

Paris: Biography of a City

Humanities 375.01
Sarah Curtis

Spring 2011
TTh 9:35-10:50

Paris is one of the world's greatest cities and a means by which we can explore the creation of modern urban culture, as it has manifested itself in art, architecture, literature, politics, and socioeconomic change. We will trace three themes in particular: 1) Paris as a city of protest and revolution, 2) Paris as the world capital of avant-garde art and culture, 3) the physical transformation of the city itself from a medieval metropolis to the capital of modernity. The perspective will be multidisciplinary, that is we will look at the development of Paris through painting, architecture, literature, film, and memoir. We will spend about two-thirds of the course on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Reading:

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore:

Emile Zola, *The Ladies' Paradise* (Oxford World Classics)

Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (Simon and Schuster)

George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder* (UC Press, photocopy)

Leila Sebbar, *The Seine Was Red* (Indiana University Press)

Some of the readings are available on electronic reserves at the library. They can be accessed via the internet on campus or at home at the following address: <http://eres.sfsu.edu/> (or by the link on the library web page or my web page). The password for this course is Eiffel. (If you are having trouble logging in, check that you have capitalized and correctly spelled the password.) These readings are indicated on the schedule with the abbreviation ER.

Some readings are directly accessible on the web, in which case the URL is given in the syllabus. There are also links on my web page.

Office hours and contact information:

Tu, Th 2:30-3:30, and by appointment

office location: Department of History, Science 267

phone: (415) 338-2250

e-mail: scurtis@sfsu.edu

website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/scurtis>

Course requirements:

Students will be expected to complete the reading assignments by Thursday of each week and come to class prepared to discuss them. There will be a take-home midterm and final, which will require critical reflection on the reading and lecture material. Additionally students will complete a short research project on a monument or neighborhood in Paris as well as a short paper based on a film featuring contemporary Paris. Due dates are given on the schedule and details on the research project and film paper are at the end of the syllabus.

Grading:

Grades will be determined as follows: midterm 25%, final 25%, research project 20%, film paper 20%, participation 10%. Students who wish to take the course CR/NC can change their grading status via “My SFSU” before March 18.

Assignments due on Tuesday and turned in on Thursday will be marked down one half grade (e.g. A to A-); those due Thursday and turned in on Tuesday will be marked down two-half grades (e.g. A to B+), and assignments turned in one week late one full grade (e.g. A to B). Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted.

If you are unable to complete the course requirements by the end of the semester, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. I will issue no instructor-initiated withdrawals or incompletes. Student-initiated incompletes are reserved for serious medical excuses (with documentation) or other natural disasters within the last three weeks of the semester. The last day to drop a course without a “W” is February 4; the last day with a “W” (except in extreme circumstances) is April 22.

Schedule:**January 25-27****Origins****February 1-3****Paris in the Middle Ages**

Reading: Victor Hugo, “A Bird’s Eye View of Paris,” from *A Hunchback of Notre Dame*
<http://www.bartleby.com/312/0302.html>

website: Paris at the Time of Philippe Auguste

<http://www.philippe-auguste.com/uk/ville/index.html>

February 8-10

Royal Paris

Reading: Louis-Sebastian Mercier (ed. Jeremy Popkin), *Panorama of Paris*, selections (ER)

February 15-17

Revolutionary Paris

Reading: Restif de la Bretonne, *My Revolution*, selections (ER)

February 22-24

Romantic Paris

Research project due Thursday

March 1-3

Rebuilding Paris

Reading: Emile Zola, *Ladies' Paradise*, chaps. 1-7

March 8-10

Impressionist Paris

Reading: Emile Zola, *Ladies' Paradise*, chaps. 8-14; Baudelaire, "The Eyes of the Poor," from *Paris Prowler* (ER)

March 15-17

Belle Epoque Paris

John Leighton, "One Day under the Paris Commune"

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1871leighton-commune.html>

Roland Barthes, "The Eiffel Tower" (ER)

Website: The Siege and Commune of Paris

<http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/siege/>

March 22-24

Avant-Garde Paris

Take-home midterm due Tuesday

SPRING BREAK

April 5-7

Expatriate Paris

Reading: Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*

April 12-14

Black Paris, Poor Paris

Reading: George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, chaps. 1-23

April 19-21

Occupied Paris

Reading: Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder*; Janet Flanner, “Paris, Germany” (ER)

Website: “Paris Liberé”

<http://www.paris.org/Expos/Liberation/>

April 26-28

Left Bank Paris

Reading: Janet Flanner, “Paris Journal, 1968” (ER)

May 3-5

Immigrant Paris

Reading: Leila Sebbar, *The Seine Was Red*

May 10-12

Contemporary Paris

Reading: Adam Gopnik, “The Balzar Wars” and “A Handful of Cherries” (ER)

Film paper due Tuesday

May 19

Take-home final due

A Tour of Paris (due Thursday, February 24)

This assignment asks you to research one of the monuments or neighborhoods below (assignments to be given in class). You are required to do the following:

- 1) Find 5-10 images of the place in question.
- 2) Write appropriate captions of 2-3 sentences explaining each image.
- 3) Write a short essay of approx. 500 words explaining the history and significance of the assigned place, including changes over time. Essay should be informative and lacking spelling, grammatical, or stylistic errors.
- 4) Provide a bibliography of print sources, websites, and (if applicable) novels, memoirs, and films about the assigned place. You must use at least two print sources. See me for suggestions if you are having trouble finding these.
- 5) Upload the images, captions, essay, and bibliography to a designated website (probably iLearn) where it can be viewed by the entire class.
- 6) Vote for the top five presentations! (Please note: Grading of this assignment will be done by the instructor on the basis of quality of research and presentation, entirely separate from this part of the exercise.)

Ile de la Cité	Belleville (neighborhood)
Ile St-Louis	Sorbonne (University)
Conciergerie	Panthéon
Sainte-Chapelle	Latin Quarter
Cathedral of Notre Dame	Salpêtrière Hospital
Place de la Bastille	Grande Mosquée of Paris/Institut du
Place des Vosges	Monde Arabe
Marais neighborhood	Jardin des Plantes
Hôtel de Ville	Arènes de Lutèce (Roman arena)
Les Halles (central markets)	Gobelins (tapestry factory)
Centre Pompidou (Beaubourg)	Luxembourg Gardens/Palace
Palais Royal	Faubourg St-Germain/St-Germain des
Bibliothèque Nationale (Richelieu)	Près
Bibliothèque Nationale (Mitterand)	Bon Marché department store
Louvre (palace and museum)	Invalides
Madeleine (place and church)	Eiffel Tower
Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré	Musée d'Orsay
Place Vendôme (and column)	St-Denis (abbey, Stade de France,
Opéra (Palais Garnier)	neighborhood)
Tuileries (gardens and palace)	Père Lachaise cemetery (and Mur des
Place de la Concorde	Fédérés)
Grand and Petit Palais	Montparnasse neighborhood
Champs Elysées	cafés : Le Select, Deux Magots, La
Arc de Triomphe	Rotonde, La Coupole, Le Flore
La Défense (district)	railway stations
Bois de Boulogne	metro
Montmartre (neighborhood)	sewers
Basilica du Sacré-Coeur	bridges (esp. Pont Neuf)

Paris in the Movies (paper due Tuesday, May 12)

Watch one of the films from the list below and write a 3-4 pp. paper that evaluates how the filmmaker represents the city of Paris. You do not need to evaluate the film as a whole nor give a detailed plot summary (a short paragraph is fine if you feel it is necessary). Instead, some questions you should consider are:

In what period of Paris history is the film set?

What specific places (monuments, neighborhoods, private homes, etc.) in Paris are shown in the film?

How does the choice of locations influence the portrayal of the city?

What attitude characterizes the vision of Paris? (e.g. nostalgia, cynicism, realism, etc.?)

What visual or directorial techniques are used to portray Paris in a particular way?

Do the characters in the film represent real or idealized Parisians?

You do not need to do background research for this assignment, but if you use outside sources (print or internet), you must cite them appropriately in the text (informal notes are fine) and include a bibliography.

Papers should be double-spaced in 12-point font with normal margins. Staple the upper left-hand corner and include page numbers.

Films:

(Plot summaries available at <http://www.imdb.com/>)

*Zazie in the Metro (1960)

*Breathless [A bout de souffle] (1961)

Is Paris Burning? (1966)

*The Last Metro (1980)

*Les Amants du Pont-Neuf [The Lovers on the Bridge] (1991)

*La Haine [Hate] (1995)

*When the Cat's Away [Chacun cherche son chat] (1996)

*Amélie (2001)

*The Dreamers (2003)

Paris, I Love You [Paris, Je t'aime] (2006)

Paris (2008)

*Available to view at Library Media Services in HSS 127 with advance reservation.