THE PEOPLING OF NEW YORK
CUNY Honors College Seminar 2, Spring 2013

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Tues: 5:00-7:30PM
City College
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Course Description:
The class will examine the role of immigration and migration in shaping New York into the city it is today. We will study the history of the various waves of newcomers and investigate the impact of each group on the city’s ethnic makeup, culture, economy, physical appearance and soul. We will compare the impact of immigration today with its impact 50 and 100 years ago and we will contrast how different ethnic groups have coped with the losses and challenges of immigration. We will try to understand the hardships—emotional and practical—that immigration presents as well as the often-romanticized opportunities. We will look at how different groups of immigrants have altered the character of many of the city’s neighborhoods, its commerce, its politics. Finally, we will take up the perpetual debate about whether immigrants should encourage assimilation into the American mainstream, focus on retention of native identity or find a congenial middle road. On their own, students will choose a neighborhood and study some of these issues as they manifest themselves in that community.

Course Books
All the Nations Under Heaven, Frederick Binder and David Reimers (Columbia University Press 1996)
The World in a City: Traveling the Globe Through the Neighborhoods of the New New York, Joseph Berger (Ballantine, 2007)

Other required readings will be made on e-reserve from these books:
Interpreter of Maladies, Jhumpa Lahiri (Houghton Mifflin, 1999)
New Immigrants in New York, Nancy Foner (Columbia University Press, 2001)
Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants, Robert Courtney Smith (University of California Press, 2006)
World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America, Irving Howe (Harcourt, 1976)

Course grades: 45 percent papers, 20 percent final test, 15 percent website, 20 Percent class participation. Attendance required every class; if absent, e-mail or call ahead.
COURSE OUTLINE
1. Jan. 29: Introduction/Overview: What was New York like 50 years ago and how and why has it changed? We talk about own immigrant or migratory roots and family histories--when come, why, what you remember about adjustment? Why do people immigrate?

Discussed interviewing techniques and what questions we’ll ask of our immigrant guests? And prepare plan for paper and website that will look at history, cultural characteristics, housing conflicts and major issues of a selected neighborhood

Assignment: Prepare a two-page migration history of your family. If your parents did not immigrate from abroad, try to find out what ancestor did and how you ended up where you live now. What was it like coming to this city? Experiences? Hardships? Benefits? Emotional journey?

Readings for next class:
Lost in Translation, Pages 3-95

2. Feb. 5: What does it mean to be an immigrant?—Differences in language, cultural cues, loss of friends, familiar clothes, foods etc. Spurred by Eva Hoffman’s Lost in Translation, we discuss experiences of nostalgia, alienation, mixed feelings towards benefactors, different customs.

Read some immigration stories in class.
Interview each other in pairs, with prepared questions.
Assignment: Write a 2-page immigration biography of your classmate
Readings for next class:
Beyond the Melting Pot, Pages 1-23

FEB. 12, Lincoln’s Birthday, No classes

3. Feb 14 : Who are the immigrants of New York?
More reflections on Lost in Translation.
Who were the city’s immigrants in the 1960s? Who are they now? Why do immigrants choose certain neighborhoods? (language, religion, presence of compatriots, availability of foods and other products, nearness to jobs, subway lines to ethnic cores.)

Speaker: Anthony Mancini journalism chairman, Brooklyn College
Readings for next class:
All the Nations Under Heaven, Pages 60-92 and Pages 135-148
Beyond the Melting Pot, Pages 181-288
“Arriverderci Bensonhurst,” World in a City, Pages 196-208

4. Feb. 19: Visit to the Tenement Museum, Meet at 5:00 at 103 Orchard Street, Lower East Side. Take B or D train to Grand Street or F to Delancey (45 minute tour).

5. Feb. 26: The Irish and Italians. Why did they come, Where did they settle? What was their culture like and how different from others at the time? Where are they now?
Visit by Ray Corio and talk about growing up Italian in a non-Italian neighborhood.

**Discuss Website**—Chris Caruso Explains Requirements and Techniques

**Readings** for next class:
- All the Nations Under Heaven, Pages 114-135
- World of Our Fathers, Pages: 26-62 (“Departure and Arrival”)

**6. March 5: Jews and Russian Jews.** Why did they come? What lives did they make? What are the differences between the two Jewish immigrations?

Discussion of The Triangle Fire of 1911.

Visit by Ralph Blumenthal

**Discuss Neighborhood Paper**

**Readings** for next class:
- All the Nations Under Heaven, Pages 225-257.
- “Jamaicans: Balancing Race and Ethnicity,” in *New Immigrants*, Pages 201-228

**7. March 12: Jamaicans and West Africans:** How is the experience of these immigrants different from earlier waves? What specific issues do they have? What have they added to the city’s cultural stew?

Visit by Selena Blake, Jamaican immigrant, Or Stephen Cohen.

**Readings** for next class:
- Mexican New York, Robert Smith, Pages 1-52 (on e-reserve)

**8. March 19: Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Dominicans and South Americans** What does it mean to live in two cultures at once? How has the mode of immigration—with or without documents-- been a crucial issue in how lives are lived?

Visit by David Gonzalez, New York Times reporter

**Readings** for next class
- “Chinese: Divergent Destinies in Immigrant New York” in *New Immigrants*, Pages: 141-169
- Asian-Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues, Pyong Gap Min, editor, (Pine Forge Press, 2006), Pages 80-100

**March 25 and April 2 fall during Spring recess so no classes**
9. April 9: Chinese and others Asians: How have they enriched the cultural stew? Why have Chinese and Korean immigrants been as successful as they have or is this picture an exaggerated stereotype? What are the real problems they face?
   Visit by Winnie Hu on gambling bus accident and what it revealed about Chinese life and culture in New York
   Readings for next class:
   World in a City, Pages 49-59, 88-99, 172-179

10. April 16: How immigration has affected commerce? What occupations have immigrants dominated and why? How has this changed the way New Yorkers do business? Are illegal immigrants taking jobs away from Americans?
   Interview Intesar Museitef, Palestinian home care attendant
   Read for next class: Beyond the Melting Pot, Pages xxxi-lxxvi
   “For the First time Minority Vote was a Majority,” The New York Times, Dec. 26, 2009

11. April 21 or April 20: Neighborhood tour: Lower East Side—Date to be Decided, Sat. or Sun. Appreciate an ethnically mixed neighborhood through its people, buildings, foods, religious institutions

12. April 30: Impact on Politics. How does immigration affect the politics and leadership of the city. What are recent trends and what can we anticipate?
   Visit by Dr. Brenda Berger to talk about psychological issues that derive from attachment to homeland.
   World in a City, “Bewildering Flavors in Richmond Hill,” Pages 181-195
   World in a City, “Melting Together in Ditmas Park,” Pages 19-31

13. May 7: Tensions with other groups. How do Americans with immigrant roots take to newer immigrants? How do older immigrants take to newer ones of the same ethnicity? How has technology changed the immigrant experience and enabled families to stay more in touch? What melting has actually occurred in the so-called melting pot? A look at melting pot neighborhoods?
   Read for next class, Interpreter of Maladies, “When Mrs. Pirzada Came to Dine,” Pages.23-42 and “Mrs. Sens, Pages. 111-135
   World in a City, “Domestic Disturbances in Rego Park,” Pages 143-156
   World in a City, “Families Ties and Knots in Flushing,” Pages 114-129

14. May 14: Impact on family life Why is immigration so hard on marriage and family life? How do the twin desires of assimilation to the American mainstream and retention of ethnic identity clash so often?
   Watch: The film “The Namesake” based on a Jhumpa Lahiri novel in Class

FINAL PAPER DUE May 14

15. May 21: Final exam