CAS LF 343 La France à Paris : Paris in literature

Credits: 4

Professor: Hélène Marineau (hmarin@bu.edu)

Schedule: 16 two-and-a-half-hour sessions over 7.5 weeks
(Tuesday & Thursday – 9:30 to 12 pm + 2 additional sessions)

Office hours: Tuesday 9:00-9:30, and by appointment

Course visits:
- Guided visit of the Montmartre neighborhood
- Victor Hugo’s House
- The Arcades of Paris
- The Latin Quarter

Course material:
- A course pack with all required literary readings (to be purchased by each student).
- Carole Narteau et Irène Nouailhac, La Littérature française, les grands mouvements littéraires du XXe siècle, Librio n°933, 2011.

I. COURSE PRESENTATION AND OUTCOMES

This course offers a journey through the cultural and literary history of France from 1750 to the present day through the lens of a singular place: Paris. The arts have used Paris as an inspiration, but have also helped to construct our image of it.

Paris is much more than just a setting for French arts and letters. The city is often an active space, a character, the metaphor of an entire society. Beginning with the French Revolution, it is also a symbol of the historic changes that the Western world is experiencing at any given moment. Paris is therefore also a symbol of progress, in both negative and positive ways. Paris experienced a golden age when it became, in the words of Walter Benjamin, “the capital of the 19th century.” It was where the greatest artist, philosophers, and thinkers of the time came together to conceive and represent the new world. This evolution is reflected in the city’s urbanism.

This course will explore, through literature, the cultural history of the superposition of Paris the myth and Paris the reality. We will study how the work of various Parisian writers interacts with our image of the city. Because our study will focus as much on the city as the texts, guided and unguided visits of Paris will be integrated into the course.

For each class session, students will read and prepare several texts, responding to two key questions:
1. What does the text say? What image of Paris does this writer construct?
2. How does the writer construct this representation of Paris (metaphor, stylistic effects, vocabulary, etc.)?
Each session will be organized around this preparatory work; student-led discussions are therefore the essential foundation of the course. The objective of this class structure is to help students learn to recognize various literary devices, understand their implications, and produce an exhaustive analysis of each text.

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 literary movements from 1750 to present day and their main characteristics, hence the ability to situate and explain in their historical and artistic contexts movements such as romanticism, realism, surrealism, oulipo, through the reading and in depth analysis of poetic or fiction texts by major authors such as Hugo, Baudelaire, Zola, Apollinaire, Prévert, Sartre, Beauvoir, Breton, Perec, as well as contemporary authors such as Modiano, Ernaux, Rolin, Vasset, Haenel;
- the ability to identify and name the main stylistic processes and figures of speech (lexical field, metaphor, repetition, juxtaposition, etc.), to determine their impact on the meaning of a text, to organize and develop observations and reflections in a coherent and structured analysis (oral or written);
- a concrete experience of the city and of its cultural and literary history, through collective visits or individual exploration of a specific neighborhood related to a given literary text;
- the ability to build from a constant reflection on their personal and intercultural experience and on the evolution of their relation to the city their own literary representation of Paris and to describe it through a creative writing essay;
- the necessary linguistic skills to understand and communicate on literary texts.

II. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Exam: 20%
The final exam is cumulative and will contain both short-answer questions and an essay.

Essay: 20%
Students will write a creative essay (4 pages) in which they reflect on their personal cross-cultural experience of the city and on the influence of texts and authors studied in class on their experience.

Oral presentation: 20%
Working in groups of 2 or 3, students prepare a 20-minute presentation on a given text and its evocation of a Parisian site, which they will also visit.

Homework: 25%
Throughout the course, students will complete 6 response assignments, answering comprehension questions related to the text currently being studied. These assignments ensure that students prepare adequately for each class session and that they understand basic techniques of literary analysis.
Participation, effort, and progress: 15%
Included in this grade is weekly homework, which involves reading texts 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

Session 1
- VISIT: Guided visit of the Montmartre neighborhood

Session 2 Paris as a Literary Capital
- Course Presentation
- Introduction to the analysis of literary texts

Session 3 The Myth of Paris
- Charles Baudelaire, “Les Septs Vieillards”
- Julien Gracq, En lisant, en écrivant (excerpts)
- Victor Hugo, Introduction to Deux volumes de Paris Guide par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France (excerpts)
- Response assignment 1 due

Session 4 The Paris of Revolutions (1789-1871)
- Auguste Barbier, “La Cuve”
- Charles Baudelaire, “La beauté du peuple”
- Victor Hugo, Choses vues (excerpts)
- Response assignment 2 due

Session 5 The Paris of Revolutions [cont’d]
- Jacques Prévert, “Mai 1968”
- Peter Watkins, La Commune de Paris (excerpts)
- Victor Hugo, Les Misérables (excerpts)
Session 6
- VISIT: Victor Hugo’s House
- Response assignment 3 due

Session 7 The Paris of Arcades and Flâneurs
- Charles Baudelaire, “Les Foules”
- Émile Zola, *Au Bonheur des dames* (excerpts)
- Louis Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris* (excerpts)
- Walter Benjamin, *Paris, capital du XIXe siècle* (excerpts)
- Response assignment 4 due

Session 8
- VISIT: The Arcades of Paris
  - Reading: « A Note on Realism » Robert Louis Stevenson

Session 9 Paris and Modernity
- Oral Presentation 1: Charles Baudelaire, “A une passante” and “Les Fenêtres”
- Oral Presentation 2: Guillaume Apollinaire, “Le Pont Mirabeau” and “Zone”
  - Reading: «La Mouvance symboliste » in *La Littérature française. Les Grands mouvements littéraires du XIXe siècle*, p.86-88
  - Reading: «L’Avant Garde poétique » in *La Littérature française. Les Grands mouvements littéraires du XXe siècle*, p.18-22

Session 10 Writing Paris Today
- Introduction to Annie Ernaux
- Oral Presentation 3: Annie Ernaux, *Journal du dehors* (excerpts)
- Oral Presentation 4: Annie Ernaux, *La Vie extérieure* (excerpts)

Session 11 Writing Workshop
- Guest Lecturer: Gaëtan Darquié, professor at the University of Paris 8

Session 12 Avant-Garde and Intellectual Paris
- Annie Ernaux, *La Vie extérieure*
- Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l’âge* (excerpts)
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’Etre et le néant* (excerpts)
- Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (excerpts)
- André Breton, *Nadja* (excerpts)
- ESSAY DUE
Session 13 Other Visions of the City
- Bulletin du groupe français de l’Internationale lettriste (23) (excerpts)
- Georges Perec, Tentative d’épuisement d’un lieu parisien (excerpts)
- Patrick Modiano, Dora Bruder (excerpts)
- Response assignment 5 due

Session 14 Peripheries and Non-places
- Yannick Haenel, Evoluer parmi les avalanches (excerpts)
- Oral Presentation 5: Jean Rolin, Zones (excerpts)
- Oral Presentation 6: Philippe Vasset, Un Livre Blanc (excerpts)

Session 15
- VISIT: The Latin Quarter

Session 16
- Synthesis and review for Final Exam

FINAL EXAM

IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Studied texts
Guillaume Apollinaire, Alcools, Mercure de France, 1913.
Louis Aragon, Le Paysan de Paris, Gallimard, 1926.
Auguste Barbier, Iambes, Urbain Canel et AD. Guyot, 1832.
---, Le Spleen de Paris, Michel Lévy, 1869.
Simone de Beauvoir, La Force de l’âge, Gallimard, 1960.
André Breton, Nadja, Gallimard 1963.
Annie Ernaux, La Vie extérieure, Gallimard, Folio, 2000.
---, Choses vues, juin 1848.
---, Les Misérables, Éditions Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie, 1862.
Patrick Modiano, Dora Bruder, Gallimard, 1997.
Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz, Paris (notes d’un Vaudois), 1938.
Jean-Paul Sartre, L’Être et le néant, Gallimard, 1976.
Émile Zola, Au Bonheur des dames, Editions Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie, 1883.
---, Paris, Éditions Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie, 1898.
---, « Le Roman expérimental », Le Bien public, 1881.
Additional readings

Theoretical works

Literary descriptions of Paris

Paris in 20th century poetry
André Breton, Poison soluble, Gallimard/poésie, 1996.
Yves Martin, Le Partisan. Le Marcheur, Table ronde, 1996.

Paris in classical literature novels

Paris in 20th century novels
Patrick Modiano, La Place de l’Étoile, Gallimard/Folio, 1975.