

## **Public Space and Parks as OER**

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A lecture on Public Space and Public Art in New York is an excellent way to engage students in their own environment, and can be incorporated into Survey 2 classes or more focused courses on public space, North American art and architecture, nineteenth century art and architecture or contemporary public art. In this case, the specific geographical position of the campus can become a type of 'OER'. At Baruch, the closest space is Madison Square Park, but there are many spaces around the city that instructors can utilize for this type of class. This is a great activity because it also gets the students out of the classroom, provides a welcome respite in the middle of the semester, and sometimes even allows them to explore a part of the city they may not be familiar with (particularly in the case of commuter campuses like at CUNY).

### **Learning Goals**

After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Think critically about the designation of public space
- Engage in critical discussions of public art and their relationship with city and neighborhood demographics
- Consider public art as an expression of and reaction to the realities, changes and inequalities of the city
- Consider the city as a living and ever-changing entity

### **Activity (60-90 mins)**

#### Preparation:

- In the place of readings, ask students to engage with the public space and public art in their own neighborhoods. Ask them to share their responses in the form of photos/videos and/or short written responses via BlackBoard/DropBox/Google Drive etc.
- Several NYC parks have public art programs and it is good to be familiar with the particular space which you will be visiting.
- If there is a particular installation or program in the space, it is also possible to assign local press articles about the art. This allows students to engage with local public art as well as the history of urban development.

#### In class:

- Arrange to either walk together or meet at a designated meeting point.

- Start off by asking the students to imagine New York with no parks or public spaces, and highlight how vitally important public space is in any urban environment
- Walk around the park and give a mini-lecture about the history of the park and the particular buildings and monuments in the park, to explain how the space developed as it is.
- Weather permitting, find a space to sit and discuss the students' findings when they looked at public art and public spaces in their own neighborhoods. Depending on the size of the class, each student might have the chance to describe their own neighborhood and how the public space reflects the population of their neighborhood.
- This can also lead to engaging discussions on the changes within New York City, or any other city, on the shift of demographics, gentrification etc. Discussion can lead to fruitful comparisons between the surroundings of the campus and other NYC neighborhoods.

**Suggested Resources:**

- [\*NYC Parks: Art in the Parks\*](#)
- [\*Madison Square Park Arts\*](#)
- Dolores Hayden, [\*The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History\*](#) (M.I.T. Press, 1997).