

Technology and Science in 19th and 20th Century French Literature
French 132
Spring 2017
Instructor: Natalie Deam
Time: Tue/Thur 10:30-11:50am
Office Hours: Thursdays 12-2pm 260-311

Que c'est beau, la nature! A dire chaque fois qu'on se trouve à la campagne.
-Flaubert *Les Reçus*

Course description:

How did the train, the prose poem, or the submarine change the way we think about the world? This class offers a survey of major French authors and artists that will help us reconsider our present relationship to literature, science, nature, and technology by exploring how 19th and 20th century texts represented these ideas. Many of the ideas and inventions that we take for granted today— evolution, the free-verse poem, electric light—were sources of great inspiration and anxiety for poets and artists. Our discussions will look at how poems, short stories, and novels, as well as paintings, photographs, and films represent these changes and readers' changing relationship with the world. From Hugo's romantic landscapes to Baudelaire's crowded cities we will consider how nature served as both an escape from the crowded urban metropolis and an active threat to modern man. By comparing Zola's attempts at a scientific novel with Verne's submarine science fiction and Maupassant's fantastic tales, we will discuss how writers pushed the boundaries of reality, fiction, and fantasy, and how literature represents the real. Reflecting on the Lumière brothers' first films, Atget's haunting photographs of Paris, and Barthes' later discussion of the camera, we will discuss how new visual technologies simultaneously liberated our human perspective as well as affected how we comprehend what we see. Finally, with the surreal wartime poems of Apollinaire, the scientific poetry of Francis Ponge, and the strange nature films of Jean Painlevé we will explore how new science and technologies constantly re-open our eyes to the unknowns of the natural world and challenge the ways that literature represents our ever-changing experience.

Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to develop your French speaking, writing, and critical reading skills over a series of discussions and assignments that all build towards the final paper and final exam. In addition to learning about the major authors, genres, historical events, and cultural changes of the 19th and 20th centuries, you will be expected to construct arguments, supported by textual and contextual evidence, about these ideas. To practice this type of argumentation, assignments and discussions will focus on moving beyond a text's literal meaning to think about how the choice of words, metaphors, grammar, and imagery affect the text's deeper meanings.

-Your daily reading journal is designed to train you how to connect texts to your lives as well as to develop questions for class discussion. You will practice both close-reading and critical thinking in these daily reflections.

-Brief in-class presentations aim to familiarize you with situating a text within its historical context and to make broad connections between literary and aesthetic movements.

-Short weekly writing assignments, based on close reading, will train you how to create questions that open a text to critical interpretation, as well as to succinctly answer these questions.

-Your final paper will grow out of one of these short writing assignments. Through the multi-draft process you will learn how to develop your individual reading within a larger historical context as well as situate it among a critical dialogue with other texts and scholars.

Course format:

Each class will begin with a discussion of a painting or photograph that corresponds to that day's assigned text in order to generate core vocabulary for the discussion and to practice spontaneous interpretation as a group. Discussion will then open with brief, three to four-minute student presentations to contextualize the reading. The topics of the presentations are found below and require very basic research (wikipedia.fr is a great starting point!) Each presentation should also include the relevant dates, major literary or artistic works, political implications, and major themes of the topic. Each presentation should identify a larger cultural context for thinking about the text, as well as make a basic argument how and why this context is important for our modern understanding of the text. The rest of the class will consider these arguments in our later discussion and develop their broader implications and interpretations using close reading.

Language proficiency:

The class is based on in-class discussion and participation, all of which will be performed in French. Preparation for class in addition to regular attendance is therefore imperative. In order to ensure that you are able to fully participate in class activities and assignments, this course requires an intermediate-high level in French proficiency rating (according to ACTFL guidelines). This means that you can reasonably communicate in past, present, and future time frames and are moving towards making and supporting arguments in French. If you have any questions or concerns about your language ability, I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible. In-class activities and writing assignments are designed to target specific grammatical and linguistic structures and practice advanced communication in French, including summarizing and comparing texts, justifying an argument, and practicing idiomatic expressions of formal academic French. I will happily tailor class activities and assignments to target specific language concerns and individual student requests.

Class requirements:

-Please come to class each day with the readings prepared, questions considered, ready to help and to listen to your fellow classmates!

- You are expected to keep a daily reading journal (as in a physical journal used just for this class), where you can collect vocabulary and useful expressions, prepare comments and questions for class discussions, consider topics for papers, and respond to prompts given in class. I will periodically collect the journal to read your responses, which are part of the participation grade.
- You will present in class at least twice throughout the quarter on assigned topics. These presentations are brief, no longer than four minutes, and are designed to help introduce our discussions of the readings.
- A short, 300-word paper on a pre-assigned topic will be due on weeks two, three, four, and five, sent to me electronically by 5pm on the Friday of that week. I will return this paper with comments by Monday the following week.
- We will develop your final paper over the entire quarter. In week five you will schedule a check-in meeting with me to discuss your ideas for the final paper. The first draft will consist of a 5-6 page close-reading of a key course text. The second draft will be 7-8 pages and will incorporate the historical, cultural, and technological context of the novel. The third draft will be 9-10 pages and will incorporate at least one secondary source of literary criticism or cultural history into your argument.
- There will be a final exam that focus on identification and comprehension of texts and major topics of class discussion.

Grading Scale:

Participation: 20%

Presentations: 10%

300-word reflections: 20%

Final paper: 25%

Final exam: 25%

Texts to order:

Jules Verne *20,000 Lieues sous les mers*
 Livres de Poches Classiques
 ISBN 978-2-253-00632-9

Émile Zola *Thérèse Raquin*
 GF Flammarion
 ISBN 2-08-070229-7

Course schedule and assignments:

Week one:

1. **Introduction:** April 4

Primary Reading: Hugo 'Magnitudo Parvi: i' (in class)

2. **Light, Revolution, and Romanticism:** April 6

Primary Reading: Hugo 'Magnitudo Parvi: ii, iii, iv' (18 pp)

Secondary Reading: Marshall McLuhan 'Pour comprendre les medias'
Presentations: Victor Hugo, Le Romantisme, Le Sublime

Week two: Response due Friday

3. The Rail and Romanticism: April 11

Primary Reading: De Vigny 'La Maison du berger I, La Maison du berger III' (10pp)

Secondary Reading: Schivelbusch "Railroad Space and Railroad Time" (20pp)

Presentations: Victor Alfred Comte de Vigny, Le Chemin de fer

4. The Ship: April 13

Primary Reading: Baudelaire 'L'homme et la mer,' 'Le Voyage'

Secondary Reading: Margaret Cohen "The Waterways of Modernity" (20pp)

Presentations: Charles Baudelaire, L'Ennui, Le poète maudit

Week three: Response due Friday

5. The City: April 18

Primary Reading: Baudelaire 'Le Cygne', Essais de *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (I: Le Beau, la mode et le bonheur, III: L'Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant, et IV: La modernité)

Secondary Reading: Walter Benjamin 'Paris Capital of the 19th Century' (11pp)

Presentations: L'Hausmannization de Paris

6. The Rail and the Fantastic: April 20

Primary Reading: Maupassant 'La Peur' (6pp)

Secondary Reading: Todorov 'La Définition du fantastique' (9pp)

Presentations: Guy de Maupassant, le Fantastique

Week four: Response due Friday

7. The Cinema: April 25

Primary Reading: Auguste & Louis Lumière: *L'Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* (1895), *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895), *Le Jardinier (l'Arroseur Arrosé)* (1895), *Baignade en mer* (1895), Excerpts from *Avant le Cinéma* (Benjamin Gastineau, Edouard Mouton, Auguste Villiers de l'Isle Adam) (11pp)

Secondary Reading: Tom Gunning 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment' (8pp)

Presentations: Les Frères Lumière, Étienne-Jules Marey

8. The Camera: April 27

Primary Reading: Charles Baudelaire 'Extrait du Salon de 1859' (3pp)

Secondary Reading: Roland Barthes 'Le message photographique' (13pp)

Suggested Reading: Walter Benjamin *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Kevin Newmark 'Now You See It, Now You Don't, Baudelaire's Modernité'

Presentations: Eugène Atget, Walter Benjamin *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

Week five: Response due Friday

9. **Naturalism and Nature:** May 2

Primary Reading: Émile Zola *Therese Raquin* Preface - Chapter 10 (50pp)

Secondary Reading: Eric Auerbach 'Germinie Lacerteux' from *Mimesis* (31pp)

Presentations: Émile Zola, Le Naturalisme

10. **Naturalism and Nature:** May 4

Primary Reading: Émile Zola *Therese Raquin* Chapter 11-Chapter 18 (50pp)

Presentations: L'Impressionisme

Week six: Schedule a check-in meeting about the final paper

11. **Naturalism and Nature:** May 9

Primary Reading: Émile Zola *Therese Raquin* Chapter 19 - Chapter 24 (30pp)

Presentations: The Portrait of Dorian Gray, Les adaptations de *Thérèse Raquin*

12. **Naturalism and Nature:** May 11

Primary Reading: Émile Zola *Therese Raquin* Chapter 24-Chapter 32 (40pp)

Presentation: The New Woman, L'Hystérie

Week seven: First draft of the paper due Friday

13. **The Submarine:** May 16

Primary Reading: Verne *20,000 Lieues sous les mers*: 'Un écueil fuyant' (5pp),

'L'homme des eaux' (7pp), 'Le Nautilus' (6pp), 'Tout par l'électricité' (6pp)

Presentations: Jules Verne, La Commune de Paris, La Musée d'Histoire Naturelle

14. **The Submarine:** May 18

Primary Reading: Verne *20,000 Lieues sous les mers*: 'Promenade en plaine' (5pp), 'Un forêt sous-marine' (5pp), 'Quatre mille lieues sous le Pacifique' (6pp), 'Le royaume du corail' (7pp), 'Les Poulpes' (9pp)

Presentations: L'Exposition Universelle à Paris (1867), Les Adaptations de *20,000 Lieues sous les mers*

Week eight: Second draft of the paper due Friday

15. **Trip to special collections:** May 23 (no reading)

16. **Technologies of War:** May 25

Primary Reading: Guillaume Apollinaire 'Zone,' 'Collines,' 'Le Petit Auto'

Secondary Reading: Roger Shattuck 'Painter-Poet' from *The Banquet Years* (22pp)

Presentations: French Participation in WWI, Guillaume Apollinaire, Surrealism

Week nine: Third draft of the paper due Friday

17. **Return to Nature:** May 30

Primary Reading: Albert Camus 'Noces à Tipasa'
Secondary Reading: A Helpful Guide to Camus' Philosophy
Presentations: Albert Camus, L'Existentialisme

18. Trees: June 1

Primary Reading: Francis Ponge 'Faune et Flore' (4 pp), Victor de Laprade 'Le Poeme de l'Arbre' (2 pp)
Presentations: Francis Ponge, La Resistance

Week ten: Final draft of the paper due Friday

19. Nature films: June 6

Primary viewing: Jean Painlevé : *Les Amours de la pieuvre*
Presentations on nature films of your choice