

Urban Choreography

Bodies and Cities in Motion

UURB3024, Spring 2024, Thursdays: 1:55-3:45pm
63 Fifth Avenue/University Center, Room 503

Julia Foulkes, foulkesj@newschool.edu; Office Hours: [sign-up sheet](#)

Jane Jacobs described her neighborhood's daily habits as a "sidewalk ballet," a valorization of the rhythm and movement that characterize urban life. Jacobs' invocation of ballet—a highly technical and stylized form of dance—unbares the routine movements that structure our inhabitation of cities. This course uses the framework of urban choreography to look at these patterned practices of motion from the scale of the body to the street, neighborhood, region, and globe. We examine the well-oiled grooves of sidewalk interaction, walking, crowd flows, transit and vehicular circulation as well as deliberate ruptures such as flash mobs, police surveillance, and protests. We analyze how various groups comport their bodies and move through space, often constrained by social factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and other dimensions. Students will examine their own movement habits as well as devise aspirational choreographies of urban flows.

Learning Objectives

- Develop attentiveness to the different kinds of information, analysis, and biases in primary, secondary, and artistic sources.
- Work collaboratively and individually to create responses to readings, materials, and research.
- Develop a final project that synthesizes the materials of the course.
- This course fulfills the shared capacities of *Critical Analysis*, *Creative Making*, and *Cross-Disciplinary Thinking*.

Readings and Materials

The required reading and materials are available on Canvas and are compiled by week in Modules. To access the materials directly, log on to canvas.newschool.edu with your New School username and password.

Assignments

Urban life unfolds in the context of social engagement—collaborative strategies and collective participation are a significant component of your learning. This is both a seminar and a workshop; as such, you are expected to read and reflect critically in class as well as participate responsibly and fully as creator and respondent.

Discussion (10%): The primary assignment of the course is spirited discussion of the readings and materials. I consider the following criteria regarding your contribution to discussion: frequency, quality, referencing of readings and materials, and responsiveness to others' ideas.

Five Journal Entries (20%): Write five journal entries of 2-3pgs each for submission by Thursday morning by 10am, in Canvas. Take a question, comment, or concern from the materials of class that day and relate to your experience of moving in the city.

Two Photographs+Captions (20%): Capture a moment of movement in the city. For inspiration, look at the photographs of James Van Der Zee, Walker Evans, Bill Cunningham, Martha Cooper, Joseph Heathcott—find others! Caption the photograph in less than 30 words; post in Canvas.

Collaborative Project (20%): In groups of three, build a picture of Lagos from Teju Cole’s passages in *Tremor* (2023): chs 6-7. The picture could be a mental map, a geographic one, a prose poem, an audio or visual response. Consider all the people presented and figure out relations between them. What matters in this portrait of a city? Who matters?

Choreographic Score (30%): There are four kinds of scores that we will encounter this semester: Janet Cardiff’s [Her Long Black Hair](#), a guided walk in Central Park; Teju Cole’s writing of Lagos in *Tremor*; Amze Emmons’ visual game, [Playing the Grid](#); and Andrew Suseno’s [Moving Rasa](#). Take one as a model for a choreographic score of your own. We will determine together the elements and parameters of a choreographic score as we move through the semester.

Class Schedule

Week 1	Introduction
Jan 25	In-class: Jane Jacobs, <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i> , ch2 excerpt
Week 2	Choreography in/of the City 1
Feb 1	Readings: Edwin Denby, “Buildings, Dancers, and People in the Streets” (1965) Elizabeth Kendall, “NYC’s Gift of Motion,” <i>New York Times</i> (2020) Megan V. Nicely, “Choreographing the City: Techniques for Urban Walking,” <i>Liminalities</i> v11 #2 (June 2015): 1-16
	Due: Journal Entry #1
Week 3	Choreography in/of the City 2
Feb 8	Readings: Annie-B Parson, <i>The Choreography of Everyday Life</i> (2022)/Course Reserves
	Due: Photograph+Caption #1
Week 4	Urban Design
Feb 15	Readings: Richard Sennett, <i>Flesh and Stone</i> (1994): ch.8 Kevin Lynch, “The City Image and Its Elements” (1960) Sara Hendren, <i>What Can a Body Do?</i> (2020): ch. Street
	Due: Journal Entry #2
Week 5	Choreographic Score/Walking
Feb 22	Janet Cardiff, Her Long Black Hair Meet at Central Park, 6th Ave. and Central Park South—bring headphones! Readings: Garnette Cadogan, Walking While Black (2016)

(or listen to the Public Radio International interview with him here:
<http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-07-13/he-loved-walking-kingston-jamaica-us-it-put-him-danger>)

Week 6
Feb 29 Walking the City
Reading: Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001): ch. 11
Alexandra Horowitz, *On Looking* (2013): A Nice Place (to Walk), pp. 139-58
Radhika Subramaniam, “Round Trips: NY-Bom-NY” (2015)
Due: Journal Entry #3

Week 7
Mar 7 Choreographic Score/Writing [workshop together]
Readings: Teju Cole, *Tremor* (2023): chs 6-7

Mar 14 **NO CLASS—Spring Break**

Week 8
Mar 21 Choreographic Score/Writing
Readings: Teju Cole, *Tremor* (2023): chs 6-7
Due: Collaborative Project

Week 9
Mar 28 Biking/Skateboarding the City
Readings: Maria Ward, *Bicycling for Ladies* (1896): chs. 2, 7, 11, 12
“The Horseless Carriage Means Trouble” (1908)
Evan Friss, *On Bicycles* (2019): p.58-72 section on Ward; p.124-47 on bike messengers in 80s
[Opponents Seek to Grind Skatepark to a Halt](#), Gothamist (2024)
Due: Journal Entry #4

Week 10
Apr 4 Moving Underground
Reading: Rashmi Sadana, *The Moving City: Scenes from the Delhi Metro and the Social Life of Infrastructure* (2022)
Part One: Vanita, Red Line, Nuked Natal, Ramlila Maidan, Yellow Line, Drishti, A Developed Country, Blue Line, and Delhi-6
Part Two: The Play about the Metro
Part Three: World Class, Magenta Line, Jahnavi, Pink Line
Due: Photograph+Caption #2

Week 11
Apr 11 Choreographic Score/Moving; **meet at Washington Square Park fountain**
[Moving Rasa](#) with Andrew Suseno
Reading: Choreographic Score/Visual: Amze Emmons, [Playing the Grid](#)

Week 12
Apr 18 The City from Above
Readings: Philip Mark Plotch and Jen Nelles, *Mobilizing the Metropolis: How the Port Authority Built New York* (2023): ch. 3
Luis Rafael Sanchez, “The Flying Bus” (1987)
Due: Journal Entry #5

Week 13 Surveilling the Moving City
Apr 25 Reading: Shannon Mattern, *A City is Not a Computer* (2021): ch2
Workshop Choreographic Scores

Week 14 **Presentations: Choreographic Scores**
May 2

Week 15 **Presentations: Choreographic Scores**
May 9

Class Policies

Attendance. All credit students are required to attend class each week, and there is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence. All absences are treated the same. Your grade for the course as a whole will be lowered one step after 2 absences (i.e., from B to B-). Three or more absences will result in an automatic failure of the class. *You **cannot** complete the course for a passing grade if you have not submitted any assignments by April 4. The last day to withdraw from a course is April 16.*

Late Submissions. Each late submission of any assignment will result in a one-grade-point deduction for each calendar day it is late (i.e., from B to B-).

Academic Honesty. Plagiarism—the use of another person’s words or ideas in any academic work—or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in serious academic penalties, from a failing grade in the class to expulsion from the university.

For information on avoiding plagiarism through proper acknowledgements, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and forms of citation in research and writing, students should visit the [University Learning Center](#). The university’s policies on Academic Integrity and Intellectual Property Rights can be found [here](#).

Please note that students must receive prior permission from instructors to submit the same or substantially overlapping material for two different assignments. Submission of the same work for two assignments without prior permission is plagiarism.

Other Important Information

Libraries. [The New School Library](#) offers frequent research workshops for students, the day, time, and location of which are posted to the Library webpage.

The University Learning Center. The [University Learning Center](#) provides individual tutoring sessions in writing, ESL, math, and economics, and time management. Sessions are interactive, with both tutor and student participating. Appointments can be scheduled via Starfish or stop by for a walk-in session. The ULC also offers several academic and skill-building workshops. The ULC has remote appointments and can be reached at learningcenter@newschool.edu.

Accommodations. If you are a student with a disability/disabled student, or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please first complete the Self ID form on the [Student Disability Services](#) website. Then, head to Starfish and find a time to meet with Nick Faranda, at a time of mutual convenience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Student Disability Services (SDS) at studentdisability@newschool.edu, or 212-229-5626.

Student Support. [Student Support](#) works with students who are struggling with non-academic challenges, distressing experiences, and crisis situations. Contact staff for assistance in navigating challenges and connecting to on-and off-campus services and resources, including for emergency financial, housing, food, or other needs. SSCM is located at 80 5th Avenue on the 3rd floor; studentsupport@newschool.edu or call 212.229.5900 x3701. Office hours are Mondays through Thursdays, 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.; Fridays, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Food and Housing. Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact Student Support for support and access to resources. The New School also has a [food pantry](#) (click on link for hours and all information).

Student Health Services. [Student Health Services](#) works collaboratively to support the physical, emotional and social well-being of its students and promotes a university-wide culture of wellness. They educate students to become discerning health consumers and advocate for their well-being to enable their learning and success both in and out of the classroom. They mobilize resources and support for students facing urgent and critical concerns. Our high-quality services and programs are student-centered, inclusive and based on public health, social justice, holistic and integrative approaches, which empower students to successfully attain their educational goals.

For information about the wide range of medical, counseling, and other services, groups, and opportunities go to the website above, or go in person to 80 Fifth Avenue, 3rd floor (check the website for drop-in hours for medical and counseling services), call 212.229.1671, or email shs@newschool.edu. For after-hours health concerns call 212.229.1671 and a nurse will answer the phone and provide care advice.

Financial Aid. [Financial Aid](#) can help you manage your education costs. They welcome students and family inquiries about Financial Aid eligibility and financing options; tuition and fees; cost of living in New York City; managing your personal finances; individual billing and payment issues. You can reach at finaid@newschool.edu or 212.229.8930, or stop by 72 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor, Monday through Friday, 10:00-4:45pm.

Student Emergency Fund. This [program](#) provides currently enrolled students experiencing acute financial distress with one-time financial assistance. It cannot be used to cover tuition; it is expected that a student in need will work with Student Success staff or outside resources to take steps towards long-term stability. Students in need can complete an online application for emergency funding support. Questions and concerns can be submitted to emergencyfund@newschool.edu.