

## Anthropology of the City: Exploring Modern Athens



### **ANTH 315 *Anthropology of the City: Exploring Modern Athens*** **Winter Term 2020**

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#### **Class Meetings:**

Monday-Friday

Hourly schedule TBA

#### **Course Description**

Do a Google image search for Athens, Greece. What do you see? When I did it today, I got a long page of dramatic images of the ancient Acropolis above the city, with a few pictures of recent political protests scattered in between. What is this modern city, the representation of which is dominated (well, at least in the images of the Google-able) by a glorious ancient past? Or, for those who follow international news, perhaps this view is complicated by a knowledge about recent political and economic upheavals over the past decade in Greece's capital city. Or further, for those who enjoy travel Instagram accounts, maybe you've come across an even more recent renaissance in Athens in the local food scene, or street art scene, or emergent hip neighborhoods. Those collectively are the expectations most students, most travelers, are bringing to this city.

How can we come to understand an Athens that contains all these things, but so very much exceeds them? How can we understand Athens from the perspective of an anthropologist, getting underneath these surface images and exploring the everyday life of the city, as well as the history that shaped that life, and the practices of Athenians who currently experience it, make it, and transform it? That is the goal of this course: to understand all of the different ways there are to be an Athenian, and to try to wrestle with the impossibility of knowing a place so big, so plural, so dynamic, so difficult, and so wonderful.

This course has a three-pronged approach to exploring Athens. The first is general: we will study the "city" as both a concept and a material reality, and the theories and issues anthropologists bring to the study of the city. The second takes us to the specific: how can we apply those ideas to the city we will be located in, to Athens? The third brings us the tools necessary to collect the data for that exploration: the qualitative methodologies used in the social sciences to study the spaces, people, practices, sounds, tastes, ideas, fields of power, and more that make up everyday life in this incredible city you'll be making your temporary home.

We will be systematically studying Athens in its material reality, in the experiences it shapes, and in the experiences people shape it with. We will be engaging with how the city intersects with gender and sexuality, inequality, migration, sustainability, consumption, capitalism, politics, activism, state power, housing and homelessness, art, pleasure, and more. This course will require you to be brave and open-minded, in interacting with strangers and new places. You will try new things you end

up loving and other new things you end up greatly disliking. By learning to live in and understand another culture, you will also learn more about yourself and your own prejudices and predispositions.

## **Learning objectives**

- You will become knowledgeable about how urban environments have been studied in the social sciences (with a particular focus on sociology, anthropology, and multi-disciplinary approaches like urban studies, the themes and issues specific to cities and city life, and the problems with treating the "urban" and "rural" (and other such categories) as strictly distinct from each other.
- You will be able to critically discuss the global and local forces behind urbanization and growth of cities.
- You will be able to apply this general knowledge about city formations to Athens and its specific history.
- You will become intimately familiar with the experiences of everyday life in Athens, through a variety of neighborhoods and social settings.
- You will gain a relational understanding of Athens in context with the rest of Greece and its neighbors.
- You will learn and practice a number of ethnographic research methodologies for gathering and analyzing data about life in Athens, and have a solid grounding in the ethics of participant observation.
- You will develop, through all of your senses (the five you know you have and several more you weren't necessarily yet aware of), your own subjective, positional, visceral, thoughtful, and analytical understanding of life in Athens.

## **Course Requirements**

Students will be expected to do the assigned daily readings and apply them to our activities through participation and discussion. In-class lectures will be connected to on-site visits. Research methodologies will be taught through lectures and readings, and will be put into practice through the course assignments. Assignments will include an ongoing fieldnotes journal (with prompts) and four research reports based on independent research projects.

## **Grading and Evaluation**

20% of grade: Students will produce an ongoing fieldnotes journal, following specific prompts that will be distributed.

60% of grade: Students will produce four research reports, following detailed guidelines, based on ethnographic methodologies covered in the class.

20% of grade: Students will need to do the readings before class, come to class with notes on the readings that include discussion questions and critical engagements, and participate in discussion. Rubrics for the evaluation of each of these grade factors will be distributed on the first day of class.

## **Attendance**

Students are expected to be present and on time for all classes and for all arranged activities.

## **Electronic devices**

Desktop computers are available in Athens at CYA for student use. In this course students may use their own laptops or tablets in class for note taking or to refer to the readings.

## **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodations, please inform the Director of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation. Additionally, this course requires a daily walking in the city; if you have mobility issues, please contact CYA to discuss further.

## Course Materials

Course readings will be available through CYA's online course management software, Moodle, or provided as textbooks by CYA (which may not be written in and must be returned).

## Preliminary Course Schedule

Course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and in keeping up to date with current research. A more precise schedule of daily readings and activities will be distributed the first day of class. This list will also be supplemented with recent journalistic reports and video, and short selections of more theoretical pieces will be read and analyzed collectively during class time.

### Section 1. Is this a research of the city, or in the city?

Walks and site visits:

Pangrati neighborhood walk

Readings for class discussion:

Ekistics, The Athens Center of. 1980. "HUCO: The Human Community in Athens." *Ekistics* 47 (283): 232-63.

De Certeau, Michel, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol. 2014. *Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (selections)

Taussig, Michael T. 2011. *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (ongoing reading)

Lectures:

The history of the city

Classic social theory approaches to imagining the city

### Section 2. History in the making of cities and this city.

Walks and outings:

The original plan of Athens walk

Neighborhoods outside of planning: Anafiotika & Kaisariani walks

The Athenian apartment building site visit

2004 Olympics transformations walk

Readings for class discussion:

Bastéa, Eleni. 2000. *The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (selections)

Dubisch, Jill. 1977. "The City as Resource: Migration from a Greek Island Village." *Urban Anthropology* 6, no. 1: 65-81.

Gallant, Thomas W. 2016. *Modern Greece: from the War of Independence to the Present*. London: Bloomsbury. (selections)

Hirschon, Renée. 1998. *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: the Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*. New York: Berghahn. (selections)

Papageorgiou-Venetas, Alexander. 1994. *Athens: the Ancient Heritage and the Historic Cityscape in a Modern Metropolis*. Athens: Archaeological Society at Athens. (selections)

Sutton, Susan Buck. 1986. "Family and Work: New Patterns for Village Women in Athens." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 4, no. 1: 33-49.

Korres, Manoles, and Charalampos Bouras (eds). 2003. *Athens - from the classical period to the present day: (5th century B.C. - A.D. 2000)*. Athens: Kotinos. (selections)

Lectures:

Participant-observation research methodologies

Social theory and history on walking and cities

### Section 3. Consuming the city

Walks and outings:

Faliro coastline walk

Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center site visit  
Central Market walk  
Rembetiko music site visit  
Social enterprise café site visit  
Technopolis museum site visit and Gazi neighborhood walk

Readings for class discussion:

Chatzidakis, Andreas. 2014. "Athens as a Failed City for Consumption." In *Crisis-Scapes: Athens and Beyond*, 33–41. Athens: Synthesi.  
Economou, Leonidas. 2014. "Political and Cultural Implications of the Suburban Transformation of Athens." In *Crisis-Scapes: Athens and Beyond*, 13–17. Athens: Synthesi.  
Riedel, Brian. 2009. "Forlorn, Ancient District: Gazi as Gayborhood?." *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 18, no. 2: 241-264.

Lectures:

Connecting local, global, and social economies through the city  
Research methodologies for sound, taste, and other sensory experiences

## Section 4. Politics in and of the city

Walks and outings:

Graffiti walk  
Polytechnio site visit  
Exarchia walk  
Syntagma (Parliament) site visit

Readings for class discussion:

Arampatzi, Athina. 2017. "The spatiality of counter-austerity politics in Athens, Greece: Emergent 'urban solidarity spaces'." *Urban Studies* 54, no. 9: 2155-2171.  
Astrinaki, Rania. 2009. "'(Un)Hooding' a Rebellion: The December 2008 Events in Athens." *Social Text* 27, no. 4.101: 97–107.  
Dalakoglou, Dimitris. 2012. "The Crisis before 'The Crisis': Violence and Urban Neoliberalization in Athens." *Social Justice* 39, no. 1: 24–42.  
Dalakoglou, Dimitris and Giorgos Poulimenakos. 2018. "Hetero-utopias: squatting and spatial materialities of resistance at times of crisis in Athens." In *Critical Times in Greece Anthropological Engagements with the Crisis*, Routledge.  
Leontidou, Lila. 2012. "Athens in the Mediterranean 'Movement of the Piazzas' Spontaneity in Material and Virtual Public Spaces." *City* 16, no. 3: 299–312.  
Madden, David J., and Antonis Vradis. 2012. "From Athens to Occupy and Back." *City* 16, no. 1–2: 235–36.

Lectures:

Problematizing the Athens-centric focus of research on Greece

## Section 5. Inclusion and exclusion in the city

Walks and outings:

Schedia "Invisible Routes" walk  
Kypseli neighborhood walk  
NGO site visit

Readings for class discussion:

Arapoglou Vassilis P. and Kostas Gounis. 2017. "Contested Landscapes of Homelessness in Athens." In *Contested Landscapes of Poverty and Homelessness in Southern Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 63-76.  
Tsavdaroglou, Haris. 2018. "The Newcomers' Right to the Common Space: The Case of Athens during the Refugee Crisis." *ACME* 17, no. 2: 376–401.  
Kandyliis, George, Thomas Maloutas, and Nikolina Myofa. 2018. "Exceptional social housing in a residual welfare state: housing estates in Athens, Greece." In *Housing Estates in Europe*, pp. 77-98. Springer.

Kozaitis, Kathryn. 1997. "“Foreigners among Foreigners’: Social Organization among the Roma of Athens, Greece.” *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 26, summer: 165–99.

Panori, Anastasia, Yannis Psycharis, and Dimitris Ballas. 2018. "Spatial segregation and migration in the city of Athens: Investigating the evolution of urban socio-spatial immigrant structures." *Population, Space and Place* e2209.

Lectures:

- Histories of urban exclusion and segregation
- Austerity and its effects in the city
- Discourses of urban regeneration and sustainability