

MHC 120: People of New York
Spring 2024
Thursdays, 10:00am-12:40pm, MHC Room 2

Instructor: Dr. Renee Romano

Email: rromano@gc.cuny.edu

Office Hours (online): Mondays, 3:30-6:00 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

New York has been described as “America’s quintessential immigration city,” a place that is distinctive in the United States—and perhaps in the world—for the way it has been shaped and impacted by waves of migration and immigration. The city’s economy, politics, demographics, culture, and built environment have been indelibly shaped by the long history of people arriving from around the world who have made New York their home. In this class, we will explore the history and experiences of the many diverse people who have come and settled in New York since the earliest days of initial European exploration, as well as the ways in which the city has been shaped and transformed by migrants and immigrants.

The course will explore a wide range of questions as we study the changing patterns of migration to New York from the 1600s through today. We’ll examine why people in different historical moments came to the city; how their ethnic, gender, racial, and religious identities impacted their migration experience; the conditions they encountered at different historical moments; the kinds of institutions and communities they built; and how different groups responded to the challenges of assimilation and acculturation. Throughout the class, we’ll also pay attention to how immigration and immigrants in New York have been portrayed in political discourse, public policy, historical accounts, newspapers, and literary works. We’ll use the lens of food to explore some of these issues, including looking at the way food practices have created communal ties for groups, and how migrant/immigrant food cultures have shaped the NYC food landscape (and been shaped by it).

This seminar is also designed to introduce you to social science research methods. Using various tools of the social sciences—including historical research, statistical analysis, mapping, participant observation, and oral history—we will together seek to understand the opportunities immigrants have found here, the challenges they have faced, and the many ways they have made New York City what it is today.

LEARNING GOALS:

Students in MHC 120 will:

- Demonstrate a comparative understanding of different populations of New York and the shifting population patterns over time in New York neighborhoods
- Use a variety of approaches (qualitative, quantitative, or experiential) to come to an understanding of the diversity of people’s experiences in NYC city.
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches and methodologies used by the social sciences.
- Gain facility reading scholarly texts critically and efficiently, identifying a text’s key argument, approach, and use of evidence
- Communicate ideas orally and feel comfortable engaging in vigorous discussions with peers.
- Collaborate effectively with a group on a research project.

COURSE READINGS:

The only required book for this class is Imbolo Mbue, Behold the Dreamers (2016). It is available (used and new) from online booksellers for prices ranging from \$6-\$20. It may also be available from your local library. All other required readings are available on the Blackboard site.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

This section of People of New York meets once a week for 2 hours and 40 minutes. While most class session will begin with a short lecture/presentation by the professor to frame the topic for the week, the bulk of the class time will be spent in discussions and doing activities and workshops about the readings and different social science research methodologies. Weekly readings should be completed **before** you come to class. We will also use the city itself as our classroom as we visit museums, do walking tours, and engage in ethnographic observation.

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade for MHC 120 will be based on five components:

- Regular Attendance and Engaged Participation: 10%
- Short Weekly Assignments and Reading Responses: 15%
- Your Immigration/Migration story paper (4 pages, due Feb. 17): 20%
- Behold the Dreamers paper (5 pages, due April 27): 25%
- Group Final Project and Individual Reflective Essay (due May 22): 30%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (10% of total grade)

Your active involvement with the class is extremely important. Attendance, reading, and participation are critical to your learning and your success in MHC 120. Regular class attendance is expected; unexcused absences will affect your final grade in the class. If you must miss class because of illness or a family emergency, please let me know in advance of class so that we can discuss how you can make-up the missed session.

WEEKLY BLACKBOARD POSTS—DUE BY WED. AT 9:00 pm (15% of total grade)

Every week, there will be short writing assignment that is due the night before our Thursday class meeting. Most of these blackboard postings are reading responses; others are short assignments related to the final project. Your reading responses give you an opportunity to engage with the readings and to develop your ideas about them before you come to class. There is a discussion board prompt for each reading response, but most fundamentally, I want these responses to be your space to connect the readings, draw out key themes, and raise questions about them. Responses should be approximately 200-300 words. If you have time, please look over the responses of your classmates before our Thursday class session. For assignments related to the final project, follow the directions outlined on the blackboard site and in the syllabus. Blackboard posts and the short assignments are **always** due by 9:00 pm on the Wednesday before our Thursday class sessions. A reminder that you are expected to do the reading and to come to class prepared to talk about it even when there is no required reading response.

PERSONAL MIGRATION/IMMIGRATION HISTORY PAPER—DUE MONDAY, FEB. 17 (20%)

For this paper, you will interview a relative and write a 4-page paper that explores your own family's migration/immigration experience. A full description of the assignment is available on the course blackboard site and will be handed out in class. Papers are due on Monday, February 17 by 9pm. Please be prepared to talk about your paper during our class session on February 20.

BEHOLD THE DREAMER PAPER—DUE SUNDAY, APRIL 27 BY 11:59PM (25% of total grade):

For this paper, you will choose and explore one theme from the novel, *Behold the Dreamers*, by putting the novel in conversation with at least three other readings we have done for class. A full description of the assignment is available on the course blackboard site and will be handed out in class. We will talk about the novel in class on April 24 and you should be prepared to talk about your ideas for the paper then. Papers are due on Sunday, April 27 by 11:59pm.

GROUP FINAL PROJECT—ALL WORK DUE BY THURSDAY, MAY 22 (30% of final grade)

As a final project for MHC 120, the class will work together on projects for the Food Atlas of New York, a new website that will feature the work of several different sections of People of New York this year. Working in groups of two or three, students will decide on a topic for the final project, which will include both location entries prepared by individual group members and a group-written digital article. As part of the work for the final project, every student will be required to interview at least one person, to do research in secondary literature related to their project's theme, and to find primary resources (images, artifacts) to use in the project. Each student will also be required to submit a 1000-word essay that reflects upon what you learned in the course, your experience working with your group and on your individual location entries. Further guidelines about the group project are available on the blackboard site.

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Due Dates and Late Policy: You must successfully complete every assignment and revision to pass the class. Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade every 24 hours turned in after the deadline (i.e., a B paper would become a B- paper). If you are having trouble getting something done on time, ask for an extension. I will grant extensions for illnesses, family emergencies, or other unexpected events, but you must email to ask for an extension *before* the paper is due. I won't give an extension just because you have another paper due on the same day, so please plan accordingly.

Office Hours: I will hold office hours every week on Mondays from 3:30-6:00pm over Zoom. Please sign up for an office hour appointment slot in advance using the link to my google appointment calendar. If you cannot make regular office hours, you can email me to set up an alternate meeting time.

Appointment Calendar: <https://calendar.app.google/qwGgaPxkiBVAe9dd6>.

Zoom Office Hours:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87082119345?pwd=dzZuaWN1YzdEQnVncW1qeVBERnh5dz09>

Technology: Please bring a tablet or laptop with you to class if you can; we will regularly undertake activities that will require that students can connect to the internet.

The Classroom Environment: The history of New York and its residents is fascinating and exciting, but it also raises challenging issues like colonialism, racism, and wealth inequality. All of us share a responsibility to make this an enriching and safe space for making arguments, expressing our views, disagreeing with others' ideas, and raising questions. "Safe" is not the same as comfortable; there may be moments of discomfort in discussion, but students should treat their classmates with patience and respect. Respecting our class space also means coming to class on time and being attentive in class.

Academic Honesty: I expect you to do your own work for the class and to give credit for all source materials that you use in your work. If you are unclear about how to credit a source or what exactly counts as plagiarism (defined as passing off someone else's ideas or writings as your own), please come talk to me. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with immediately according to the letter of college policy. You must acknowledge whenever you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, books, the media, or Chat GPT). If you have questions about citations, academic honesty, or the acceptability of collaborations, please see me.

Educational Access: I am committed to creating inclusive learning environments and to designing a course in which all students can learn. If any aspects of the instruction or design of the course result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation, please let me know. If you receive any specific accommodations, please provide documentation from the appropriate Disability Service Office.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 30: Introduction

February 6: Natives and Settlers in Early New York

Due: Reading response due by Wed., February 5 at 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

Read:

Frederick Binder, David Reimers, and Robert W. Snyder, "A Seaport in the Atlantic World, 1624-1820," in All the Nations Under Heaven: Immigrants, Migrants, and the Making of New York, pp. 1-27.

Andrea Valentino, "What's Left of New York's Dutch Past," BBC, November 18, 2019;
<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20191118-whats-left-of-new-yorks-dutch-past>

In Class: Workshop on Interviewing and Public-Facing Research Ethics with TLC Sonia Sanchez

February 13: Early Manhattan Museum and Walking Tours [Neighborhood Visit]

Today we will be exploring Lower Manhattan. Directions about meeting spot and time TBA.

Due: Submit a proposal for a topic for the final project to the Blackboard site discussion forum by 9pm on Wednesday, February 12. Explain your idea and why you think it is interesting.

Read:

Leslie Harris, "Slavery in Colonial New York," in In the Shadow of Slavery, pp. 11-47.

In Class: Walking Tour of Dutch Manhattan with stops at the Museum of the American Indian and the African Burial Ground Museum.

February 17: *Your Migration/Immigration Story Paper due by 9pm*

February 20: The First Great Immigrant Wave, 1800-1860

Due: Reading response due by Wed., February 19 at 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

Read:

Tyler Anbinder, "Irish Metropolis" in City of Dreams, pp. 149-171.

Frederick Binder, David Reimers, and Robert W. Snyder, "Becoming a City of the World, 1820-1860" in All the Nations Under Heaven, 28-61.

Excerpt, Ken Burns, dir., "New York: A Documentary Film, Episode 2, Order and Disorder," watch from 23:45 to 38:00, <https://youtu.be/Ul6igzLaXWg?si=nALcFxmcm8KxOAPI&t=1423>

"Irish Stereotype," at Illustrating Chinese Exclusion website,
<https://thomasnastcartoons.com/irish-catholic-cartoons/irish-stereotype/>

In Class: We will spend some time talking about your papers on your own New York story; we will also be debating and voting on topics for final projects. Come prepared to make a pitch for your idea.

February 27: The Second Great Immigrant Wave, 1880-1920

Due: Reading Response due by Wed., February 26 at 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

Read:

Tyler Anbinder, "The Lower East Side," in City of Dreams, 354-382

Jane Ziegelman, "Chapter 4: The Rogarshevsky Family" in 97 Orchard: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement (Harper Books, 2010), 125-181.

Anza Yezierska, "American and I" (1923)

In Class: Workshop on finding and using primary and secondary sources

March 6: NO CLASS MEETING—CLASSES FOLLOW WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

March 13: Tenement Museum and Little Italy [Neighborhood Visit #2]

Today the class will be visiting the Tenement Museum and Little Italy. Directions about meeting spot and time TBA.

Due: Interview for your location entry should be completed by this date. Submit a report on your conversation (potentially including a transcript) to the Blackboard discussion forum by 9pm on Wed., March 12. What themes emerged from your interview? What did you learn from it?

Read:

Tyler Anbinder, "Little Italys" in City of Dreams, 383-409.

Benedicte Deschamps, "The cornerstone is laid": Italian American Memorial Building in New York City and Immigrants' Right to the City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *European Journal of American Studies* 10:3 (2015): 1-14.

In Class: Visit to the Tenement Museum and Walking Tour of Little Italy

March 20: The Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance

Due: Reading response due by Wed., March 19 at 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

Read:

Isabel Wilkerson, "The Great Migration: 1915-1970," in The Warmth of Other Suns (2010), 8-15.

"Letters of Negro Migrants," published in the *Journal of Negro History* (July and October 1919), <https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/260GMigration.html>

"Looking at the Great Migration," Tenement Museum Blog, <https://www.tenement.org/blog/looking-at-the-great-migration/>

James Weldon Johnson, "Harlem: The Cultural Capital" in The New Negro, ed. Alain Locke (1925), 301-311

Tammy L. Brown, "Caribbean New York" in City of Islands: Caribbean Intellectuals in New York City (2015), 21-44

Excerpt from Ken Burns, "New York: A Documentary History, Episode 5," Watch from 28:00-35:30, <https://youtu.be/OXC2oa1UJg8?si=kAh-2Y2Mz4mOkBHD&t=1680>

In Class: Workshop on using Social Explorer and Census Data with TLC Charlotte Thurston

March 27: The Third Great Immigrant Wave, Post-1965 Immigration to New York

Due: Reading Response due by Wed., March 26 at 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

Read:

Lesley Kennedy, "How the Immigration Act of 1965 Changed the Face of America," *History.com*, August 12, 2019,

Muzaffar Chisti, "Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration And Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States," *Migration Information Source*, October 15, 2015,

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/fifty-years-1965-immigration-and-nationality-act-continues-reshape-united-states>

A chapter from Nancy Foner, ed., *New Immigrants in New York* (2001)

Students will be assigned to read one of the following chapters:

- DOMINICANS: Patricia Pessar and Pamela Graham, "Dominicans: Transnational Identities and Local Politics," 251-273.
- MEXICANS: Robert Smith, "Mexicans: Social, Educational, Economic, and Political Problems and Prospects in New York," 275-300.
- SOVIET JEWS: Annelise Orelick, "Soviet Jews: The City's Newest Immigrants Transform New York's Jewish Life," 111-140.
- JAMAICANS: Milton Vickerman, "Jamaicans: Balancing Race and Ethnicity," 201-221.

In class: We will work in groups to compare experiences of different recent immigrant groups. We will also spend time developing bibliographies of secondary sources related to the subjects of the group projects.

April 3: Reading the city landscape

Due: Submit a report on a secondary source that relates to the topic of your group project. Your report should summarize the argument of the source (scholarly article or book) and include a review of the content that might be useful in writing your thematic article for the Food Atlas. Groups should coordinate so that each member is reporting on a different secondary source.

Read and Watch:

William Whyte, "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces," (1980),
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8mpdo3> (58 minutes)

Start reading Behold the Dreamers

In class: Neighborhood Observation (Place TBA) and Group Project Work Time

April 10: Ways of Thinking about Food, Immigration, and Culture

Due: Reading Response due Wednesday, April 9 by 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

Read and watch:

The Search for General Tso, 2014 documentary, 1 hr. 15 minutes (*Available free (with ads) from Pluto TV or for rent from Google, Apple, Youtube, Amazon for \$3.99*).

Donna Gabaccia, "Food Fights and American Values" from We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans (1998), 122-139.

Sean Basinski, "Hot Dogs, Hipsters, and Xenophobia: Immigrant Street Food Vendors in New York," *Social Forces* 81:2 (Summer 2014), 397-408.

In class: Bring an object or image to class that represents your family's food traditions or that is meaningful to you in relation to food; be ready to share with the class

April 17: No Class—Spring Break [CONTINUE READING BEHOLD THE DREAMERS]

April 24: Immigrant Storytelling

Due: Reading response due by Wed., April 23 at 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

Imbolo Mbue, Behold the Dreamers (2016), entire

In Class: Guest Nishan Bhaumik, Pro Bono Counsel for Humanitarian Immigration, Davis Polk & Wardell

Sunday, April 27: Behold the Dreamers Paper Due by 11:59pm

May 1: Chinese Immigrants and Chinatown in Manhattan [Neighborhood Visit]

Today the class will be visiting Chinatown and the Museum of the Chinese in America. Directions about meeting spot and time TBA.

Due: Preparation for Project Expo presentation (Details TBA)

Read

Min Zhou, "Chinese: Divergent Destinies in Immigrant New York" in Foner, ed., New Immigrant New York, 141-172.

Cathy Erway, "'The Pandemic Showed Us How Fragile Chinatown Is': Three Years Later, Chinatown is forever changed," *Eater NY*, March 15, 2023.

In Class: Walking Tour and Class visit to the Museum of the Chinese in America

May 3-7: Seminar 2 Project Expo at Macauley College

Groups will be assigned times to make short presentations about their work on their projects to date; each student will also be expected to attend at least one other session. More details TBA.

May 8: Immigration Today

Due: Reading Response due by Wed., May 7 at 9pm [Respond to prompt on Blackboard]

“Luis Ferre-Sadurni, “What to Know about the Migrant Crisis in New York, City,” *New York Times*, August 19, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/nyc-migrant-crisis-explained.html>.

“Facts, Not Fear: How Welcoming Migrants Helps New York City,” Report of the NYC Comptroller’s Office, January 4, 2024, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/facts-not-fear-how-welcoming-immigrants-benefits-new-york-city/>

“The Role of Immigrants in the New York City Economy,” Report 7-2016, New York Office of the State Comptroller, November 2015, pp. 1-4, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/osdc/pdf/report-7-2016.pdf>

Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf, and Mary C. Waters, “Worlds of the Second Generation” in Becoming New Yorkers: Ethnographies of the New Second Generation (2004), 1-19.

Kirk Semple, “Take the A Train to Little Guyana,” *New York Times*, June 8, 2013, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/06/09/nyregion/new-york-citys-newest-immigrant-enclaves.html>

May 15: Group Project Work Day

Due: Drafts of individual location entries and of group articles due. Submit via blackboard and bring a copy to class.

In Class: Class today will be devoted to peer review work on the group final project.

May 22: Upload individual location entries and group articles to the Food Atlas by 10am; Submit final reflection essay via Blackboard by 10am.