"New concepts must relate to our problems, to our history, and above all to our becomings" (Gilles Deleuze)

This term Urban Theory I is oriented towards interpreting the play among conceptualizations of “the city,” spatial practices, and the production of meaning. Theoretical conventions will be discussed in relationship to the time/space that produced them. We will also consider how historic urban theories converse with new conceptualizations and how visions of the future shape and/or are resisted by social practices. How systems of representations, images of the city, and felt experience are integral components of urban life will be explored in both class and in students’ work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to attend class and be prepared to discuss readings as assigned (20%). They will also write a term paper that uses one of the theoretical perspectives introduced in class. This may be an analytic essay or an interpretation of contemporary or historical urban space. There will be 4 components: topic selection, progress report (15%), panel presentation (25%) and Final Paper (40%). The final paper is due the last day of class.

Course material will be presented in class or available on electronic reserve.

INTRODUCTION

Approach of the course introduced and illustrated with two urban paradigms

“The most political decision you make is where you direct people’s eyes. . . . And the most politically indoctrinating thing you can do to a human being is to show him, every day, that there can be no change” (Wim Wenders)

Reading:

“The Urban Landscape from the point of view of images.” Wim Wenders

“Visit to Antwerp” Albert Durer

“The Lineaments: On Public Works” Leon Battista Alberti

Background: What is a Paradigm? Giorgio Agamben, Chapter one The Signature of All Things