CAS LF 342 French Society through Theater, Cinema, and Music
Credits: 4

Instructors: Elisabeth Montfort-Siewert (siewert@bu.edu) & Hanadi Sobh (hsobh@bu.edu)

Course schedule: 17 two-and-a-half-hour sessions over 7.5 weeks
(Monday & Wednesday – 12:30 to 3 pm + 2 additional sessions)

Additional required activities:
- Two visits: “Sur les traces d’Edith Piaf” & a guided visit of the Lucernaire, a cultural center in the heart of Paris combining all performing arts
- Two film viewings in Parisian movie theaters
- Two theater outings
- One optional outing to the Comédie Française

Office hours: Monday 3:00-3:30 (Hanadi), Wednesday 3:00-4:00 (Elisabeth)

Course material
Course pack:
Required readings and worksheets are included in a course pack to be purchased by the student. All required films are available on DVD at the BU Paris Center; students may also watch films online with their personal Netflix or Amazon Prime subscriptions.

Required films:
- Dalida (Lisa Azuelos, 2017)
- Divines (Houda Benyamina, 2016)

Films for cinema project:
- La Famille Bélier (Eric Lartigau, 2014)
- La Vache (Mohamed Hamidi, 2016)
- Chocolat (Roschdy Zem, 2016)
- Fatima (Philippe Faucon, 2016)
- Dheepan (Jacques Audiard, 2015)

Plays studied in class:
- Un Air de famille (Jaoui-Bacri)
- Et pendant ce temps Simone veille (Corinne Berron et Hélène Serres)

I. COURSE PRESENTATION AND OUTCOMES

The performing arts form a window to a culture, a civilization, a mentality. They help us penetrate the cultural intimacy of a people, making us discover not only the essential subjects of a society, but also the unique ways to address, to express and to contemplate these subjects. This course combines several elements: diverse forms of expression (theater, film, song), diverse time periods (from the 1920s to today), and diverse aspects of a work (style, themes, sociocultural context).

Amongst all of this diversity, students will surely find common approaches. Students are thus encouraged to surpass the formal separations between various components of the course to identify the similarities between the past, the present, between the plays, films and songs, both in the themes addressed and the ways of thinking. Beyond thinking whether or not they like a work, students should
ask themselves how it is typically French. They should use this course as a cultural experience that will enable them to discover that which really concerns the French people today.

The course is structurally divided into two sections: theater, and music and film. Classes will alternate between these two sections with additional outings to view films, attend theatrical performances, and visit sites in the city related to its theatrical, musical, and cinematic history. The study of the works themselves (plays, movies, song lyrics) will be supplemented by the reading of critical articles.

This course of study will help students live in present-day Paris, understand current issues, and live more like real Parisians.

The course, including additional seminars and visits, is conducted entirely in French.

Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will have developed

- basic knowledge of major French popular music movements, from the 1920’s to present day, and of their main characteristics (Roaring Twenties, chanson réaliste, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, protest songs, techno-house, slam, la nouvelle scène française);
- the history of French theater from the Middle Ages to present day;
- in-depth knowledge of a number of songs written by major French singers from 1950 to present day, through the in-class analysis of lyrics, meaning, impact, public perception;
- two contemporary theater plays which they will have integrally read and analyzed before seeing them performed;
- several recent films which they will have seen and analyzed, collectively or individually, reflecting both on their inner structure and content and on the responses they inspire to the public, be it French or American;

- a concrete experience of Paris, of its cultural and artistic popular history, through group visits, outings to the cinema or the theater, meetings with actors, authors or directors, individual cultural site explorations for oral presentations;
- the ability to build a formal critical argumentation (oral or written), and to debate about text characteristics or implications;
- a subtle understanding of the French way of thinking, society and culture, allowing a better integration in the Parisian environment and a clearer perspective on personal intercultural experience.

II. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Exams (2): 37.5%
The midterm exam (12.5%) will cover the theater component of the first half of the course, while the final exam (25%) will cover the latter half of the theater component as well as the song texts studied throughout the semester.

Film report: 12.5%
Students will choose a French film from a list and write a paper (2-4 pages) reacting to and analyzing the film’s themes and images. The paper will be graded based on the student’s understanding of the film in general, the pertinence of the analysis, and the organization and effort of expression. All the films are available in the DVD library at the BU Paris center.
Theater presentation: 10%
Working in groups or alone, students will prepare a presentation of about 15 minutes on a given subject related to contemporary French theater and its public reception: the administration of the Comédie Française and its treatment in the press, Ionesco and the Théâtre de la Huchette, Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil, etc.

Music presentation: 10%
Working in groups, students will present a French song and their reaction to and analysis of it, treating as both a lyrical text and a historical and cultural moment. The 10-12 minute presentation will be followed by a class discussion led by the presenting students.

Participation, effort, and progress: 30%
Included in this grade is weekly homework, which involves reading texts (song lyrics and plays) and completing worksheets to ensure comprehension and prepare class discussion. This grade also takes into account the quality of a student’s presence in class, energy, relevance of comments, effort and progress in language proficiency, and attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Policy
1 absence (class session or activity) = -1 point on the overall grade
4 or more unexcused absences = grade of F for the course
Missed assignment or test = grade of 0 for the assignment
Plagiarism on an assignment = grade of 0 for the assignment

NB: Excused absences must be justified by a doctor’s note or a scheduled internship interview.

Plagiarism (BU Policy)
All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on the examinations or for plagiarism may be ‘expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean.’ Read the full Academic Conduct Code online at http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/.

III. Calendar

Additional readings and homework may be assigned in class each day.

Session 1
- **VISIT**: Le Lucernaire, a cultural experience in Paris

Session 2 (Music and cinema)
- Presentation of the course
- Introduction to Dalida (Lisa Azuelos, 2017)
- How do we analyze the chanson française? Practical tools and discussion of the current musical phenomena in France: L.E.J
  - For Session 4:
    - Complete the worksheet handed out on Dalida
Session 3 (Theater)
- Presentation of the course
- Vocabulary of the theater, essential themes and topics
- *L’Officiel des spectacles* and contemporary theater in Paris
- Historical and theoretical overview: Western theater from the Middle Ages to the 20th century

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<td><em>Dalida</em></td>
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Session 4 (Music and cinema)
- *Dalida*: Group discussion and debate
  - For Session 6:
  - Listen to the selected songs by Grand Corps Malade & Louane and answer the questions on p. 9-11

Session 5 (Theater)
- *Un Air de famille*. (first part) Presentation and analysis.
  - Reading: *La famille vient en mangeant* (Télérama 2015)
  - Reading: *Papa, Maman, tout un roman* (Télérama 2016)

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<th>Session 6 (Music and cinema)</th>
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<td>The evolution of the <em>chanson française</em> from 1920 to today, part I</td>
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<td>Music presentation 1: At the heart of current events, Grand Corps Malade &amp; Louane</td>
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  - For Session 8:
  - Listen to the selected songs by Thomas Dutronc and Oxmo Puccino and answer the questions on p. 15-17

Session 7 (Theater)
- *Un Air de famille*. (last part) Presentation and analysis.
  - Reading: *Famille, le grand chambardement* (Télérama 2014)

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<td><em>Un Air de famille</em></td>
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Session 8 (Music and cinema)
- The evolution of the *chanson française* from 1920 to today, part II
- The evolution of Paris as a musical theme: from *guinguette* to rap
- Lecture: « *Paris en chansons* » by Christian Marcadet, Chapter « Espaces symboliques et mythologie de Paris » (p.154-160)
- Music presentation 2: Scenes of Parisian life, Thomas Dutronc & Oxmo Puccino
  - For Session 11:
  - Listen to the selected songs by Edith Piaf and Serge Gainsbourg and answer the questions on p. 21-23
Session 9 (Theater)
- Midterm
- Theater presentations

Session 10 (Music and cinema)
- Introduction to *Divines* (Houda Benyamina, 2016)
- Portrait of French mythic artists: from Edith Piaf to Serge Gainsbourg (Selected texts p. 20-23)
  → For Session 12:
    - Listen to the selected songs by Danakil and MC Solaar and answer the questions on p.25-27
    - Complete the worksheet on *Chocolat!*

Session 11 (Theater)
- *Et pendant ce temps Simone veille*. (first part) Presentation and analysis.
  Reading: *Des femmes au Panthéon* (La Vie, 2013)

Session 12 (Music and cinema)
- *Divines*: Group discussion and debate
- Music presentation 3: mythical artists in the Parisian space today, Danakil & MC Solaar
- Review for final exam
  → For Session 15:
    - Complete the worksheet related the movie you chose, following the guidelines in the course pack

Session 13 (Theater)
- *Et Pendant ce temps Simone veille*. (second part) Presentation and analysis.
  Reading: *Paris est une femme* (Elle, 2014)

Session 14 (Music and cinema)
- Visit in Paris: *Sur les traces d’Edith Piaf*
- Review for final exam
- Cinema project

Session 15 (Theater)
- Review for final exam
- Meeting with the authors and comedians from “*Et pendant ce temps Simone veille*”

FINAL EXAM: Last Friday
IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

THEATER:
Required readings
Un air de famille. Jaoui-Bacri, Quatre-vents
Et pendant ce temps, Simone veille ! Corinne Berron et Hélène Serres. Edition édite théâtre 2012
Michel Viegnes, Le théâtre, problématiques essentielles, Hatier, 1992

Press and websites
L’Officiel des spectacles
Théâtres et spectacles de Paris
Télérama
billetreduc.com

CINEMA:

Studied films
Dalida (Lisa Azuelos, 2017)
Divines (Houda Benyamina, 2016)
La famille Bélier (Eric Lartigau, 2014)
La vache (Mohamed Hamidi, 2016)
Chocolat (Roschdy Zem, 2016)
Fatima (Philippe Faucon, 2016)
Dheepan (Jacques Audiard, 2015)

Press and websites
Studio Ciné live (magazine mensuel de cinéma)

MUSIC

Studied songs
L.E.J: J’ai la dalle (2015)
Grand Corps Malade : Je suis Charlie (2015)
Louane : Un automne à Paris (2016)
Oxmo Puccino: Pam Pa Nam (2013)
Edith Piaf : Non, je ne regrette rien (1956)
Serge Gainsbourg : La Javanaise (1963)
Danakil Non, rien de rien (2011)
MC Solaar : Nouveau Western (1994)
Chrys Nammour : Paris se relève (2015)
Jacques Dutronc : Il est cinq heures, Paris s’éveille (1968)
Serge Gainsbourg : Bonnie and Clyde (1967)

Required readings
Christian Marcadet, Paris en chansons, Chapitre « Espaces symboliques et mythologie de Paris » (pages 154-160)

Websites
ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Theater
Ionesco Marie-France, Portrait de l’écrivain dans le siècle, Eugène Ionesco 1909-1994
Michel Viegnes, Le théâtre, problématiques essentielles, Hatier, 1992
André Degaine, Le théâtre raconté aux jeunes, Nizet, 2006
La littérature française, Repères pratiques, Nathan 2002
M.M Fragonard, Précis d’histoire de la littérature française, Didier, 1981
Raymond Queneau, Exercices de style, Folio
Gilles Dyrek, La touche étoile
Jean-Michel Ribes, Théâtre sans animaux, Babel
Yasmina Reza, Art, Magnard

Cinema
Yann Darré, Une histoire sociale du cinéma français, édition La découverte, 2000
Vincent Pinel, Genres et mouvements au cinéma, Larousse, 2009
Laurent Jullier, Michel Marie, Lire les images de cinéma, Larousse, 2012
Emmanuel Ethis, Le cinéma et ses publics: Comment le cinéma nous aide à nous comprendre et à comprendre les autres, Editions Universitaires d’Avignon, 2015

Music
Ludovic Perrin, Carla Bruni, La nouvelle chanson française, Hors Collection, Janvier 2005
Marc Robine, Fred Hidalgo, Il était une fois la chanson française, Des trouvères à nos jours, Poche, 2006
Céline Fontana, La Chanson française Histoire, interprètes, auteurs, compositeurs, Hachette pratique, 2007

Cultural studies and general topics
Bernard Darras, Images et études culturelles. Publications de la Sorbonne
Jean-Benoît Nadeau, Julie Barlow, Pas si fous ces Français, Ponts, 2005