The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century ushered in an especially turbulent period in cultural and artistic history, overturning much of the settled ground of art and literature. The ordered and linear narratives of the nineteenth-century novel gave way to stream-of-consciousness techniques, the artistic distinction between figure and ground was ruptured by the radical formal experimentation of abstract artists, and the experimental arts upended even the most basic assurances about the foundations of creative expression. Cities were the engines of these radical changes, accelerating the pace of change by bringing disparate racial, ethnic, and artistic communities into greater contact with one another. Nowhere was this more visible than in New York with America abandoning its isolationist stance in the world and experiencing unprecedented waves of immigration, while European artists and authors responded with renewed interest to the dynamism of the New World. Artists and writers, ideas and capital, flowed in increasingly urbane settings, coalescing in arenas that will be the particular focus of our interest: the ethnic enclaves of the Lower East Side, the cosmopolitan and bohemian communities of Greenwich Village, the emerging cultural establishments of Midtown, and the newly flourishing Harlem Renaissance. Through a study of multicultural literature and the arts, focusing particularly on the collections of the Princeton Art Museum, students will begin to appreciate the role New York played in these transformative years, and the ways in which it dissolved the conventional distinctions between the artistic disciplines. Some of the questions we will consider include: How was modernity defined and understood differently by writers, artists, and other cultural figures in New York? How did artists respond to the city in literature, painting, photography, music, and film? How were manuscripts and artworks patronized, distributed, circulated, consumed, and collected in modern New York? To answer these questions we will go to the sites that made these narratives possible, engaging in experiential learning about the modern period and studying the lasting aftereffects of modernism on the city in the twenty-first century.

The objectives of the course are to engage in the interdisciplinary and site-based research that characterizes many of the most exciting developments in the fields of the spatial and digital humanities while fully imbibing the rich cultural resources both on the Princeton campus and in New York. Over the course of the semester students will be asked
to coordinate and collaborate on a series of “waypoints” that chart their site visits and subsequent research, helping to establish a map of modernist New York across the disciplines. Doing so will create a network of locations in which cultural work was taking place during the era and make available moments of contiguity that might occupy a blind spot in traditional scholarship. Rather than writing conventional research papers, students will write web-based, geographically coded sites into a shared, collaborative map of the city they are studying, creating a record both of our own travels and a sense of the cultural-archaeological layers of the streets we’ll walk. In the process, we will draw an inductive map of our own discoveries in these cities, moving in staged assignments from professor-chosen sites, to student-selected inquiry, and finally toward student-designed, syncretic “walking tours” through the streets of modernist New York.

[B] = available as a .pdf file on the course Blackboard site
[P] = collections of the Princeton Art Museum

Week 1: Orientations
Feb 2 Orientations, introductions, course policies
  David Harvey, “Modernity and Modernism” from The Condition of Postmodernity [B]

Feb 4 selections from: Ann Douglas, Terrible Honesty [B]
  Christine Stansell, American Moderns [B]
  William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff, New York Modern [B]
  Houston A. Baker, Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance [B]

Downtown: Lower East Side & Greenwich Village

Week 2: Before the Modern
Feb 9 Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence

Feb 11 Wharton, cont.
  Edith Wharton, “Tendencies in Modern Fiction” [B]
  John Singer Sargent, “Mrs. Henry Marquand” [P]; “Portrait of Madame X” [B]
  Guest Scholar: Veronica White, Mellon Curatorial Assistant for Academic Programs

**Waypoint #1: Formal Analysis due February 13th**

Week 3: Bowery Days
Feb 16 Stephen Crane, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets NB: Class meets today in McCormick 363
  Jacob Riis, selections from How the Other Half Lives (in Crane)

Feb 18 Crane et al., cont.
Week 4: **Lower East Side**

**Feb 23** Anzia Yezierska, *The Bread Givers*  
Alan Crosland (dir.), *The Jazz Singer* [B]

**Feb 25** Yezierska et al., cont.  

**Waypoint #2: Close Reading due February 27**

Week 5: **Ash Can Modernism**

**Mar 2** Rebecca Zurier, selections from *Picturing the City* [B]  
Works from the Museum collections by John Sloan, George Bellows, George Luks, Robert Henri, and William Glackens [P]

**Mar 4** Zurier et al., cont.

**Mar. 7th, first class trip to NYC**

Week 6: **Village Bohemia**

**Mar 9** Edith Wharton, “The Pot-Boiler” [B]  
Langston Hughes, “Slave on the Block” [B]  
Stansell, selections from *American Moderns* [B]  
George Chauncey, selections from *Gay New York* [B]  
Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney studios at 8 West 8th St.

**Mar 11** Bohemians, cont. **CLASS MAY NEED TO BE RESCHEDULED**  
Berenice Abbott, “Minetta Street, Nos. 2, 4, 6, Manhattan, 21 November 1935” [P]  
Guest Scholar: Aaron Shkuda, Princeton-Mellon Initiative in Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities

**Waypoint #3: Addresses, due Mar. 13th**

**Mar 17, 19: Spring Break**

**Week 7: 1913 Armory Show**

**Mar 23** Marilyn Kushner et al., selections from *The Armory Show at 100* [B]

**Mar 25** Kushner et al., cont.

**Week 8: Comics and Modernism**

**Mar 30** Peter Maresca (ed.), selections from *Society Is Nix* [B]  
Richard Outcault and George Luks, *Hogan’s Alley & The Yellow Kid* [B]  
George Luks, caricatures in the Museum collections [P]  
Guest Scholar: Veronica White, Mellon Curatorial Assistant for Academic Programs

**Apr 1** Maresca et al., cont.
Week 9: **MOMA and the Whitney**
Apr 6  Richard Meyer, “Prehistoric Modern” from *What Was Contemporary Art?* [B]
Avis Berman, selections from *Rebels on Eighth Street* [B]
Visiting Scholar: Elizabeth Lee, Associate Professor of Art History, Dickinson College

Apr 8  Meyer et al., cont.
Andreas B. L. Feininger, “Midtown” [P]

**Apr. 11th, second class trip to NYC**

**Waypoint #4: Modern American Art, due Apr. 13th**

**Uptown: Harlem and Beyond**

Week 10: **Harlem Renaissance I**
Apr. 13 James Weldon Johnson, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*
Selections from ragtime, jazz, and the blues

Apr. 15 Johnson, cont.

Week 11: **Harlem Renaissance II, Modernism Now**
Apr 20  Langston Hughes, selections from *The Ways of White Folks*; selected poems [B]
Claude McCay, selected poems [B]
Zora Neale Hurston, selected stories [B]
Lucy Ashjian, “untitled (dancers in nightclub)” [P]
Aaron Siskind, selections from *Harlem Document* [P]

Apr 22  Hughes et al., cont.
Romare Bearden, “Moon and Two Suns” [P]
Jacob Lawrence “The Migrants Arrive…” [P]

**Waypoint #5: Modern American Literature, due Apr. 25th**

Week 12: **Conclusions**
Apr 27 Research Symposium

Apr 29 Research Symposium; Conclusions, summations, celebration

**Waypoint #6: Self-designed, due Apr. 31**

**NYC Modernism Walking Tour: May 12th, 4:30 PM—Failure to Complete all Written Coursework by Dean’s Date will Result in a Failing Grade for the Course**
**Requirements:**

— **Timely and Thoughtful Completion of Reading Assignments**

— **Punctual Attendance and Engaged Class Participation, including Two Daylong Visits to New York and Extensive Study of the Princeton Museum Collections**

— A series of 6 “Waypoints” (600-1200 words each) on the class website

— **Rigorous Commentary on and Revision of the Work of Classmates**

— Final “Walking Tour” of Modernist New York in lieu of a final exam, synthesizing the research completed by the class throughout the semester

**Required Texts:** All texts are available for purchase at Labyrinth Books and are accessible via three-hour reserves in Marquand Library. **If you purchase your books through other sources, please only purchase the edition/ISBN indicated below.**


**Grading:** Diagnostic Writing Exercise (Waypoint #1)—5%; Papers (Waypoints #2-6)—50%; Final Walking Tour (in lieu of a final exam)—20%; Class Participation—25%

**Late Paper Policy:** All papers and other assignments are due on the date indicated on the syllabus. With the extraordinary and rare exception for medical or emergency reasons, late papers will receive a failing grade. Failure to turn in all writing assignments by Dean’s Date will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Course Attendance Policy:** More than two unexcused absences will result in a failing course participation grade. More than four unexcused absences will result in a failing course grade. Excused absences for non-academic or non-medical reasons (job interviews, significant extracurricular commitments, etc.) must be arranged with me well in advance of the scheduled date. Attendance is measured not only by your physical presence, but also by active contributions to course discussion; consistent, silent attendance will receive a “C.”

**Laptop/Phone Policy:** While tremendous tools for learning, I have found that laptops in the seminar classroom inhibit rather than promote intellectual dialogue. Unless you have a documented need for a laptop for note taking, please print out all of the course readings and bring them to class, and please refrain from using any internet-enabled devices in the classroom. Obviously, this rule goes out the window when we’re working on the course website in class; when we employ technology, we’ll try to do so in concert. Do I contradict myself? Very well then . . . . I contradict myself; I am large . . . . I contain multitudes.
**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Princeton’s policies on academic conduct and the undergraduate honor system are admirably clear and available for review here: [http://www.princeton.edu/pub/rrr/index.xml](http://www.princeton.edu/pub/rrr/index.xml) I am happy to discuss questions about academic honesty, permissible collaboration, and proper citation both during class time and privately during office hours.

**RESEARCH AND WRITING RESOURCES:** I strongly encourage students to take advantage of writing and research assistance that is available on campus. Located in Lauritzen Hall, the Writing Center ([www.princeton.edu/writing/center](http://www.princeton.edu/writing/center)) offers student writers free, one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers who are trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. Writing Center Fellows can help with any part of the writing process, from getting started to developing a thesis, structuring an argument, or revising a draft. The goal of each session is to teach writing strategies that will encourage you to become an astute reader of your own writing. Although the Writing Center is not an editing or proofreading service, Fellows can help you learn strategies for improving sentences and checking mechanics. I encourage you to make visits to the Writing Center a regular part of your writing process. Every writer—no matter how confident or experienced—can benefit enormously from the insights and suggestions an intelligent outside reader offers. To make an appointment, visit the Writing Center’s web site at [www.princeton.edu/writing/appt](http://www.princeton.edu/writing/appt). Evening drop-in hours are also available, Sunday through Thursday. I have also arranged for our seminar to have a Course Fellow, a dedicated tutor who will be familiar with the assignments and expectations of our course. More details will be forthcoming as I have them.

A research librarian or museum curator can both elevate your scholarship and save tremendous amounts of time in your search for scholarly resources. Three contacts I particularly recommend are Veronica White, Mellon Curatorial Assistant for Academic Programs at the Museum ([vmwhite@princeton.edu](mailto:vmwhite@princeton.edu)), John Logan, Literature Bibliographer at Firestone ([jlogan@princeton.edu](mailto:jlogan@princeton.edu)), and Mary George, Senior Reference Librarian ([mwgeorge@princeton.edu](mailto:mwgeorge@princeton.edu)), although anyone on staff at Firestone, Marquand, or the Art Museum can help orient you to the wealth of scholarly resources at the University.

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES:** In full support of Princeton University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be recommended for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services ([ods@princeton.edu](mailto:ods@princeton.edu); 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests for academic accommodations for this course need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, and again at least two weeks in advance of any needed accommodations in order to make arrangements to implement the accommodations. Please make an appointment to meet with me in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs. No accommodations can be given without authorization from ODS, or without advance notice.