

Field Trip to the Empire State Plaza
Sunday, April 7, 2019 • 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
optional dinner to follow

Our field trip to the Plaza, although at first blush it might appear tangential to Mapping and Exploring Rome, is essential to both courses. The purpose of the excursion is manifold:

- to consider ancient monumental space in a modern context, and vice versa;
- to consider the impact of large-scale building projects on an urban landscape;
- to provide an opportunity for on-site writing and the basis for the *Giornale* writing assignment (due Saturday, April 13);
- to have the experience of an extended group excursion before our Rome residency; and
- to field-test and familiarize ourselves with our audio tour equipment.

Attendance. Participation in this field trip is mandatory, unless your presence is required at another College-sponsored event (such as a conference or a team sport). If you believe you have a conflict, please consult with Profs. Curley and Spinner to make arrangements to visit the Plaza and to complete the writing assignments on your own time. The trip counts toward 25% of your participation grade, so unexcused absences or incomplete work will come with a hefty penalty.

Activities. Rain or shine, we'll depart from the Case Center lot at 1 p.m. sharp and drive down to Albany. (Drivers and parking will be arranged in advance.) Upon our arrival, we'll distribute the tour equipment and spend some time walking on and under and around the Plaza. Then we'll separate for a time so that you can compose answers to a set of questions and take notes for your *Giornale* assignment. Following this, we'll reconvene and discuss your answers to the questions. Finally, we'll collect your answers, along with the audio equipment, and continue the conversation over (an optional) dinner.

Questions. The questions to answer are as follows:

- How do you imagine the space of the Plaza and the concourse gets used?
- What civic values are expressed in the construction of these spaces?
- Are these spaces oriented toward the past or toward the future? Explain.

Dinner. For dinner, we hope to head to [Druthers Albany](#). Profs. Spinner and Curley will subsidize the meal, so you can expect to pay no more than \$10.00 (cash only). Return to campus will be between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. Remember, the dinner is optional, so if you need to leave after the excursion is over, that's fine.

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What to bring. You should bring the following items with you:

- a sturdy notebook and two pens/pencils (in case one stops working);
- earbuds, for the tour equipment (3.5 mm jack only);
- water and snacks (though see below on restrooms);
- weather-appropriate clothing and shoes;
- rain gear and/or sunscreen; and
- cash for dinner (if you intend to join us — small bills appreciated).

You should eat breakfast and/or lunch before we depart. While the Plaza and the concourse underneath it are a flurry of activity during the working week, food services on the weekend are usually non-existent. The same advice applies to public bathrooms, which are always inconvenient. (As in Albany, so in Rome!) If nature calls, you'll spend much of your writing time in search of a restroom. Please take care of your business before we leave Skidmore.

Solo excursions. As noted, if you cannot join us on the 7th, you'll be responsible for visiting the Plaza and the concourse on your own time. Do so whenever it is convenient, either before or after April 7th, but no later than the 10th. While you are there, answer the questions and take notes for your *Giornale* entry, just as you would if you were with the group. Also — and this is key — take a selfie in front of The Egg to prove you were there. When you return to campus, type up the answers to the questions and email them and your selfie to Profs. Curley and Spinner. Your *Giornale* assignment will be due on the 13th, along with everyone else's.

Schedule. The trip will require some planning in advance, and there will be some work to do afterward. Here's the complete schedule of events:

Week of Mar. 18: distribution and discussion of these guidelines.

Week of Mar. 25: drivers and diners finalized.

Week of Apr. 1: brief readings on the Plaza, to be done prior to departure.

Sunday, Apr. 7: field trip day, depart Case Center at 1:00 p.m..

Saturday, Apr. 13: *Giornale* writing assignment, based on our excursion, due at noon.

Week of Apr. 15: watch a documentary on the Plaza in small groups (see below).

Monday, Apr. 22: discussion of the experience in class.

Documentary. As a follow-up to our trip, please watch on your own time *The Neighborhood That Disappeared*, a 2014 documentary on the making of the Plaza. We'll distribute the DVDs in advance and ask anyone whose class participation grade needs a boost to schedule and host a viewing party. Emily G. has scheduled one in the Media Viewing Room of the Library for Tuesday, April 16 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The documentary will be part of our discussion on April 22.

Please let us know if you have questions or comments.