

NYU Paris

ANTH-UA 9901 /IDSEM-UG 9357

Urban Ethnography: Paris

Instructor Information

- Professor Beth Epstein
- Office hours by appointment
- beth.epstein@nyu.edu

Course Information

- ANTH-UA9901 / IDSEM-UG9357
- Urban Ethnography: Paris
- Taking the city, and specifically the city of Paris, as its focus, this course explores what anthropology can bring to an understanding of cities and urban life. Complex spaces that at once create, sustain, and transgress various forms of social and cultural distinction, cities pose particular challenges for the ethnographer in pursuit of fine-grained analysis that takes into account the multiple and transecting strands of the metropolis. In this course, we study various forms of ethnographic analysis in order to gain insight into the particularities of Paris and the broader historic, social, economic, and political phenomena that the city and its spatial organization reveal. Working out from an understanding of urban space as a socially and politically meaningful site of claims-making and contestation, we consider the importance of consumption and display in shaping urban identities, and of the shifting dynamics of groups and boundaries within the urban context.

Alongside their investigation of the city, students also have the opportunity to develop their skills in ethnographic research methods. Exercises in participant-observation and in the transformation of first-hand experience into a finished piece of ethnographic work allow students a chance to gain appreciation for the complexities of “the field” while developing insight into a corner of Parisian life. [Co-requisite or prerequisite, if any]

- Tuesday 13h00-14h30, Thursday 13h30-15h00
- Salle 501

Course Overview and Goals

Upon Completion of this Course, students will have:

- ❖ Gained fluency in some of the central debates in urban anthropology;
- ❖ Achieved appreciation for the possibilities and complexities of the ethnographic method through hands-on exercises and fieldwork;
- ❖ Deepened their comprehension of French society, culture, and history through an exploration of Paris as a site of anthropological inquiry.

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Class is run as a seminar. Students are expected to come to class, to be on time, and to be prepared to contribute actively to discussion. 15%

Assignment 1

Short essays, 30%

Two 3 to 5 page papers in which students develop a central theoretical problem in relation to a site visit and/or materials examined in class. Students must hand in **two** essays, out of the five major thematic areas. *See syllabus and hand-out for due dates and more information.*

Assignment 2

Research project: Students will work individually or in pairs to conduct ethnographic research in and of a public place in Paris, such as a park, a market, a restaurant/café/fast-food venue, a district or neighborhood, a shopping center, a train station, a tourist destination and so on. Students might choose two places with similar functions but distinctive features for comparative purposes (for example, a market in two different neighborhoods of the city). Projects are to be selected in consultation with the professor and will be carried out throughout the course of the semester. Components of the research project include:

- ❖ Project proposal, 2 pages, due March 12th, 10%
- ❖ Methodology exercises (see methods workshops), 15%
- ❖ A finished piece of ethnographic writing, 12-15 pages, due May 21st, 30%

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points	Description
A	16-20	Outstanding

Letter Grade	Points	Description
A-	15	Excellent
B+	14	Very Good
B	13	Good
B-	12	Satisfactory
C+	11	Above Average
C	10	Average
C-	9	Below Average
D+	8	Unsatisfactory
D	7	Low Pass
D-	6	Low Pass
F	5	Fail

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1 2/5	Introduction, The Modern Metropolis		Introduction to themes of the course and to the fundamentals of fieldwork practice. Students are to start compiling a short list of places and problems they would like to explore for their ethnographic projects, to be discussed in individual meetings with the professor during Week 2.

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
2/7		<p>Georg Simmel (1969 (1903)) "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in <i>Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities</i>, Richard Sennett, ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. pp. 47-60.</p> <p>Andy Merrifield (2000) "Benjamin & the City of Light," <i>The Nation</i>, 270(4):25-28.</p>	
Week 2 2/12	Methods Workshop I – Going to the Field	<p>Tim Ingold (2018) <i>Anthropology, Why it Matters</i>. Cambridge: Polity Press. Ch. 1, pp. 1-25.</p> <p>Bronislaw Malinowski (1984 (1922)) <i>Argonauts of the Western Pacific</i>, Waveland Press, Introduction, pp. 1-25.</p>	<i>Individual meetings to decide on a fieldsite will be held this week.</i>
2/14		<p>Roger Sanjek (1990) "The Secret Life of Fieldnotes," pp. 207-226, 237-247, 252-255, in Sanjek ed, <i>Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology</i>. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.</p>	<p><i>Exercise 1: Charting the field -- Start paying attention to how people use and/or travel through your field site. Note any differences you observe in types of populations that use your site, or variations in their use depending on days of the week or times of day. Note any particularities in the way people use the space. Write up your observations as a map and in fieldnotes, due February 28th</i></p>
Week 3 2/19	The Politics of Space	<p>Michel Foucault (1979) <i>Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i>. A. Sheridan, transl. NY: Vintage Books, pp. 195-209.</p> <p>Jane Jacobs (1961) <i>The Death and Life of Great</i></p>	<p><i>Paper option 1, due March 5th</i></p>

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
		<p><i>American Cities</i>. NY: Vintage Books, pp. 29-54.</p> <p><i>Optional</i>: Setha M. Low (2010) "A Nation of Gated Communities" in H. Gusterson & C. Besteman, eds. <i>The Insecure American: How We Got Here and What We Should Do About It</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 27-44.</p>	
2/21		<p>Darrin McMahon (1996) "The Birthplace of the Revolution: Public Space and Political Community in the Palais-Royal of Louis-Philippe-Joseph d'Orléans, 1781-1789." <i>French History</i>, 10(1):1-29.</p> <p>Walter Benjamin (1999) <i>The Arcades Project</i>, H. Eiland & K. McLaughlin, trans. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, excerpts.</p>	
Week 4 2/26		<u>Site visit</u> : Palais Royal & the Arcades	
2/28	Methods workshop II— Project proposal	Discussion of Exercise 1	<p><i>Exercise 2: Complete the NYU Human Subjects Tutorial; note any questions or concerns. To discuss in Week 9.</i></p> <p><i>Write up a two page Project Proposal, in which you briefly describe your field site, identify a specific problem or question related to your field site that you plan to explore, and articulate why.</i></p> <p>Due March 12th</p>

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Week 5 3/5	Urban Distinctions: Mapping Social Class	<p>Beatrix LeWita (1988) <i>French Bourgeois Culture</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 3, pp. 62-98.</p> <p>Susan Terrio (1996) "Crafting Grand Cru Chocolates in Contemporary France," <i>American Anthropologist</i>, 98(1): 67-79.</p> <p>Michel Pinçon & Monique Pinçon-Charlot (2012) « Dans les Beaux Quartiers : Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, » <i>Ethnologie Française</i>, 42(3): 451-452.</p>	<i>Paper option 2, due March 21st</i>
3/7	Methods Workshop III – Thick Description	<p>Clifford Geertz (1973) <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i>. New York: Basic Books, ch. 1, pp. 3-30.</p> <p>Cristina Moretti (2017) "Walking" in <i>A Different Kind of Ethnography: Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies</i>. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 91-112.</p>	<i>Exercise 3: Review your notes, see if you can start identifying patterns or repeating themes. Pull out one to three significant details from your observations; describe them "thickly" in light of what you have seen and know about your site. Two to 3 pages, due April 9th</i>
Week 6 3/12		Project proposal due, discussion	
3/14		<u>Site visit:</u> Faubourg St. Honoré	
Week 7 3/19		Shamus Rahman Khan (2011) <i>Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, ch. 3, pp. 77-113.	
3/21	Urban Distinctions: Debating the	Patrick Simon (2000) « The Mosaic Pattern : Cohabitation between Ethnic	<i>Paper option 3, due April 11th</i>

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
	“Ethnic Community”	<p>Groups in Belleville, Paris” in S. Body-Gendrot and M. Martiniello (eds.), <i>Minorities in European Cities. The Dynamics of Social Integration and Social Exclusion at the Neighbourhood Level</i>. London, Macmillan Press, pp.100-115.</p> <p>Alice Hertzog (2018) “Bartering for Belongings: Ethnic Trade in Belleville, Paris” in H. Ghorashi , K. Davis , P. Smets (eds.) <i>Contested Belonging: Spaces, Practices, Biographies</i>. Emerald Publishing, pp.183 - 208.</p>	
SPRING BREAK 3/25-3/29			
Week 8 4/2		<u>Site visit</u> : Belleville	
4/4		Rogers Brubaker (2004) <i>Ethnicity without Groups</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, ch. 1, pp. 7-27.	
Week 9 4/9	Methods Workshop IV – The reflexive anthropologist	<i>Exercise 3 due, discussion</i>	
4/11		<p>American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethics</p> <p>Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000) “Ire in Ireland,” <i>Ethnography</i> 1(1): 117-140.</p>	<i>Exercise 4: Think about your own position in relation to your field project. How does your position as a young person, a student, a foreigner, a non-native French speaker etc. affect your research, and how, if at all, has your project challenged any assumptions or preconceptions you held before you</i>

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
			<i>started? What new insights can you gain about your field site by thinking about your own place in it? Two to 3 pages, due April 25th.</i>
Week 10 4/16	Urban Distinctions: Politics of Style	<u>Film screening:</u> <i>Paris is Burning</i> (1990) Jennie Livingston.	<i>Paper option 4, due April 30th</i>
4/18		Dick Hebdige (1979) <i>Subculture, the meaning of style</i> . London: Routledge, pp. 100-127	
Week 11 4/23		Emma Tarlo (2010) <i>Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith</i> . Oxford: Berg Publishers, ch. 3, pp. 43-70. Daniel Miller (2010) "Anthropology in Blue Jeans," <i>American Ethnologist</i> 37(3):415-428.	
4/25	Methods workshop V – On ethnographic writing	Exercise 4 due, discussion Roger Sanjek, "On Ethnographic Validity" in Sanjek, ed. <i>Fieldnotes</i> , pp. 385-418.	<i>Exercise 5: Start writing! Submit the first 5 pages of your final project for peer review (details tba), due May 9th for discussion on May 14th & 16th</i>
Week 12 4/30		Students will work in groups on a variety of texts, to be posted on NYUClasses.	
5/2	Place & Non-Place	<u>Reading:</u> Marc Augé (1995) <i>Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity</i> . John Howe, transl., London: Verso, prologue & pp. 94-115.	<i>Paper option 5, due May 16th</i>
Week 13 5/7		Pierre Nora (1996) "General Introduction: Between Memory and History" in <i>Realms of Memory:</i>	

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
		<i>Rethinking the French Past</i> , Arthur Goldhammer, trans. NY: Columbia University Press; pp. 1-20.	
5/9		First 5 pages of ethnographic projects due, ready for distribution for peer review. <u>Film screening</u> : <i>Chacun Cherche son Chat</i> (1996) Cedric Klapisch	
Week 14 5/14	Methods workshop VI – Peer review	Prepare <u>constructive</u> notes and criticism of your classmates' submissions Group discussions	
5/16		Group discussions	
Week 15 5/21	Conclusions	Wrap-up, final ethnographic projects due	

Course Materials

Required Textbooks & Materials

Course reader, available at Mistral Photo, 40 rue St. Jacques, Paris 5°

Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](http://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

- Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Students are

responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsher penalties including failure.

- Unexcused absences affect students' grades: unexcused absences will be penalized with a 2% deduction from the students' final course grade.
- Absences are excused only for illness, religious observance, and emergencies.

Illness: For a single absence, students may be required to provide a doctor's note, at the discretion of the Associate Director of Academics. In the case of two consecutive absences, students must provide a doctor's note. Exams, quizzes, and presentations will not be made up without a doctor's note.

Religious Observance: Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their instructor and the Academic Office in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If exams, quizzes, and presentations are scheduled on a holiday a student will observe, the Associate Director, in coordination with the instructor, will reschedule them.

Please note: if you are unable to attend class, you are required to email your professors directly to notify them.

Late Assignment

Late submission or work will be accepted only with justifiable reasons of health or family emergency.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.

Plagiarism: *presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one's own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:*

- *a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks*
- *an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work*
- *the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one's own*
- *submitting evaluations of group members' work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member*
- *altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.*

For further information, students are encouraged to check www.nyu.edu/about/policies-

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Instructor Bio

Beth Epstein holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from NYU and a B.A. from Princeton University. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she is Academic Director at NYU Paris. Her research focuses on the history and meaning of race and “difference,” on questions of civic life, and on urban policy and practice in France and the United States. She has conducted fieldwork in rural and urban France and taught many courses on social issues in contemporary French society. She is co-director of the documentary film *Kofi chez les Français* (with Carlyn Saltman, 1993), and author of the book *Collective Terms: Race, Culture & Community in a State-Planned City in France* (Berghahn Books, 2011), as well as several scholarly articles. Her work has been funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the French-American Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, and the Independent Social Research Fund.