

Migration and Space in American Culture

3 creds.

Spring semester

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Aims and Objectives

The course will work at the intersection between the new theorization of space/place, the American experience of mobility/migration, and the cultural representations of both. It will move back and forth between the three sides of this triangle, where the emphasis will move from the workings of space as a form of power, to the migrant's narrative of dislocation and relocation, to the analysis of international in/hospitality, to end up (unfortunately, on a grim note), with a view of postapocalyptic spaces in an inhospitable earth.

From the outset of the American experience, national mythology in the US celebrated the restless individualism of colonists, explorers, pioneers, soldiers, and immigrants who supposedly left home to settle new territories and never look back. In this view, the land was a neutral territory, almost a blank sheet, awaiting the inscription of civilization. To this day, mobility, migration, resettlement, travel and the clashes and confluences of cultures they bring about remain dominant issues in American culture and literature. This course proposes to explore space and spatial mobility within and across the American social and cultural borders.

Our first unit will be dedicated to the analysis of the workings of space: we will review the different theories (mostly French) that focus on space as a dynamic source of strategic power (Foucault), as well as a potential site of tactical subversion (de Certeau). We will carry out a genealogical overview of space theories from philosophers to geographers to literary scholars.

The second unit will pay particular attention to the geographies of the immigrant experience. How is America defined in the face of the immigration experience? How does

displacement inflect the creation of immigrant identity? How is identity transformed and reconstructed after immigration? And what's narrative got to do with it?

Our third unit will look at the home as central space of the self. We will work around ideas of the home as protective shelter, as representation of roots and memory. The home as space of dreams, in Gaston Bachelard's terms. We will also explore the space of the home as traversed by ideas or openness and closure, promise and threat, the public and the private.

The fourth unit will focus on the representation of post-apocalyptic and inhospitable spaces in the post 9/11 era, taking Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* as our key text. The novel portrays a potential condition of "universal homelessness" where we are all exiles looking for refuge in an inhospitable world.

Our fifth and final unit will explore migration from the point of view of race, identity and The Other. She will address issues of race, identity and parasitism through the analysis of Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* and James Gray's 2013 film *The Immigrant*.

Course Program

1. Space and Place in Theory
2. Immigrant Spaces: Migration, Desti-Nation, Dissemi-Nation
3. Urban Spaces / Personal Spaces: Home and the Un-homed
4. Postapocalyptic Spaces: Universal Exile
5. National Spaces: Welcoming the Stranger

Required Readings

1: Space and Place in Theory

- Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces"
- Michel Foucault, "Panopticism"
- Tim Cresswell, "Defining Place"
- D. Massey, "A Global Sense of Place"

2: Immigrant Spaces: Desti-Nation, Dissemi-Nation

Literature:

- Anzia Yezierska, "America and I"
- Sui Sin Far, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian"
- Li Young Lee, "The Cleaving"

Theory

- Stuart Hall, "Identity and Diaspora"
- C. Venn, "Identity, Diasporas and Subjective Change"
- A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference"

3: Urban Spaces / Personal Spaces: Home and the Un-homed

Literature:

- Helena Viramontes, "Neighbors"
- Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*

Theory

- De Certeau, "Walking" & "Spatial Stories"
- Gaston Bachelard, "The House" (From *The Poetics of Space*)
- Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive"

4: Postapocalyptic Spaces: Universal Exile

Fiction

- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Film (optional)

- John Hillcoat, *The Road* (2009).

Theory

- Marc Auge, "Non-Places"
- Hannah Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State"
- Giorgio Agamben, "Biopolitics and the Rights of Man"

5: National Spaces: Welcoming the Stranger

Fiction

- Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*

Film

- James Gray, *The Immigrant* (2013)

Theory

- J. Derrida, "Hospitality"

- M. Dikec, “Extending Hospitality”

Methodology (For online teaching)

Onsite Sessions: All sessions will take place onsite at the Master’s seminar room, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Valladolid. Each session includes a series of primary texts (and films) that are compulsory for every student, as well as a collection of theoretical texts (readings strongly recommended). For each session, I will initially dwell on the presentation of theoretical issues that support the readings selected for the session. The second part of the session will rely mostly on student input and will focus on the analysis of the literary texts selected.

Student Video presentations: for each session, there is a list of theoretical texts exploring some key issues in space studies. Each student will be required to select one of those theory texts and do a video presentation of the major issues it tackles, together with his/her own critical response to it. These video presentations will be made available for everybody through Campus Virtual. Ideally, student video presentations should be ready by the day of the session where they are proposed. And in any case, they all must be available at Campus Virtual for everybody to see before the last session.

Written assignment for missed sessions: For every session you fail to attend (except for the first one), students are required to elaborate a critical report (2-3 pages.) on one of the literary readings assigned for that unit.

Final Project: rather than producing a final paper for the course, students can present a detailed draft of a potential paper. It must contain an introduction with a valid thesis, plus a detailed description of the major issues that would be explored, and a basic bibliography to be used. Length: 3-4 pages.

Class discussion: Other than the regular class discussions, there will be a discussion forum for each unit, where students can comment on different issues in a collaborative manner. The discussion may be initiated by the prof after each session, but it should ideally function as autonomous exchange of ideas between students.

Tutorials: the lecturer will be available for consultation through a forum where students are welcome to pose their questions or suggestions. A particular chat for individual consultation will be created upon request by individual students.

Assessment

Participation in discussions (online/onsite): 25 %

Video presentation: 25%

Discussion forum: 10%

Final project 40%

Bibliography and Resources

- Augé, Marc, 1992, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London and New York: Verso.
- Bachelard, Gaston, 1994 (1958), *The Poetics of Space*. Boston. Beacon Press.
- Benito, Jesús, and Ana M^a Manzananas, 2003, *Intercultural Mediations: Hybridity and Mimesis in American Literature*, Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- Castells, Manuel, 1977 (1972), *The Urban Question*. London: Arnold.
- Certeau, Michel de 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall.
- Deleuze and Guattari, 1992, (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London & New York: Continuum.
- Foucault, Michel, 1986, "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 22.7.
- Glazer, Nathan, Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, 1970, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri, 1991, *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Manzananas, Ana M^a and Jesús Benito, 2011, *Cities, Borders and Spaces in American Literature and Film*, New York: Routledge.
- Manzananas, Ana M^a and Jesús Benito, 2014, *Occupying Space in American Literature and Culture*, New York: Routledge.
- Manzananas, Ana M^a and Jesús Benito, 2017, *Hospitality in American Literature and Culture*, New York: Routledge.
- McNulty, Tracy, 2007, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, and the Expropriation of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Molz, J. G. and Sarah Gibson, 2007, *Mobilizing Hospitality: The Ethics of Social Relations in a*

- Mobile World*, Burlington: Ashgate.
- Olalquiaga, Celeste, 1992, *Megalopolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Parrilo, Vincent, 1996, *Diversity in America*, Pine Forge Press/ A Sage Publications Company,
- Parrilo, Vincent, 1997, *Strangers to These Shores. Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States*. Boston - London: Allyn and Bacon
- Price, Patricia, 2004, *Dry Place: Landscapes of Belonging and Exclusion*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press
- Rosello, Mireille, 2001, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Soja, Edward, 1989, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.
- Soja, Edward, 2000, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Tuan, Yi-Fu, 2008 (1977), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis: U. Minnesota Press.

Schedule

The class meets twice a week
The course takes place late in the Fall semester.