Draft syllabus developed as part of *Mapping for the Urban Humanities* course, Summer 2016
Center for Spatial Research, Columbia University

Reading the multilingual city
New York, urban landscapes and urban multilingualism

Course description:

"The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language: the city speaks to
its inhabitants; we speak our city, the city where we are, simply by living in it, by
wandering through it, by looking at it, is truly and mostly clear if we take into
investigation all that surrounds us in the context of visual culture of the urban."
Roland Barthes, *Semiology and Urbanism*

The 21st century is shaping up to be the century of cities. By 2050, and at the current rate of urbanization, two-thirds of all people on the planet are projected to live in urban centers or clusters and cities will become the key demographic locus of the future. As a consequence, not only will cities become increasingly central to an understanding of modern life, but they could also potentially displace the state as both an essential spatial unit for the organization of territory and a critical container of social processes (Sassen, 2006).

While cities have always been places of heterogeneity, the accelerating patterns of worldwide migration patterns have changed the profile of most modern urban landscapes to one now best characterized by superdiversity and sociolinguistic complexity, i.e. dense forms of social, cultural and economic diversity that are found in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Blommaert, 2013). As a result, cities are both the primary space where one can engage with multilingualism and a privileged testing ground where one can study the shifting linguistic profile of modern urban landscapes.

However, while the city as such as long been a topic of academic, policy and development discourse, most studies of urban environments have largely ignored the linguistic dimension of the urban experience. When social scientists look at heterogeneity within the context of cities, they generally do not devote a great amount of space to analyzing the specific effects of language diversity and multilingualism on urban areas. Language is often simply taken for granted and language issues are dismissed as nothing more than another marker of ethnic or national identity.

Yet, cities have always been, and will always be, a privileged arena of language contacts. They remain a strategic site where one can encounter multilingualism – a phenomenon that is the inevitable consequence of the constant intermingling of a multiplicity of ethnicities and cultures in a shared geographic space. While multilingualism can be extraordinarily complex to capture, it can also be a revealing lens for investigating social and cultural history in a broad range of urban contexts. Studying multilingualism against the backdrop of an urban environment allows for a rich and textured account of how the changing types of interaction between spaces and languages fundamentally inflects a city's cultural history.

While all cities are multilingual to some degree, a few cities have always had a special relationship to language. New York is a city in which a multitude of languages have always cohabitated – at times peacefully, at times less so – and where they have had to compete for legitimacy as well as for access to the spaces of the city. In many ways, this makes New York a rich terrain for the meaningful study and exploration of multilingualism within the complex, evolving structures of the global city.

This course seeks to bring the city and multilingualism into conversation in order to throw light on the cultural history of New York as a multilingual city in which multiple cultures and languages co-exist, interact and lay claim to an ever-changing urban landscape. Focusing on the history and present state of various languages in the New York landscape, the course will explore urban multilingualism through a variety of critical, theoretical, and cultural lenses that will expand our understanding of the relationship between the spatial organization of a city and its linguistic profile. The course will balance readings, in-class presentations and discussions, and guest speakers with off-campus field trips to challenge students to develop the necessary tools and competences needed to

engage with multilingualism both in New York as well as in other cities that might be characterized by a different multilingual typology.

Although fluency in a second language is not required, it is highly recommended. This seminar will also offer numerous opportunities for those of you currently enrolled in a language course to enrich and extend the content of this course by taking your language study "out of the classroom."

Required texts and materials

Course Reader: A smaller-size reader will be made available. Other readings will be handed out in class or be made available online. To participate in class, you will need to bring the reader and any other assigned readings to class for every on-campus meeting of our class.

Notebook and camera: Throughout the semester, you will be asked to take photos of examples of language in public space, and to annotate these photos. Make a habit of carrying a small notebook and a digital camera/cell phone camera with you. Please discuss with me if you don't have access to these tools.

Online class tools: Throughout the semester, you will use Cityscape (a tool developed by the LRC to document and engage with the multilingual landscape of urban environments) to create media rich posts, share images, and discuss these posts with your classmates. We may make use of other sites such as Edublogs (www.edublogs.org), Instagram (www.instagram.com) or Flickr (www.flickr.com) to support the seminar.

Please choose and create an online identity for these semi-public sites that you feel comfortable sharing and that is compatible across a small number of platforms.

MTA pass: During the course of the semester, we will take the subway or the bus for a small number of field trips over the course of the semester. Please make sure you have an MTA pass.

Activities and assignments

This course emphasizes research skills and the presentation of knowledge as much as the learning of content. As such, the instructional design methods for this course are inspired by three pedagogical approaches or philosophies:

- Place-based education (a philosophy that promotes learning rooted in the local experiences of a particular place).
- Active learning (a process that engages students in activities that promote critical and reflective skills).
- Social pedagogies (an approach that considers that the representation of knowledge for an authentic audience (other students, an external audience, etc.) is a central part of the construction of knowledge).

With this in mind, the course promotes inquiry-based, immersive learning activities within a social pedagogy framework that require students to think about how languages exist(ed) in the city as embodied, situated practices. Students are asked to investigate research questions at the nexus of language and the urban environment and then an originally produced digital artefact that crystallizes this experience and illustrate a constitutive aspect of a particular language or a particular set of discursive practice.

1. ***Readings & in-class discussion (approximately 1.5 hours every week):*** On average, we will have 25-50 pages of readings per week, in academic, news, and other genres. Every week, I will assign 1 or 2 main readings (and, depending on the week, supplementary online materials) that introduce new concepts related to course themes, give background to discussion topics, describe the places we are visiting, etc. You will be responsible for reading

and responding to questions about these online <u>before</u> our seminar meetings (see below). In-class discussion will draw upon everyone's online postings, and will be facilitated by student discussion leaders in pairs or small groups. Active listening and discussion—both in class and online—are basic requirements to receive a "Pass" in this class.

2. ***Photography and field note taking (30 mins/wk)****:* Language is all around us in a modern urban environment. Every week throughout the semester, you'll have a specific question or topic, related to the visible languages of public places, to think about and keep an eye out for. You'll observe, record, and annotate your observations and incorporate these into your online posting and class discussion.

3. ***Online reflections and discussion (2 hrs/wk)****:* Each student will be required to compile an ongoing chronicle of his/her experiences in this seminar in a blog. Your blogs are where we will synthesize our responses to class topics and readings, on one hand, and our observations and reflections on our study of urban multilingualism, on the other. You will be using your blog for composing, commenting, and adding resources more than once a week; specific schedule and guidelines will be announced in class. (*I will be blogging on the same schedule on the course blog)

4. ***Mapping exercises:*** For each two-weeks period, students will be required to complete a mapping exercise that will help them reflect on the centrality of space to the topic at hand and reflect critically on questions that conceptualize, theorize, and assess the spatial dimension of multilingualism in an urban environment. These will include exercises in data mining and data collection; exercises that will help students reflects on the areal differentiation of linguistic data; and exercises that will help student familiarize themselves with how to display linguistic data in spatially-enabled digital visual environments.

5. ***Supervised final project that builds on engagement with NYC and/or a global*** **city:** Since this class poses questions about the role of multilingualism in urban places and for urban populations, we will actively critique existing and historical representations of various languages and cultures, as they are evident in everyday NYC landscapes. Then, in response, we will produce our own representations. These can include text and photo journals that capture and reflect upon individual "drifts" through the city, various forms of mapping that capture the specific linguistic landscapes of a particular neighborhood or street, digital stories, and other means of audio, visual, and written expression that record enriched linguistic walks through the city or record the collaborative exploration of a facet of the city's linguistic life **Note**: The preparation and writing of these mini projects will happen via your blogs; doing and reflecting on them on your blog will be your assignment for that week.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Take a critical view of language in its cultural and societal dimension.
- Have an understanding and be able to describe the challenges and opportunities facing multilingual urban communities, with special reference to NYC.
- Reflect critically on the meaning of identity and culture in the context of globalized communities.
- Acquire and implement methods of first-hand data collection and interpretation (qualitative and/or quantitative).
- Work in a team to plan and carry out research and to compose and publish online a research report targeting a wider audience of potential stakeholders.

Attendance

Discussion, presentation, and being present are everything for a seminar. On-time arrival and regular attendance is expected. Please discuss any probable absences with me beforehand. Missing more than 3 seminars and/or frequent late arrivals will jeopardize your ability to participate fully and earn a passing grade in this class.

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In-class participation

Seminars are a great opportunity to learn not just from the instructor and official materials, but also from the opinions and experiences of other participants. Active listening and speaking, mutual respect and risk-taking, patience and initiative with respect to all participants are required.

Individual media use (cell phones, computers, etc.) is not allowed at any time during group or whole-class discussions. There will be a computer available for projection; anyone is welcome to use this if discussion warrants it. Individual computers may be used during project-related pair or group work.

Grade

Your grade will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grade Breakdown	
Participation/Preparation/Attendance	20%
Online Reflections	20%
Mapping Exercises	30%
Final Project	30%

Grade Scale			
97-100	A+	73-76	C
93-96	A	70-73	C-
90-92	A-	67-69	D+
87-89	B+	63-66	D
83-86	B	60-62	D-
80-82	B-	50-59	F
77-79	C+		

Schedule

The seminar is divided into seven segments of two weeks each.

Topic 1 (Weeks 1-2): What is a city?
- Larger goal for these weeks: Understanding what exactly makes a city a city.
- Questions to consider: How do we describe a city? What are its characteristics? How do we make sense of it? How do we experience it? What are some of the tensions that characterize it? What are some typologies of cities?

Readings:
- Pile, S. (1999). What is a city? *City worlds*, 3-52.
- Mumford, L. (2015). 'What Is a City?'Architectural Record (1937). *The City Reader.*, 183-88.
- Kotkin, J. What is a city for? Working Paper Series No. 1, Lee Kuan Yew Centre For Innovative Cities
- Harvey, D. (2003). The right to the city. *International journal of urban and regional research*, *27*(4), 939-941.

Topic 2 (Weeks 3-4) What is multilingualism?
- Larger goal for these weeks: Understanding the concept of multilingualism.

- Questions to consider: How do we differentiate between several types of multilingualism (individual, social political, institutional, etc.)? What factors are important for our purposes in our working definition of multilingualism? How can we "measure" multilingualism? How can we visualize it? What is the role of multilingualism in the city?

Readings**:**
- Selection from Edwards, J. (2002). *Multilingualism*. Routledge.
- Aronin, L., & Singleton, D. (2008). Multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation. *International journal of multilingualism*, *5*(1), 1-16.
- Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2012). From monological multilingualism to multilingua francas. *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism*, 439.
- Shohamy, E. (2012). Linguistic landscapes and multilingualism. *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism. London: Routledge*, *5*, 38-551.

Topic 3 (Weeks 5-6) NYC as a multilingual city
- Larger goal for these weeks: Understanding the nature of New York City as a multilingual city.
- Questions to consider: How have successive immigration waves shaped NYC linguistic profile? How has multilingualism been inscribed in the historically layered cultural geography of NYC? What is the city's policy towards multilingualism? How does NYC tolerant policy towards languages other than English conflict with the national trend towards language assimilation? How does the history of multilingualism in NYC compare to that of other cities with different linguistic histories?

Readings:
- Rose, G. (1995). Place and identity: a sense of place. *A Place in the World*, 87-132.
- i Solé, R. C.(2013). Cosmopolitan speakers and their cultural cartographies. *The Language Learning Journal*, *41*(3), 326-339.
- Becker, K., & Coggshall, E. L. (2009). The sociolinguistics of ethnicity in New York City. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, *3*(3), 751-766.
- Garcia, O. (2001). New York's multilingualism: World languag and their role in a U. 8. city1. *The multilingual apple: Languages in New York city*, 3.

Topic 4 (Weeks 7-8) The city as a multilingual text
- Larger goal for these weeks: Understanding what we can learn from the visible display of multilingualism in the urban space.
- Questions to consider: What and how do we read an urban landscape? How is the urban text constructed (written) and experienced (read)? Is the multilingual city a unified or a plural text made up of many signs? How is a particular city perceived, and sometimes mythologized linguistically?

Readings:
- Stahl, G. (2009). Urban Signs/Signs of the Urban: Of Scenes and Streetscapes. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, *1*(2), 249-262.
- Barthes, R. (1986). Semiology and the Urban. *The city and the sign: An introduction to urban semiotics*, 87-98.
- Sassen, S. (2003). Reading the city in a global digital age. *Cities in Globalization*, 231.
- Duncan, J., & Duncan, N. (1988). (Re) reading the landscape. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *6*(2), 117-126.
- Gorter, D. (2006). Introduction: The study of the linguistic landscape as a new approach to multilingualism. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *3*(1), 1-6.

Topic 5 (Weeks 9-10) The city as a site of multilingual memory
- Larger goal for these weeks: Understanding how cities have the capacity for powerful projection of images of the past.
- Questions to consider: In what ways is the past inscribed in the urban landscape? How are cities the palimpsests of past multilingual memories? What are the effects of reading the

history of a city through the lens of one language rather than another? How can different voices, histories, and worldviews be read (or at least detected) in the individual signs that can be seen in NYC?

Readings:
- Selection from Hayden, D (1995). The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History.
- Selection from Bachelard, G., & Jolas, M. (1994). *The poetics of space* (Vol. 330). Beacon Press.
- Huyssen, A. (1999). Fear of Mice—The Transformation of Times Square. *Harvard Design Magazine. Winter/Spring 1998: 26-28. 4 Ross, Andrew. The Celebration Chronicle. New York: Ballantine Publishing Group*.
- Huyssen, A. (1993). Monument and memory in a postmodern age. *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, *6*(2), 249.

Topic 6 (Weeks 11-12) The city as a site of multilingual imagination
- Larger goal for these weeks: Understanding cities not only as material and lived spaces, but also as spaces of imagination and representation.
- Questions to consider: How does the city affect the imagination and how is the city itself imagined? How do we imagine the "Other" in the collective imagination of the city and how does the "Other" imagine the city? How does the multilingual city function as a multisensorial semiotic space? How is the city an invitation to invent in and for multiple languages?

Readings:
- Gilbert, D., & Hancock, C. (2006). New York City and the Transatlantic Imagination French and English Tourism and the Spectacle of the Modern Metropolis, 1893-1939. *Journal of Urban History*, *33*(1), 77-107.
- Tussyadiah, I. P., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2009). Mediating tourist experiences: Access to places via shared videos. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *36*(1), 24-40.
- Bridge, G., & Watson, S. (2003). City imaginaries. *A Companion to the City*, 7-17.
- Donald, J. (2008). The Immaterial City: Representation, Imagination, and Media Technologies. *A Companion to the City*, 46.

Topic 7 (Weeks 13-14) The city as a translational zone
- Larger goal for these weeks: Understanding how translation can be a key to making sense of multilingual cities.
- Questions to consider: What can one translate from a city? How does one translate what the urban landscape offers to us? What are the cultural and geographical urban spaces that give rise to intense traffic across languages and cultures? In what way are urban translation zones divided and contested urban space, where language relations are regulated by the opposing forces of coercion and resistance? What kind of new translation cartography can we expect to find in the altered exchange between the physical and the virtual in the contemporary urban centers? How do the languages of cities influence the process of both writing and translating?

Readings:
- Massey, D. (2010). *A global sense of place* (pp. pp-232). Aughty. org.
- Pratt, M. L. (1991). Arts of the contact zone. *Profession*, 33-40.
- Simon, S. Translating and interlingual creation in the contact zone. *Post-colonial Translation*, 58.
- Simon, S. (2012). The city in translation: Urban cultures of central Europe. *Target*, *24*(1), 126-140.
- Simon, S. (2009). Cities in translation: some proposals on method. *Doletiana: revista de traducció, literatura i art*, (2), 000-0.