

Nineteenth-Century Cities: Berlin, London, Paris

Comparing literary and visual representations of Berlin, London, and Paris in the nineteenth-century, this seminar's project is to explore different perspectives on how the rapidly changing experience of life in these cities informs the equally rapid changes in the ways in which urban landscapes were described, understood, and imagined. Taking a deliberately intermedial approach, the seminar will address the depicted experience of such essential elements of nineteenth-century urban modernity as industrialization, demographic change, the changing roles of women, mobility and speed, changing understandings of nature, crowds, and bourgeois consumption and display.

Literary readings will include canonical texts of nineteenth-century city writing in English, French, and German. We will also study visual representations of these cities and their immediate surroundings, with a particular focus on impressionist painting; and we will consider how the early development of photography contributed to the emergence of new ways of understanding space, time, and movement. Our work with these texts and images will be complemented by the study of theoretical and historical readings on the modern city and its imaginative representation.