

Flânerie and other Modern Mobilities

FREN 503: Modernities

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Oh ! errer dans Paris ! adorable et délicieuse existence. Flâner est une science, c'est la gastronomie de l'œil. Se promener, c'est végéter ; flâner c'est vivre. --Balzac



"Le Flâneur," Pierrot le Chat (2015)

What if we had to approach modernity on foot, would you walk with me? This course is an invitation to think together about the pedestrian practices of modernity, from wandering and roaming to wayward trajectories and random movement. How can we get with what resides in the speeds and rhythms of movement within the city, and the encounters, sensations, and modes of thought those speeds and rhythms occasion? What could such movement tell us about the “psychic life of the city” (Mbembe)? This course takes up “[t]he hazard of movement, of moving and being moved, of knowing that we are affected, that we are affective” (Moten) as a through line for thinking about modernity. Primary works in poetry and fiction, as well as essays, constitute the main corpus of our readings, which span from the 19th century to the present. Modalities of movement include: flânerie, dérive, errance, fuite, tracing, tracking, cruising, bar-hopping, metroing, sound-walking, and nomadism. Our walk through modernity will lead us to discussions of ideas around: chance encounters and the everyday; cartographies, topographies and experiences of space; evidence, clues, and signs; typologies and taxonomies of urban modernity; photography, fashion, and shopping; surfaces, borders, and boundary crossing; ephemera and memory.