MEIS-GA 1770
Theorizing Mobility
Fall 2020

Tuesdays 4:55-7:35

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About this Course
Today’s world is as being in constant motion. People, commodities, ideas, images, and ideas flow in different directions across the planet. Mobility refers to the ideologies, imaginaries, and policies of movement, to infrastructures and embodied practices of physical movement. Mobility is also related to stasis, forms of settlement, sedentary ideologies, and immobilization. Scholars have attempted to make sense of these altered or intensified spatial and temporal realities, while others have drawn our attention to the historical precedents of contemporary globalization. Multiple concepts are deployed to comprehend mobility, including globalization, transnationalism, deterritorialization, time-space compression, network society, space of flows, and cosmopolitanism. This course examines different forms of mobility, from migration, capital flows, and tourism to pilgrimage, jihad, and imperialism. It draws on a thematically and geographically diverse set of theoretical, historical, and ethnographic texts to explore the analytical purchase of mobility/immobility as a conceptual and methodological framework to study human sociality. The course asks what analytic possibilities are opened when we use mobility as a lens to comprehend empire, capitalism, religion, culture, and history.

Requirements
This is a seminar, and full participation in discussions is expected. Each member of the seminar will lead two class discussions, to be arranged at the beginning of the semester. This is an expansion on the weekly response, to include explication, tie-in to previous readings, critique. In addition, each week each member will submit brief commentaries or questions in response to the readings, by way of Forum on NYUclasses. These should range, roughly, between 200 and 700 words. They are meant to focus and support the discussions. There will also be a final paper on a topic negotiated between members of the seminar and instructor, in conversations that should begin very soon after the semester starts. The final paper should be submitted no later than ….. 2020.

Schedule
Week 1: Why Mobility?


Foundations

Week 2: Thinking about globality/locality

- Frederick Cooper, “Globalization,” in Colonialism in Question.

Week 3: Ecological Mobility: Early theorists of mobility

- Marcel Mauss, Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo: A Study in Social Morphology.

Week 4: Globalization, Commercial/Industrial Mobility

- Saskia Sassen (2007), Sociology of Globalization, pp. 3-44. (Chapter 1 and 2).

Infrastructures

Week 5: Logistics

- Marc Levin (2006), The Box: How the Shipping Container made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger; chapter 1-4, 9, 10, 14.
- Barry Lynn (2005), End of the Line: The Rise and Coming Fall of the Global Corporation, chapter 4 (thinking in links)

**Week 6: Material Aesthetics**

• Wolfgang Schivelbusch (2014), *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*.

**Week 7: Cities**


**Actors**

**Week 8: Mobile Person**


**Week 9: Immobile Person**

• Julie Y. Chu (2010), *Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China*.

**Week 10: Security & Control**


**Religion**

**Week 11: Mobile Religion I**

• Engseng Ho (2006), *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*.

**Week 12: Mobile Religion II**


**Week 13: Mobile Religion III**

• Judith Scheele (2012), *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*. 
Week 14: Religion and Empire

- Darry Li (2020), *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity.*