitation to pose questions to your fellow classmates, and to solicit feedback about what the data may reveal. You will be able to take that feedback and turn it into your final, comparative essay, due a week later.
- **Comparative analytic essay (NYC and Buenos Aires):** This approx 15-page essay asks each of the five groups of four people to compare and contrast the street/public art in their two areas, making use of the historical, cultural, political, and demographic information they will have collected, as well as drawing on the reading materials and discussions they will have engaged to that point. In particular, these essays will aim to answer – based on their specific case study – the major questions of the course: How is street art understood and expressed differently and similarly in these two spaces and why? Are there any shared aesthetic

features, and if so how do they reflect the global circulation of creative modes? What do we learn about local politics from looking at the art and writing in both areas?

Ultimately, all of this content will be uploaded onto a platform based on interactive maps of each city that will allow users to navigate between layers of demographic data, pindrop site locations (with pictures and accompanying brief, critical reflection essays) of specific street/public art, the introductory, student group-generated essays on the area overall, and the analytic essays .

Required Readings

The following books are required and available at Bluestockings Bookstore, 172 Allen St.

1. Rebecca Biron, ed. *City/Art: The Urban Scene in Latin America*. Durham: Duke U Press, 2009.
2. Alison Young, *Street Art, Public City: Law, Crime, and the Urban Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
3. Norman Mailer and Jon Naar, *The Faith of Graffiti*. New York: It Books, 2009.
4. Japonica Brown-Saracino, ed. *The Gentrification Debates: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2010
5. Rafael Shacter, *The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti*. New Haven: Yale U Press, 2013.

NOTE: Instructors will provide you with copies of required book chapters, as permitted by relevant copyright law, as well as links to electronically available journal articles and other material.

Academic Integrity

Students in Gallatin courses belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html) for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

Late Submissions/Incompletes

Students can ask for extensions and will receive them at the instructor's discretion, though any late submission will incur a half grade drop unless the delay results from documented medical reasons or family emergencies. **Only requests made in advance of the deadline will be considered.** Assignments submitted late without previously alerting the instructor will not be graded. The last day to submit any pending work granted an extension is **19 May**. If you anticipate being unable to meet this deadline, you should contact the instructor immediately and request to receive an Incomplete, which will be granted at the instructor's discretion and only with a previously approved plan to complete outstanding work.

Extra Credit

Over the course of the semester, the instructors may make extra credit opportunities available to students. These may include attending relevant talks, performances, films, expositions, etc. Students are also encouraged to recommend any events that strike them as relevant to the course. Each extra credit opportunity will add one point to a student's final grade, with no more than three points possible.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(SUBJECT TO CHANGE; GUEST DATES ARE TENTATIVE AND MAY NEED REARRANGING TO ACCOMMODATE THE AVAILABILITY OF OUR SPEAKERS; ADDITIONAL GUESTS MAY BE ADDED TO THE SCHEDULE AS PERTINENT)

29 January: NYC ONLY

Visualizing Possibilities: Art, Mapping, and Data

Guests: **Holly Orr** (Geospatial Specialist, NYU Global Learning and Innovation)
 Lillian Moran (Instructional Technologist, NYU Global Tech Services)

5 February: NYC ONLY

Hands-on training with geospatial software

Team/Beat assignments

12 February: NYC & BSAS

The City as Imaginary

1. Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City" in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1984: 91-111.
2. Nestor Garcia Canclini, "What is a City?" In *City/Art: The Urban Scene in Latin America*, ed. Rebecca Biron. Durham: Duke U Press, 2009: 37-60
3. [Julio Cortázar, "Graffiti"](#)
4. Todd Presner, David Shepard, and Yoh Kawano. "Lexicon." *HyperCities: Thick Mapping in the Digital Humanities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014: 12-21.

19 February: NYC & BSAS

The City as Struggle

1. Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space" in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2009 [1972]: 167-185.
2. Neil Smith, "A Short History of Gentrification," in in Japonica Brown-Saracino, ed. *The Gentrification Debates: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2010: 31-37.
3. Anton Rosenthal, "Spectacle, Fear, and Protest: A Guide to the History of Urban Public Space in Latin America," *Social Science History* 24, no. 1 (2000): 33-73.

4. John Mollenkopf, "How to Study Urban Political Power," *A Phoenix in the Ashes: The Rise and Fall of the Koch Coalition in New York City Politics*. Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1994: 23-43

26 February: NYC & BSAS

The City as Canvas

1. Anne Pasternack and Lucy Lippard, "Thinking About the Public in Public Art: Tom Eccles and Tom Finkelppearl with Anner Pasternak," in *Creative Time: The Book: 33 Years of Public Art in New York*, Princeton: Princeton Arch. Press, 2008 (10 pp)
2. Rosalyn Deutsche, "Public Art and Its Uses," *October* (Winter, 1988): (10 pp)
3. Dario Gamboni, "Legal abuse" in *The Destruction of Art. Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997. (16 pp)
4. Harriet Senie, "Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*: Art and Non-Art Issues" *Art Journal* (Winter, 1989). (5 pp)
5. Minujín, Marta. "Destruction of My Works in the Impasse Ronsin, Paris" and "La Menesunda." In *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde*," ed. Inés Katzenstein, 59-61. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004. (5 pp)

***28 February: BSAS ONLY**

Graffiti tour of BsAs

5 March: NYC & BSAS

Focus Buenos Aires

1. Adrian Gorelik, "A Metropolis in the Pampas: Buenos Aires, 1890-1940" in *Cruelty and Utopia: Cities and Landscapes of Latin America*, Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005: 146-159
2. Daniel James, "October 17th and 18th, 1945: Mass Protest, Peronism, and the Argentine Working Class," *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 3 (1998): 441-461
3. Andrea Giunta, "The Avant-Garde Between Arts and Politics" in *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the 1960s*. Durham: Duke U Press, 2007: 243-280 (37pp)
4. Excerpts: "Tucuman is Burning: Statement of the Exhibition in Rosario"; "Buenos Aires Statement"
5. Rafael Shacter, "Buenos Aires," in *The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti*. New Haven: Yale U Press, 2013: 128-140.

12 March: NYC & BSAS

Focus New York

1. Lynne Cooke, "From Site to Non-Site: An Introduction to Mixed Use Manhattan," *Mixed Use Manhattan: Photography and Related Practices*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010.
2. [Charlie Ahearn, dir. *Wild Style New York: Music Box Films, 1983*. \(82 mins\)](#)
3. Robin Kelley, "Looking to Get Paid: How Some Black Youth put Culture to Work," *Yo Mama's Disfunktional! Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997: 43-77
4. Loretta Lees, "Super-Gentrification: The Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York" in Japonica Brown-Saracino, ed. *The Gentrification Debates: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2010: 45-50
5. Rafael Shacter, "New York," in *The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti*. New Haven: Yale U Press, 2013: 16-40

19 March: BSAS ONLY

Visit to Parque de la Memoria

1. Francine Masiello, "Introduction" in *The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis*. Durham: Duke U Press, 2001: 1-20 (20 pp)
2. Florenicia Battiti, "Art in the Face of the Paradox of Representation" and Florenicia Battiti and Cristina Rossi, "The Art of Remembering" in *Monumento a las Victimas del Terrorismo de Estado: Parque de la Memoria*, Concejo de Gestión Parque de la Memoria: Buenos Aires, 2010
3. Andreas Huyssen, "Twin Memories: After Images of Nine/Eleven," *Grey Room* (Spring 2012): 8-13 (5 pp)

26 March: NYC & BSAS

Art(ists) in Motion

1. Sharon Zukin, "The Creation of a Loft Lifestyle," in Japonica Brown-Saracino, ed. *The Gentrification Debates: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2010: 175-184
2. Richard Lloyd, "Living Like an Artist," in Japonica Brown-Saracino, ed. *The Gentrification Debates: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2010: 185-194
3. Kelsey Campbell-Dollaghan, "[Rare Photos from 1966 Show the NYC Subway in Full Color](#)," *Gizmodo*, 17 December 2014.
4. "[Christopher Morris's 1980s NYC Subway Photos](#)," *Juxtapoz*, 11 December 2014.
5. Dangerous Streets, "Trolleys, Labor Conflict, and Reorganization of Public Space in Montevideo, Uruguay," in Ronn Pineo and James Baer, *Cities of Hope: People, Protest, and Progress in Urbanizing Latin America, 1870-1930*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998: 30-52

6. Oliverio Gironde, "Poems to be Read on a Trolley Car," in Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo, eds. *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke U Press, 2000: 251-254

Guest Speakers:

Leandro Tartaglia and KBB, Buenos Aires

Amy Hausmann, MTA Curator, New York

2 April: NYC ONLY

Visit to 9/11 Memorial or High Line

1. Francine Masiello, "Introduction" in *The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis*. Durham: Duke U Press, 2001: 1-20 (20 pp)
2. Florenicia Battiti, "Art in the Face of the Paradox of Representation" and Florenicia Battiti and Cristina Rossi, "The Art of Remembering" in *Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado: Parque de la Memoria*, Concejo de Gestión Parque de la Memoria: Buenos Aires, 2010
3. Andreas Huyssen, "Twin Memories: After Images of Nine/Eleven," *Grey Room* (Spring 2012): 8-13 (5 pp)

9 April: NYC & BSAS

Street Art and Politics

1. Norman Mailer and Jon Naar, *The Faith of Graffiti*. New York: It Books, 2009.
2. Marcy Schwartz, "The Writing on the Wall: Urban Cultural Studies and the Power of Aesthetics." In *City/Art: The Urban Scene in Latin America*, ed. Rebecca Biron. Durham: Duke U Press, 2009: 127-144 (17 pp)
3. [Matt McCormick, dir. *The Subconscious Art of Graffiti Removal*. Rodeo Film Company, 2005.](#) (16 mins)

16 April: NYC & BSAS

Policing Art and the City

1. Alison Young, *Street Art, Public City: Law, Crime, and the Urban Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

23 April: NYC & BSAS

Off the Grid: Artists Renegotiating the City's Plan

1. Jane Jacobs, "Staging Difference: Aestheticization and the Politics of Difference in Contemporary Cities" in Jane Jacobs and Ruth Fincher, eds. *Cities of Difference*. New York: Guilford Press, 1998: 252-279.
2. Nezar Alsayyad, "Urban Informality as a 'New' Way of Life," in Nezar Alsayyad and Ananya Roy, eds. *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*. Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004.
3. Ivo Mesquita. "Cartographies" and "Latin America: Another Cartography." In *Cartographies*.
4. Jagoe, Eva-Lynn Alicia. "Jorge Macchi's Fractured Narratives of Buenos Aires."

Guest Speaker: Jorge Macchi

30 April: NYC & BSAS

Mapping Social Experience

Guest Speaker: Holly Orr (Geospat. Specialist, NYU Global Learning and Innovation)

Todd Presner, David Shepard, and Yoh Kawano. *HyperCities: Thick Mapping in the Digital Humanities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.

"The View from Above/Below": 84-128

"Windows": 128-139.

7 May: NYC & BSAS

Group Presentations

14 May: NYC & BSAS

Evaluation of platform

Open forum course evaluation