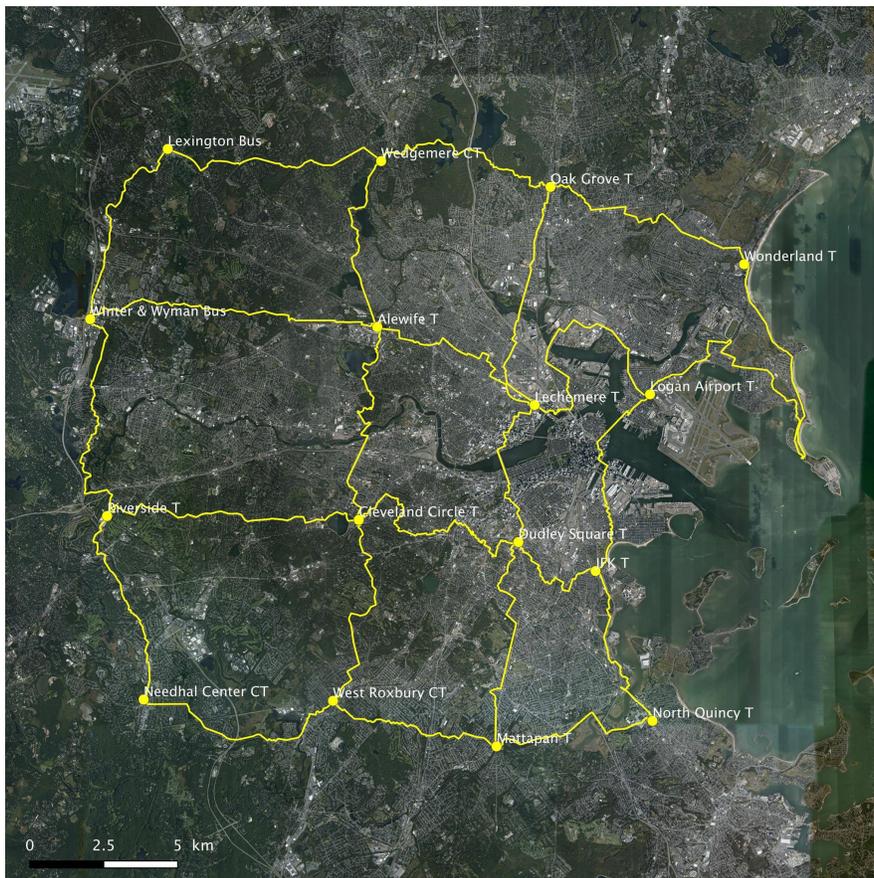


ANTH171b — Cities and Bodies: Mapping the Boston Metropolitan Trail
Pascal Menoret — class hours Friday 9am-11:50am — office hours
by appointment — classroom Brown 224 — office Lemberg 227

This seminar is an introduction to urban design anthropology that takes the Boston suburbs as its prime object of investigation. Students will participate in the design of the Boston Metropolitan Trail (BMT), a projected grid of twenty-four trails connecting sixteen bus, subway, and commuter rail stations around Boston (see map below). The BMT is a slow transportation infrastructure that connects some of the main public transit nodes of the greater Boston area. The BMT is also an art installation that critiques and displaces the image of Boston, which is still dominated by settler colonial fantasies centered on the Boston peninsula and Downtown Cambridge. In a way, the BMT is an anti-Freedom Trail. It takes its users to the Deer Island colonial concentration camp, to the Middlesex Fells and its racialized “Anglo-Saxon” and “Aryan” landscape¹, and to the holes punched in the urban fabric by mid-century urban renewal. The BMT gives visibility to indigenous lives, to African-American, Muslim, and Asian-American stories, and maps out different mobilities and spatialities.



Map: The 8 trails and 16 nodes of the Boston Metropolitan Trail

¹ Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (Harvard University Press 2010), p. 252- 257.

In this class you will:

- 1) Study the pre-colonial, settler-colonial, modern, and contemporary history of the Boston metropolitan area. Metropolitan trails are tools that allow for the creation of new narratives about a metropolitan area.
- 2) Theorize what it means to walk through urban and suburban areas, and how this practice connects to a series of artistic, cognitive, and political propositions.
- 3) Conduct a series of design and walking workshops between Waltham, Lexington, Newton, Needham, and Boston.
- 4) Produce a variety of texts and images that may feature in a Guide of the Boston Metropolitan Trail, to be published by a local university press.

By the end of this class:

- 1) You will have a broad understanding of the history and anthropology of the greater Boston area.
- 2) You will know how to design, produce, and document a walking trail.
- 3) You will have acquired theoretical tools to discuss the metropolitan experience and understand some of the challenges posed by today's metropolises.
- 4) You will be more familiar with writing and fieldwork as ethnographic tools.

This writing and walking seminar meets once a week on Friday mornings. For this class you will need to use a smartphone to document your walks. If you need assistance acquiring devices, please visit [this page](#), where you will find a laptop grant application and will be able to apply to the Brandeis Emergency Fund.

Student hours are by appointment. I am very available and accessible; don't hesitate to reach out to me! Drop me a line by email if you have any question, any time.

Assignments:

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class. Your grade will be based on the following assignments:

- **Attendance and Participation (20%).** You are expected to show up, be in class, and have thoughts to contribute to the class and the projects we work on. Attendance is not optional and will count toward your final grade. Please let me know in advance if you will have to miss class, even if it's partially. If you have any issue do not leave me in the dark but communicate with me as early and as clearly as possible. I can't help you if I don't know that you're experiencing difficulties.
- **Weekly Instagram Posts (10%).** Every week before class you will create an **Instagram post** and tag the Boston Metropolitan Trail's instagram account [@bmt_walking](#). You may post photos, videos, memes, or any content as long as it is connected to the Boston Metropolitan Trail and/or to the class readings and research. Don't hesitate to use hashtags and captions to illustrate your creative and thought process while creating these posts. These are both visual *and* (extra short) written assignments. At the end of the semester you will create a portfolio of all your posts in PDF format and email it to me (pmenoret@brandeis.edu).

- **Paper 1 (10%):** You will write a short paper (around 1,500 words), inspired by Kevin Lynch's texts, about the image of metropolitan Boston. You may use any material you want as source as long as it is connected to your walks around campus or across the metropolis. I will send you a detailed prompt in time. **You will email me your paper before or on February 7.**
- **Group research project (20%):** You will collectively research and document one of the four BMT segments near Brandeis: Brandeis to Lexington; Brandeis to Needham; Brandeis to Alewife; or Brandeis to Cleveland Circle. You will look for landmarks and prominent features, design an enjoyable and enriching path, and create a bibliography that includes academic sources, media sources, pop culture sources, literature, music, films, etc. about the segment that you are researching. You will 1) email me all documents and sources that you have gathered as a group, 2) present your group research on one of our design studios (**February 18, March 11, and March 25**) and 3) use this group effort to lead one of our walks. **I need to receive your research materials before the corresponding design studio.** I will grade your work based on these three elements, and all group members will receive the same grade.
- **Paper 2 (10%):** You will describe your segment of the BMT in a detailed manner in around 2,500 words. You may draw your inspiration from the Woolf, Cadogan, Monsiváis, Shehadeh, Madrid, or Ulin readings. Your description must be a narrative, with a clear plot, a beginning, and an end. (Detailed prompt to come.) **You will email me your paper before or on April 1.**
- **Paper 3 (20%):** Your final paper will be a non-fiction essay on one of the themes that you have researched in connection to your group work on the BMT segment you've designed, and in connection to the course's texts. In response to a clear research question, you will present, analyze, and interpret the evidence you gathered during the semester. (Detailed prompt to come.) **You will email me your final paper before or on May 13.**
- **Oral Presentation (10%):** You will present your final paper to the class at the end of the semester, to get feedback from everybody including myself. Your presentation will be 10 minutes long, and will be followed by a 5 minute Q&A. **Oral presentations will take place on April 29 and May 3.**

Important deadlines:

- Instagram post due every week before Friday, until April 8 (10 posts in all);
- Paper 1 due February 7;
- Group research material due before February 18, March 11, or March 25;
- Paper 2 due April 1;
- Paper 3 due May 13;
- Oral presentation on either April 29 or May 3.

I don't give extensions on assignments. Feel free to meet with me before and after each assignment to discuss your ideas and projects and get individualized advice and feedback.

Grading: I will grade papers using the following rubrics:

- **Content:** your paper or film has a clear argument and you build a compelling narrative, with clear points organized in an efficient way. (50%)
- **Sources:** your paper or film relies on appropriate sources, whether these are the relevant literature (for papers) or images and videos sourced (for films). You will mention your sources in footnotes (for papers) or in the credits (for films). (25%)
- **Editing and formatting:** your paper or film is clearly edited, language shows correct spelling and grammar. (25%)

Disabilities: If you need academic accommodation because of a documented disability, please contact me as soon as possible (accommodations will not be granted retroactively). If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support at (781) 736-3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

Class schedule and what to do or read before each session (all assigned texts and some research resources are on Latte):

January 21: An Anti-Freedom Trail.

During this first session we get to know each other and we start thinking about the space of metropolitan Boston. I introduce you to the Boston Metropolitan Trail project. We read together a few short texts (see the list below) and take a short, brisk walk outside during which we record our impressions. It is going to be cold out there, so bundle up! Here is a list of readings we will do in the classroom:

- Pascal Menoret, “Boston Metropolitan Trail Manifesto.”
- Lara Baladi, Pascal Menoret and Chucho Ocampo, *Boston Metropolitan Trail Guide* book proposal.
- Guy Debord, “Theory of the Derive,” *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 2, Paris, 1958.

January 28: How to Design a Trail?

What is a hiking trail? How does one design a trail? What are the impressions, spaces, landscapes that you will be on the lookout for as trail designers? During this session we think about the various tasks involved in the creation of suburban and metropolitan hiking trails. We acquire the basic tools and concepts of urban design. We also learn how to use Google Earth to record our findings and trajectories. Here is a list of readings to do before class. While reading these texts, jot down your first impressions and bring these personal notes to the classroom.

- Nicolas Mémain, “The Milano Master Class,” <https://metropolitantrails.org/en/academy/resources>.
- Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960, p. 1-25 and 46-90.
- Joseph Nevins, Suren Moodliar and Eleni Macrakis, *A People’s Guide to Greater Boston*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2020, Introduction, Boston Harbor, Roxbury and Mission Hill, Waltham, and Thematic Tours, p. 1-7, 10-21, 119-128, 246-249, and 264-287.

February 4: How to Create a Community of Walkers?

What are the politics of metropolitan hiking? This week, we reflect on what makes a hiking trail interesting for larger communities, and on what constitutes inclusiveness in relationship to metropolitan walking. Who gets to walk safely, where, and when? What is the point of walking? How can walking be an act of political consciousness and resistance? How to create

communities of walkers? Here is a list of readings. As usual, make sure to write down your reading impressions, and to bring these notes to class.

- Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting," in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1942, p. 20-36.
- Garnette Cadogan, "Walking While Black," *Freeman's*, no. 1, 2016.
- Carlos Monsiváis, "Nightlife," in Rubén Gallo (ed.), *The Mexico City Reader*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 175-192.
- Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape*, New York: Scribner, 2007, Introduction and chapters 5-6, p. xiii-xxii and 156-198.

Here are a few additional resources. First of, you should read Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks* from cover to cover. It elevates walking to a political and legal practice of resistance to military occupation, and it is an awesome book. You could also read Raja Shehadeh's more recent *Going Home: A Walk Through Fifty Years of Occupation* (London: Profile Books, 2019). To complete your understanding of walking's political potential in contexts of structural oppression, read Arundhati Roy's *Walking With the Comrades* (London/New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011).

February 11: How to Narrate a Trail?

This week, we study the narrative tools that befit the metropolitan scale. Metropolises have become ubiquitous yet mysterious. They suffer from a problem of representation. On the political side, they are (mis)represented by arcane entities (who knows exactly what the Boston MAPC or the Boston MPO are?). On the imagination side, they are still unknown and invisible. We all think we "see" Boston and Cambridge; but who can visualize the Boston-Cambridge-Newton Massachusetts-New Hampshire Metropolitan Area? This week we learn how to tell spatial stories, and how to understand the new monuments among which we spend our lives. Here are this week's readings; as usual, jot down reading impressions and bring them to class.

- Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1984, chapter IX, "Spatial Stories," p. 115-130.
- Robert Smithson, *Collected Writings*, Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1996, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," p. 68-74.
- Fabrizio Mejía Madrid, "Insurgentes," in Rubén Gallo (ed.), *The Mexico City Reader*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, p. 55-77.
- Christopher Tilley, "Walking the Past into the Present," in Arnar Árnason, Nicolas Ellison, Jo Vergunst and Andrew Whitehouse (eds.), *Landscapes Beyond Land: Routes, Esthetics, Narratives*, New York: Berghahn, 2012, p. 15-32.
- Aleksandar Hemon, "Teju Cole by Aleksandar Hemon," *Bomb Magazine*, April 1, 2014.
- David Ulin, "Street, Haunting," in *Sidewalking: Coming to Terms with Los Angeles*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2015, p. 1-10.

You may also want to read more stuff: Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City" (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1984, p. 91-110) is a classic. So is Werner Herzog's *Of Walking in Ice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), which tells the story of how the German filmmaker walked from Munich to Paris, two quintessential European metropolises, to prevent his mentor and fellow filmmaker, Lotte Eisner, from dying (and it worked!). Herzog's text is accessible online through the Brandeis Library, as are the texts about Mexico City gathered by Rubén Gallo. Of course, Teju Cole is one of the most brilliant metropolitan walkers and writers of these past ten years. Read his

Open City (New York: Random House, 2011) and his *Everyday is for the Thief* (New York: Random House, 2007), on New York City and Lagos respectively.

February 18: First Design Studio

After New York City, Mexico City, and Ramallah, now on to Boston, and to the practice of designing the trail. We reflect this week on the scale of our own metropolitan space, and on the kinds of stories that are told about Boston. We study the landscape, the geography, and the myths that unfurl around the city. We also prepare our first walk. Drawing on what we learned during the previous weeks, we prepare a design for the Brandeis-Riverside-Needham route. Here are the readings for this week; as usual, take copious notes and bring these to the classroom.

- William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1983, Chapter 3: "Seasons of Want and Plenty," p. 34-53.
- Sam Bass Warner, *Greater Boston: Adapting Regional Traditions to the Present*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, Introduction and Chapter 1, p. xiii-xvi and 1-32.
- Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston (1870-1900)*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962/1978, Chapters 1-2, p. 1-34.
- Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010, Chapter 3: "Inventing the Suburbs," p. 129-178.

In addition to these readings, the group working on the Brandeis-Riverside-Needham route will also bring to class resources on the following objects: the planning and architecture of the Brandeis campus; the Norumbega "Norse" Tower in Weston; public water in Boston/Cambridge; the history of freeways and of golf courses in the U.S.; the ecology of the Charles River...

February 25: no class

March 4: First Walk: From Brandeis to Riverside and Needham

We try out the route that we designed on February 18. Bring good shoes, a hat, water, a notebook and a smartphone (or a camera). The walk is led by the group working on this segment, based on their research. While walking, we document the trail and jot down our remarks. Prior to the session I will upload the research resources that those students working on this segment have found, so everybody can be up to speed. What if it rains? We'll still wander around, but probably less, and we'll stop somewhere to reflect on our walk.

March 11: Second Design Studio

In this research studio we focus on a few other metropolitan objects. We look at the growth of Boston through the lense afforded to us by our walking experience. We study sidewalks, metropolitan diversity, metropolitan nature, metropolitan infrastructure, and reflect on urban renewal and population removal. We also prepare our second walk and design the Brandeis-Winter&Wyman-Lexington route. Here are the readings for this week:

- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Random House, 1961, Introduction and Chapters 3 and 12, p. 3-25, 55-73 and 222-238.
- Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design*, New York: Basic Books, 1984, Preface, Prologue, and Chapter 1, p. xi-xiv, 3-5 and 9-37.
- Karilyn Crockett, *People Before Highways: Boston Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for City Making*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 3, p. 1-42 and 72-104.

In addition to these readings, the group working on the Brandeis-Winter&Wyman-Lexington route will also bring to class resources on the following objects: the history of Waltham; the ecology of Prospect Hill Park; the history of route 128, Boston's technology hub; the sociology of Lexington...

March 18: Second Walk: Toward Winter&Wyman and Lexington

Today we try out the route that we designed on March 11. Again, bring good shoes, a hat, water, a notebook and a smartphone (or a camera). Prior to the session I will upload the resources that those students working on this segment have found, so everybody can follow what's going on during the walk. The walk is led by the group of students who researched this segment.

March 25: Third Design Studio

Our third and last design studio is dedicated to understanding the legacy of settler colonialism around Boston. Today we research two routes: the Winter&Wyman-Alewife and Riverside-Cleveland Circle routes. Walking back in thought toward the core of the metropolitan area, and linking together our previous research materials, we can let our conceptual imagination linger along the Charles River, through the metropolitan park system, and above the transit, energy, and learning infrastructure of Boston. Here is our reading list for today; as always, take notes and bring them to class:

- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2014, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, p. 1-44.
- Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010, Prologue and Chapter 5: "Recreating the Wilderness," p. 1-21 and 233-276.

In addition to these readings, the group working on the Winter&Wyman-Alewife and Riverside-Cleveland Circle routes also bring to class resources on the following objects: conservation areas and nature reservations in the U.S.; the history of Bentley University; the Walter Fernald Developmental Center; the sociology of Belmont; the history of the T and of the Alewife development; the sociology of Newton and Chestnut Hill; Boston College, Brighton and Cleveland Circle...

April 1: Third Walk: Toward Riverside and Cleveland Circle

We try one of the routes we designed on March 25, and we follow the lead of the group who researched this segment.

April 8: Fourth Walk: Toward Winter & Wyman and Alewife

We try the other one of the routes we designed on March 25, and we follow the lead of the group who researched this segment.

April 15: no class

April 22: no class

April 29: Final presentations

May 3: Final presentations