

CARO'S ROBERT MOSES

Coordinator: Barry Cooper

Those of us living in or around New York City cannot but help having used one or more public works built by Robert Moses. Never elected to public office, Moses at one time simultaneously held 12 titles, including New York City Commissioner of Parks and Chairman of the Long Island Park Commission and the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. We look at Moses's legacy through the eyes of Robert Caro by using his Pulitzer Prize winning biography, *The Power Broker – Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. Much to Moses's chagrin, Caro's book, although recognizing Moses's accomplishments, was very critical of Moses, calling him a racist and a power-grabbing individual who had disdain for the public at large. With the benefit of hindsight we evaluate the legacy of Moses and determine whether Caro's criticisms were justified, in whole or in part.

(This is a repeat of a study group given in Fall 2020.)

Barry Cooper is a retired attorney. He has coordinated or co-coordinated several study groups on both law and non-law related topics.

Type of Study Group: Mostly discussion

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

The Power Broker – Robert Moses and the Fall of New York by Robert A. Caro. Paperback available on Amazon for under \$25. Used copies also available. Additional materials, primarily for session 12, will be sent separately.

***** SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *****

WEEK 1

TOPICS:

Introduction (Optional)
Chapter 1. Line of Succession
Chapter 2. Robert Moses at Yale
Chapter 3. Home Away from Home
Chapter 4. Burning

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Chapter 5. Age of Optimism

READING:

pp. 1-21 (Optional); pp. 21-88

QUESTIONS:

How did Moses's time at Yale and Oxford shape him? What were Moses's proposed changes to the civil service system and how did Tammany Hall fight the proposed changes?

WEEK 2

TOPICS:

Chapter 6. Curriculum Changes

Chapter 7. Change in Major (Optional)

Chapter 8. The Taste of Power

Chapter 9. A Dream

Chapter 10. The Best Bill Drafter in Albany

READING:

pp. 91-112; pp. 113-135 (Optional); pp. 136-177

QUESTIONS:

Who was Belle Moskowitz and what was her influence on Al Smith? On Robert Moses? What did the Commission for Reconstruction, Retrenchment and Reorganization of State Government recommend? Why weren't the recommendations implemented? How did the opponents of Moses's park plan oppose the plan. In drafting legislation creating the Long Island State Park Commission, how did Moses provide that the commissioner would be difficult to remove and that his powers would be broad?

WEEK 3

TOPICS:

Chapter 11. The Majesty of the Law

Chapter 12. Robert Moses and the Creature of the Machine

Chapter 13. Driving

Chapter 14. Changing (Optional)

Chapter 15. Curator of Cauliflowers (Selected Pages)

READING:

pp. 181-240; pp. 241-274 (Optional); pp. 274-280; pp. 280-282 (Optional)

QUESTIONS:

What was the Taylor Estate fight and litigation about and what was the eventual outcome? In order to get things done, Moses decides to work with the political bosses of Nassau County. Was anything

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that he did illegal? Does the end justify the means? (This will be a continuing theme regarding Moses.) How did Moses “blackjack” the town of Babylon?

WEEK 4

TOPICS:

Chapter 16. The Featherduster
Chapter 17. The Mother of Accommodation
Chapter 18. New York City Before Robert Moses
Chapter 19. To Power in the City (Optional)

READING:

pp. 283-346; pp. 347-367 (Optional)

WEEK 5

TOPICS:

Chapter 20. One Year (Selected Pages)
Chapter 21. The Candidate (Optional)
Chapter 22. Order Number 129
Chapter 23. In the Saddle
Chapter 24. Driving (Selected Pages)

READING:

pp. 268-385 (Optional); pp. 386-401; pp. 402-425 (Optional); pp. 426-469; pp. 489-495 (Optional)

WEEK 6

TOPICS:

Chapter 25. Changing (Selected Pages)
Chapter 26. Two Brothers (Optional)
Chapter 27. Changing
Chapter 28. The Warp on the Loom

READING:

pp. 499-509; 509-525 (Optional); pp. 525-575; pp. 576-606 (Optional); pp. 607-636

WEEK 7

TOPICS:

Chapter 29. And When the Last Law Was Down
Chapter 30. Revenge

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Chapter 31. Monopoly (Selected Page)

Chapter 32. Quid Pro Quo (Optional)

READING:

pp. 639-688; pp. 689-697 (Optional); p. 698; pp. 699-702 (Optional)

WEEK 8

TOPICS:

Chapter 33. Leading Out the Regiment (Selected Pages)

Chapter 34. Moses and the Mayors (Optional)

Chapter 35. RM (Optional)

Chapter 36. The Meat Ax

READING:

pp. 703-743; pp. 743-836 (Optional); pp. 837-849

WEEK 9

TOPICS:

Chapter 37. One Mile

Chapter 38. One Mile (Afterwards)

Chapter 39. The Highwayman (Optional)

Chapter 40. Point of No Return (Optional)

READING:

pp. 850-894; pp. 895-958 (Optional)

WEEK 10

TOPICS:

Chapter 41. Rumors and the Report of Rumors

Chapter 42. Tavern in the Town

Chapter 43. Late Arrival (Optional)

Chapter 44. Mustache and the Bard

READING:

pp. 961-1004; pp. 1005-1025 (Optional); pp. 1026-1039

WEEK 11

TOPICS:

Chapter 45. Off to the Fair (Optional)

Chapter 46. Nelson

Chapter 47. The Great Fair (Optional)

Chapter 48. Old Lion, Young Mayor

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Chapter 49. The Last Stand

Chapter 50. Old

READING:

pp. 1040-1066 (Optional); pp. 1067-1081; pp. 1082-1116 (Optional);

pp. 1117-1162

WEEK 12

TOPIC:

Robert Moses, a more current evaluation.

READING:

Materials to be sent separately.

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