

Inquiry Into New York

This course will use the city of New York in order to explore notions of American identity. New York City is, arguably, the cultural capital of twentieth- (and, so far), twenty-first century America—the center of literature, music, art, architecture, and fashion as well as the focal point for political debates on the viability of cities, immigration, and the meaning of America itself. This course studies autobiographical, fictional, non-fictional, poetic, and cinematic accounts of twentieth-century life in New York City in order to understand the dreams and nightmares embodied by the city in the popular imagination. Throughout the course, students will examine how individuals, especially those residing outside of the quintessential American metropolis itself, “read” Manhattan. Ultimately, as we work our way through the course readings, we will attempt to answer the course’s overriding question—Is New York City a part of America? Or is it “someplace” else?