INTRODUCTION

Dear Seminarians:

Here’s my latest thinking on how to organize our meetings, and what everyone’s responsibilities might be.

The goal is to get a handle on how to think about New York’s development over the twentieth century. My preferred approach is chronological coupled with some obvious central foci: thus the twenties boom (consumerism, prohibition), the thirties depression (new deal, radical culture), the fifties (cold war, urban renewal), the sixties (radical movements: black, women, gay, antiwar, antipoverty, etc), the seventies (so-called fiscal crisis, punk culture), the eighties (immigration, gentrification, homelessness, crack), the nineties (financialization), etc., etc.

There’ll be three types of readings.

**Core titles.** These are lighthouse works that provide broad overviews of multiple terrains.

Everyone must read all of these – a total of eight books.

One member will self-select to being the **presenter** of each core book. This means writing and posting assessments – their own, and any reviews that seem particularly pertinent. She or he will also take responsibility for leading the in-class discussion. (Other members may also post their own assessments and questions, but they don’t have to).

**In addition there are 62 non-core books,** mostly more specialized works that zoom in on one or another aspect of the period they are part of. Each of these will be read and reported on by one seminarian. As there are (currently) 12 students, each would read five books.

Lastly, each seminarian must produce a substantial **review essay** – something on the order of a piece in the *New York Review of Books* or *Reviews in American History*, etc -- of one or more books taken from the bibliography. Seminarians will be expected to draw on commentaries already out there in the scholarly and popular literature. Suggested length is 10-15 pages. Presentation and discussion will take up our last two weeks of discussions.
That adds up to a commitment to read and respond to **fourteen books**, one per week.

Now, let me clear about what I mean by “**reading and responding.**” For the **core books**, while you’re expected to grapple with the entire text, especially the Gotham texts (as they’re one continuous narrative flow), I don’t expect or want a detailed cover-to-cover explication of the text. I want to know whether they afford useful insights on the period and place, and what analytic methods they deploy.

This is particularly the case for the 62 **non-core books** (five per student), and especially so for those periods where there are no core works on offering – e.g. the ‘60s. For these I’d like a very brief summary of your volume’s argument; and a dossier of reviews; and also your thoughts on what the text contributes to answering some larger question, e.g., why racial, gender, etc. movements appeared when they did, and where they did, and how they related one to the other. There’s no core book that advances such a hypothesis, so we will try to roll our own. One possibility would be to spend the session’s first hour on seriatim presentations, the second hour on discussing their collective implications.

**Written comments (as well as academic or popular reviews you found telling) should be circulated on the course email list, at the latest, the night before the seminar you’ll be presenting in. Written comments should be 5-6 pages or so. Send them to:**

20thcenturynyc@googlegroups.com
Hist. 75800 - Twentieth Century New York City
Graduate Center, City University of New York
Thursdays, 6:30-8:30pm, 3 credits, Prof. Mike Wallace

SYLLABUS

1/31

INTRODUCTIONS
Getting to know one another, book sign-up for the semester.

Discussion of two short readings: Introductions, Gotham and Greater Gotham.

2/7

CLASS 2: 1900-1919
All read and write on this book.


2/14

CLASS 3: TWENTIES
Read any of the below. Presenters for each book will be assigned based on the Reading Preference Form and adjusted as needed in the first meeting of the seminar.


Note: The reprinted version cited below is freely available as a book in the CUNY and public library systems. Author is unattributed; search the title.


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**2/28**

**CLASS 4: THIRTIES: DEPRESSION & NEW DEAL**

*Core*


*OR*


*Additional*


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**3/7**

**CLASS 5: WORLD WAR II & THE CITY**

*All read and write on this book.*


*Xeroxed copies will be provided.*
3/14
CLASS 6:  THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CITY

Core

Additional

3/21
CLASS 7:  FIFTIES: URBAN RENEWAL & COLD WAR

Core

OR


[LIST CONTINUES NEXT PAGE]
Additional
Selection: Chapters: 18-20, 23-25 27-33, 36-8, 41, 44, 46, 48-50

3/28
CLASS 8: SIXTIES & ON: RADICALS
Read any of the below. Presenters for each book will be assigned based on the Reading Preference Form and adjusted as needed in the first meeting of the seminar.

CLASS 9: SEVENTIES: “FISCAL CRISIS”

Core

Additional

CLASS 10: EIGHTIES & NINETIES: FINANCIALIZATION, GENTRIFICATION, DEINDUSTRIALIZATION & NEW YORK HIP-HOP

Read any of the below. Presenters for each book will be assigned based on the Reading Preference Form and adjusted as needed in the first meeting of the seminar.


The seminarian who selects this book should also read this very short article:


LIST CONTINUES NEXT PAGE


4/18

CLASS 11: ORDER
One seminarian presents each of the core books and additional books.

Core

Additional


4/25

NO CLASS

5/2

CLASS 12 SIXTIES-2000s: IMMIGRATION
One seminarian presents each of the core books and additional books.

Core

Additional

5/9
CLASS 13  PRESENTATIONS

5/16
CLASS 14  PRESENTATIONS