



MISERICORDIA UNIVERSITY

Hosts

DAVID KISHIK

Presenting Master Classes for the
English and Philosophy Departments

David Kishik

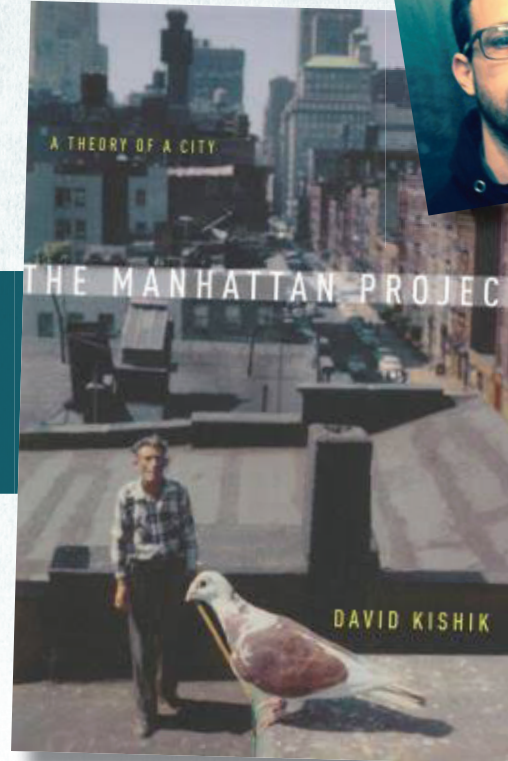
Assistant Professor, Philosophy

Institute for Liberal Arts and

Interdisciplinary Studies

Emerson College

Monday, April 11, 2016



12:00 P.M.—MERCY HALL, ROOM 325, "BENJAMIN IN NEW YORK"

Walter Benjamin did not commit suicide in 1940. Escaping the Nazis, he managed to sail to New York, where he lived a long and solitary life until his death in 1987. During his anonymous, posthumous existence, while he was haunting and haunted by his new city, Benjamin composed a sequel to his Arcades Project. Just as his incomplete masterpiece revolved around Paris, capital of the nineteenth century, his spectral text was dedicated to New York, capital of the twentieth. This, at least, is the premise of *The Manhattan Project: A Theory of a City*, which stands at the center of my talk. This book is a sui generis work of experimental scholarship or fictional philosophy, as it is a study of a manuscript that was never written. Part sprawling literary montage, part fragmentary theory of modernity, part implosive manifesto on the urban revolution, *The Manhattan Project* paints the city as a landscape built of sheer life, set somewhere in between heaven and hell, the private and the public, the real and the ideal.

2:30 P.M.—MERCY HALL, ROOM 200, "SPINOZA IN JERUSALEM"

In this talk David Kishik will discuss his current work on a translation of another curious manuscript that he recently discovered with his improbable luck. It is a Hebrew commentary on the first eleven chapters of Genesis, attributed to Baruch Spinoza and dated 1650. Needless to say, this is obviously a fake. The philosopher-to-be was only eighteen at the time, before he studied Latin and read Descartes, before he got exposed to non-Jewish culture and got expelled from the established religion. Still, on closer look, Pseudo-Spinoza's Pre-Abrahamic musings prove to be a fascinating mix of mythical metaphysics, theocratic anarchism, and minimal theology. Whoever wrote this thing was trying to construct a time machine, intervening at the very last moment, before the point of no return, right as the events that would lead to the publication of the *Ethics* and *Theological-Political Treatise* began to transpire. This is in no way an attempt to change the course of modern history, but to add to it one unrealized possibility.

Funded by the Soyka Fund for the Humanities

