



# COLT 312:

## Myths, Heroes, & Legends of the Modern City

Myths surround places as much as they surround people; they linger in our present moment as much as they are rooted in a distant past. This course will explore the mythologies that constitute the modern city as represented in literature, theory, and film: we will explore the city as a site of modern-day heroes, urban legends, and fantastical chimeras that transform classic mythological tropes and introduce new ones to the social imaginary. We will engage authors, filmmakers, and artists who explore the city's heterogeneous—and often contradictory—mythological identity: the city as a site of ideological freedom and personal liberation; the city as a place of crime and surveillance; the city as a horizon for new opportunity and wealth; the city as breeding ground for poverty and social inequalities; the city as a place of intense human connection and incredible isolation. Our discussion will center around past and present-day mythic cities like Paris, New York City, Mexico City, Tokyo, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, etc.—as seen through the work of James Baldwin, Shay Youngblood, Clarice Lispector, Roland Barthes, Roberto Bolaño, Virginia Woolf, Valeria Luiselli, and Charles Baudelaire, among others. Together we will explore the continuities and frictions between these modern, urban mythologies and the more traditional understanding of myth, heroes, and legends. Assignments will include reading responses, in-class presentations, comparative essays, and multimedia projects.

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**SPRING 2021: T/Th, 3:30 to 4:50pm PST**

