Modernity is both “the transient, the fleeting, the contingent” and “the eternal and immutable,” poet Charles Baudelaire writes, highlighting its ambivalent, contradictory character. Situating this conception of modernity in a specific time and place, 19th-century Paris, this course intends to examine the diverse iterations of modernity across different spatial environments and historical periods.

Focusing on urban modernity in Asia, the course is interested in how blueprints for modernist, global, creative, and smart cities are articulated across the greater span of the region. Such templates are often standardized, top-down visions for urban renewal, economic growth, and technological progress with contrasting degrees of triumphalism and failure. In this course, we will explore the multiple, pluralistic forms that modernity can assume among varied urban milieus and local residents by analyzing a range of texts such as master plans, street maps, genre movies, museum exhibitions, and social media. Embracing a more expansive definition, we will regard Asia as sprawling, archipelagic, and diverse, inclusive of the marginalized, diasporic populations of Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

We will ask: How can the complex flows and rhythms of a modern metropolis be visualized? What social and economic changes prevail in the shift to modes of governmentality characteristic of the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, media convergence, and immaterial production? How do urban infrastructure and architecture manage the dynamisms and tensions of modern flows and rhythms to reshape work productivity, public order, and collective memory? How are the voices and rights of the burgeoning class of cosmopolitan consumers and transnational migrants delimited and excluded from the configuration and operation of the modern Asian city?

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Visualizing the Modernist City (Sep 6)
Required:

Recommended:
- Edmund R. Tufte, “Micro/Macro Readings” and “Layering and Separation,” in
Envisioning Information (Chesire, CT: Graphics Press, 1990), pp. 36-51 and 52-65

Week 2: Parallel Modernities (Sep 13)
Required:

Recommended:

Wk 3: Creative Economies & Participatory Cultures (Class discussion) (Sep 20)
Required:

Recommended:

Week 4: Creative Economies & Participatory Cultures (Talk) (Sep 27)
Required:

Recommended:

Guest lecture:
- Dorothy Wai Sim Lau, Assistant Professor, Hong Kong Baptist University

Week 5: Border Peripheries & Rights (Oct 4)
Required:

Recommended:
- Sandro Mezzadra & Brett Neilson, “Figures of Labor,” in Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor (Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 95-130

Week 6: Street Observation & Digital Visualization (Class discussion) (Oct 11)
Required:

Recommended:

**Week 6: Street Observation & Digital Visualization (Field trip) (Oct 12)**

Field trip: Hong Kong City Gallery and Tai Kwun Centre for Heritage and Arts

**Week 7: Urban Sexualities (International forum) (Oct 18)**

Required:

Recommended:

**Week 8: Inter-Asian Noir (Film screening) (Oct 25)**

Film screening: *Burning* (Lee Chang-dong, 2018)

**Submission of individual critical reflection on Blackboard (Oct 25)**

**Week 9: Inter-Asian Noir (Class discussion) (Nov 1)**

Required:

Recommended:

**Week 10: Smart Cities and Virtual Offices (Class discussion) (Nov 8)**

Required:

Recommended:

**Submission of summary of final project on Blackboard (Nov 12)**

**Week 11: Consultation on final project (Nov 15)**

**Week 12: Presentation on final project (Nov 22)**

**Week 13: Work period for final project**
Submission of final project on Blackboard (Dec 8)

ASSESSMENT

Class participation – 15%
You are expected to participate actively during lectures, presentations, and discussions by asking salient questions and sharing relevant insights. Please make sure you have thoroughly read the required text. In every class session, different students will be called to share their thoughts or raise questions. Your responses to the presentations of your classmates will also be assessed.

Group-led discussion of recommended reading (30 mins.) – 25%
For Weeks 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10, groups of students will be assigned to lead the discussion of the recommended reading. For your presentation, your group should 1) present a summary of your assigned reading’s key terms and arguments concerning urban modernity. It should 2) explore their links with those of the required reading for the week. Your group should 3) explain how these ideas might be applicable to examples of visual or spatial representations of other Asian cities. Lastly, it should provide salient questions for further discussion.
This requirement will be marked based on the depth and clarity of your understanding of the assigned readings, which the members of your group will demonstrate during the presentation. The organization and coherence of the presentation will be taken as evidence of your group’s effort and preparedness. Part of your grade will also come from the quality of your discussion questions and examples. By 4pm of your presentation date, you should email to me your group slideshow and individual notes for grading.

Multimodal critical reflection (3 images & 400-600 words) – 20%
Working alone or in pairs, students will produce a multimodal critical reflection that documents their experience of modernity in the city during the field trip in week 6. The critical reflection will combine digital photos with written text. During the field trip, students will take three photos of different important sights or spaces that illustrate concepts about Asian urban modernity discussed in class. The accompanying written text of 400-600 words should provide an analysis in narrative or expository form.
This requirement will be marked based on the depth and clarity of the understanding it demonstrates in its explanation of its ideas and their application. The suitability of the chosen concepts for the articulations of modernity captured in the photos will factor into the grade.

Group project/paper (3000-4000 words total) – 35%
Group presentation of final project (10 mins.) – 5%
As your final requirement for the course, you will work in groups to create a proposal for a public relations or social media campaign that highlights the often suppressed or marginalized complexities of modernity in an Asian city of your choice. The paper should explain how a selection of key ideas from at least three different class sessions is being applied in the conceptualization of this proposal in
terms of its themes, objects, and methods. The proposal should be accompanied by a collection of five sample images of sites, materials, and interfaces that would simulate the implementation of the campaign.

This requirement will be graded based on the depth and clarity of the understanding it demonstrates in its explanation of its conceptual ideas and their analytical application. Credit will be given to the suitability and uniqueness of the chosen ideas and images. Lastly, the presentation of the project will be marked for its organization and coherence.

At the start of week 11, each group should submit a summary of the proposed project of 400-500 words in bullet-point format, which concisely describes its plans for the project and the ideas to be applied. In week 12, your group will give a presentation in class about your public relations or social media campaign, which will be your last opportunity to receive feedback before submitting the final version. Your presentation should feature a few of the sample images that will included in the campaign proposal.

**GRADING RUBRIC**

A (Exceptional) – The paper or project greatly exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented not only about the chosen example but also about the concepts used. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the concepts used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the concept and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organized. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

A- (Outstanding) – The paper or project exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the theory and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organized. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B+ (Very Good) – The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is coherently organized. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B (Good) – The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example could have been developed further. The paper or project displays a sufficient understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B- (More than Satisfactory) – The paper or project meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a sufficient
understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used. The language used
to explain the theory and its application is understandable. The writing is moderately
coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project may
have been submitted late.

**C+ (Satisfactory)** – The paper or project meets the expectations for this
requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack
elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a basic understanding of
the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory
and its application is understandable. The writing is slightly coherent. The chosen
example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been
submitted late.

**C, C- (Fair)** – The paper or project barely meets the expectations for this
requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used are
vaguely elaborated. The paper or project fails to display a sufficient understanding of
the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory
and its application is virtually understandable. The writing is incoherent. The chosen
example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been
submitted late.

**D+, D (Pass)** – The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this
requirement. No additional insights are presented about the chosen example or the
theory used on top of what was discussed in class. The language used to explain the
theory and its application are almost incomprehensible. The writing is incoherent.
The chosen example is irrelevant. The paper or project may have been submitted
late.

**F (Fail)** – The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this
requirement. The language and writing are poor. The chosen example is irrelevant.
The theory used was not covered in class. The paper or project may have been
submitted long past the deadline.

**ACADEMIC ETHICS**

You are expected to abide by the university’s principles and regulations on
academic honesty. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the information

Violations such as plagiarized papers or multiple submissions will not be
tolerated in any form. These will be subject to disciplinary action. Remember that all
words, phrases, or ideas taken from sources other than your own submitted
assignment must be properly cited. When in doubt about an assignment with a
possible violation, please feel free to consult me.

All written assignments must be accompanied by a VeriGuide receipt, a signed
declaration acknowledging your awareness of and subscription to the university’s
policies and regulations on academic integrity. Written assignments submitted without a
VeriGuide receipt will not be accepted and graded.