

Paris in the Nineteenth Century: Art, Urbanism, and Modernity

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Paris was, in the words of the philosopher Walter Benjamin, the “capital of the nineteenth century”: a center of modern culture, social thought, fashion, and architecture. At the same time, Paris was a site of turbulent revolutions, violent and dramatic social change, and radical urban makeover that left long-lasting effects on the city and the nation, and helped shape what France is today. This course explores how the experience of urban modernity, in all its excitement and anxieties, was represented in novels (Balzac, Zola), poetry (Baudelaire), painting, photography, and architecture. As we consider different modes of engagement with urban modernity in nineteenth-century Paris, we will not fail to notice their deep and lasting impact on our own urban practices.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The primary goals of this course are for you to learn how to think and write critically about literature and art and to learn to recognize different art forms, and cities themselves, as aesthetic and cultural objects that can also be analyzed and interpreted. In addition, you will

- Develop basic tools for literary and cultural criticism
- Learn to interact critically with and reflect upon certain aspects of your own city
- Learn about Parisian urban history and gain understanding of the city’s shifting landscape and architecture
- Learn about Parisian cultural history and gain understanding of its strong associations with modern art and culture
- Become familiar with key French literary texts, paintings, and artistic genres that have shaped modern literature and culture
- Learn how to engage critically with literary texts, historical documents, and scholarly literature
- Hone analytic writing skills

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Honoré de Balzac, *Old Goriot*, tr. Marion Ayton Crawford (Penguin Classics)
ISBN 0-140-44017-8

Emile Zola, *The Ladies’ Paradise*, tr. Brian Nelson (Oxford Classics)
ISBN-13: 978-0199536900

Charles Baudelaire, *Parisian Prowler*, tr. Edward Kaplan (U of Georgia Press) ISBN-13: 978-0820318790

Belenky and O'Neil-Henry, *Popular Literature from Nineteenth-Century France* (MLA Text and Translation), English translation

Please make sure to bring your books to class. All other readings, as well as the documentary, *Paris in the Nineteenth Century: The Making of a Modern City*, are available on the course site. Please make sure to print these readings out and bring them to class as well.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Written Assignments: Three 5-page analytical papers on a topic or question suggested by me. All papers must be turned in **on time**. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Oral Presentation: You will research and present on a modern Parisian monument and relate it to themes of the course. Presentations should be 10-15 minutes; you will be asked to turn in your bibliography and to prepare a handout with an outline of your presentation and names and dates essential to your topic. Visual aids are welcome!

Metro Diary: You will keep a regular informal weekly journal in which you will respond to readings and will also put your urban observation skills into practice by writing entries modeled on the *New York Times* "Metro diary" section (assignment borrowed from Rachel Mesch, Yeshiva University).

Attendance, Participation, and Homework: Class participation is an essential component of this class. The success of this class largely depends on your willingness to actively engage in discussions, to listen to each other, and to respond to each other's ideas. You must come to class having carefully read the texts and having thought critically about them. In addition, you may be asked to write informal responses to the readings in class. These will be factored into your participation grade. You are expected to attend all class sessions. Your grade will be lowered if you have more than three unexcused absences. If you miss more than 6 classes without proper documentation, you will fail the class. If you must be absent, please notify me by e-mail ahead of time. **However...** if you feel sick, please stay home.

Course Schedule

1. Introduction: Paris Capital of Modernity
2. Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre –Dame*, “Bird’s Eye View of Paris”
Priscilla Ferguson, “Paris: The Place and Space of Revolution” (pp. 11-16; 25 - 35)
“Chronology” (# 1, 2, 3,4)
3. The Flâneur, a figure of modernity
Louis Huart, *Physiology of the flaneur* (in Belenky and O’Neil-Henry)
Auguste de Lacroix, “Flâneur” (in Belenky and O’Neil-Henry)
Priscilla Ferguson, “The Flaneur”
4. The flâneuse (in Belenky and O’Neil-Henry)
Delphine de Girardin, Letter XVII
5. Balzac, *Old Goriot* (pp. 27-105)
6. Balzac, *Old Goriot* (pp. 105-150)
David Harvey, *Paris Capital of Modernity* [pp. 23-27; 36-41]
7. Balzac, *Old Goriot* (pp. 150-196)
Balzac, “A Proper Woman” (in Belenky and O’Neil-Henry)
8. Balzac, *Old Goriot* (pp. 196-263)
Eugenie Foa, “The Fashionable Woman and the Elegant Woman in 1833” (in Belenky and O’Neil-Henry)
9. Balzac, *Old Goriot* (pp. 263-304)
10. Haussmanisation
Vanessa Schwartz, “Setting the Stage: The Boulevard, The Press and the Framing of Modern Life” (from *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*)
“Chronology” # 5,6,7,8

11. Parisian types: the grisette
Huart, "The Grisette" (in Belenky and O'Neil-Henry)
Paul de Kock, "A Grisette Party" (in Belenky and O'Neil-Henry)
12. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (ch. I, II, III, IV, V)
"Landscape"; "The Swan"; (*Flowers of Evil*): <http://fleursdumal.org/>
"To a Passerby" (*Flowers of Evil*)

PAPER # 1 due

13. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (IX, X, XI; XII, XIII)
"Carrion" / "A Carcass"; "To a Mendicant Redhead" (*Flowers of Evil*)
14. Baudelaire, "The Eyes of the Poor"; "Widows" (*The Parisian Prowler*)
Manet, *Chez le père Lathuile*
Degas, *The Absinthe Drinker*
15. Baudelaire, "Let's Beat Up the Poor!" (*The Parisian Prowler*)
In class writing: Metro Diary
16. Baudelaire, "Crowds"; "Windows"
Edgar Allen Poe, "The Man of the Crowd"
Caillebotte, *Man at the Window*
Caillebotte, *Young Man at His Window*
Renoir, *The Moulin de la Galette*
17. Ross Chambers, "Baudelaire's Paris"
Writing workshop: please bring a draft of paper # 2 to class
18. Zola, *Ladies' Paradise* (Ch 1 and 2)

PAPER # 2 due

19. Zola, *Ladies' Paradise* (3 and 4)
20. Zola, *Ladies' Paradise* (5 and 6)
21. Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola*
In class writing: Metro Diary
22. Zola, *Ladies' Paradise* (7, 8, and 9)
23. Zola, *Ladies' Paradise* (10 and 11)

Visit to the National Gallery of Art

24. Zola, *Ladies' Paradise* (12, 13, and 14)
25. Jill Jones, *Eiffel's Tower* (excerpts)
26. Conclusion
Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century"

PAPER # 3 is due on the day designated for the final exam