This course explores the spatial manifestations of extraterritoriality in contemporary global urbanism. Defined as exceptional privileges accorded to foreign sovereigns, extraterritoriality is a concept developed by jurists of the 19th century in the context of extended sovereignties in international affairs. As neoliberal regimes cede power to extra-territorial entities, such as the World Bank, NGOs or multinational corporations, state-based power is unevenly deployed over national territories. Since the 1970s, cities have provided essential sites for the ongoing construction of extraterritoriality as an economic project causing the splintering of the city into an archipelago of islands. Discontinuous territorial fragments are set apart, protected by fences, temporary boundaries, or generally invisible security apparatuses. Because it is founded on a paradox or constitutive tension of political power over space, extraterritoriality is thus an important, if under-acknowledged, feature in the negotiation of territorial planning, urban development, and the political project of the city.

This seminar addresses this question by examining the past and present meanings of extraterritoriality, and its manifestations across a range of spatial typologies. We will explore this territorial condition via readings from geographic theory, visual arts, and urban studies. The seminar will build on the work of David Harvey, Keller Easterling, Stephen Graham, Lieven De Cauter, and Eyal Weizman to address the question of the “inside” and “outside” with respect to territorial entities. We will research how such spatial manifestations that exist across scales, geographies, and often negate the urban, can inform our understanding of contemporary urbanity. Our objective will be to construct a tentative cartographic representation of extraterritorial spaces: colonial settlements, concessionary company-towns, settlement camps, free-zones, deep-sea ports and airports, corporate zones, edge-lands, and offshore developments – to inquire how such zones are formative of rather than spaces of exception within contemporary urbanism. The seminar requires weekly readings and responses as well as a research project based on a selected case study.