This course examines the development of contemporary France, paying special attention to moments and texts that disrupt the narratives of a unified cultural space that the French (or a certain subset of the French) like to tell. Throughout the course, which spans from the French Revolution to the present day, we will examine how the idea of France is problematized internally by a number of tensions: its equally important revolutionary and reactionary political traditions; its credo of a singular culture (Republicanism) in the face of ascendant multiculturalism; its universalizing impulse and its commitment to sexual difference; its anti-immigrant reflexes and its global cultural and economic ambitions. We will do so by examining a variety of types of texts and objects, with a focus on the historical, literary, and cinematic. Taught in English.
Course objectives: To give students an overview of the major events and movements since the Revolution that shaped France today; to develop skills in both broad cultural analysis and close reading; to develop tools to articulate advanced cultural knowledge in a variety of forms (essay, oral presentation, etc.)

Required Texts [All other readings will be accessible via Canvas]

Honoré de Balzac, Père Goriot (Oxford’s World Classics)

Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Journey to the End of the Night (New Directions Books)

Course Requirements

Canvas Posts

Each week, by Friday at 5pm, you will post one or two paragraphs (around 150 words) explaining what you found most interesting in the week’s readings, lectures, and discussions, what you still have questions about, what connections you’re making, etc. This will help us take stock of what we’re learning, what is grabbing us, as well as what remains unresolved that we might want to carry over into the following week.

Presentation

At some point during the quarter (I’ll circulate a sign-up in the first week), you will give a short five-minute presentation of a historical event or biography related to course themes. I will provide a list of possible topics, but you are also very welcome to choose your own topic, in conversation with me.

Midterm Exam

Open-book, take home midterm. The format will be a mix of short answer, identification, and short essay questions.

Final Project

The final will take the form of a research project based on a course theme, topic, or concept of your choice (in conversation with me). You can choose to work on something purely historical or you can situate a present-day issue in historical context or through the lens of our course themes/discussions.

Projects can take the form of a traditional paper, a podcast, a short story, a zine, etc., but whatever format you choose, you should include at least two peer-reviewed sources and a bibliography page with citation information for all sources used.
Traditional papers should be approximately 6-8 pages long (doubled-spaced, 12-pt font, Times New Roman or another font that is not huge 😊). Creative projects should be accompanied by a 1-2 page artist statement, explaining the thinking behind your project, how it relates to course themes, and what you hope readers, viewers, hearers take away from it.

Grading Breakdown

1. Participation (class preparation, in-class work): 15%
2. Canvas Posts: 20%
3. Midterm: 20%
4. Presentation: 20%
5. Final Project: 25%

Attendance (in the era of COVID):

Unless advised otherwise, classes will take place in person (masks strongly suggested, but not required, per university policy). That said, it is also important to stay home if you have any symptoms at all, and because of that, there will not be any penalty for students who are unable to come to class, as long as you inform me as soon as possible of your absence. To make up for your absence during class discussion, you can respond to a classmate’s post in the missed day’s discussion forum (or a previous day if there is no forum that day) in addition to making your own post.

As we have already seen in previous quarters, the modalities of this course may shift as UW and the French and Italian Studies department respond to public health conditions. While the goal is to have in-person instruction be the default this quarter, it is possible that we will move between in-person and virtual instruction. I will let you know as soon as possible about any changes using Canvas messages. If you test positive for covid-19 or have had close contact with a confirmed case, please report to covidhec@uw.edu! To accommodate students who need to quarantine, each class will be synchronously streamed on zoom to allow students who can’t attend to listen in.

Academic Integrity

It is my hope that this class will encourage you to feel confident to express yourself and your own thoughts—to take intellectual risks. I want to know what you think, not what a friend or a paper writing service thinks, and the learning I hope we will do together can only be done by you and you alone. As long as you do the work, explain your thinking, and cite your sources when your ideas or information come from somewhere else, there are no wrong answers, so there should be no reason to turn in someone else’s work as your own. If you’re uncertain about whether something constitutes academic misconduct, ask me. I am happy to discuss any questions you might have.

Religious Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at
Religious Accommodations Policy (https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form (https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).

Accessibility and Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please activate your accommodations via myDRS so we can discuss how they will be implemented in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions including but not limited to mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), contact DRS directly to set up an Access Plan. DRS facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations. Contact DRS at disability.uw.edu.

Use of Technology to Support Your Learning in This Course

This course will likely use Padlet, Poll Everywhere, Google Docs, and Canvas. I am committed to ensuring access to online course resources by students. If you have any concerns or questions about access or the privacy of any platform we use, please reach out to me. I am personally concerned about online privacy and am actively trying to find ways to facilitate our classroom experience using new technology without compromising the privacy of our classroom.

Inclusion

The academy has a past marked more by exclusion than by inclusion. It is only in the last few decades that people of color, women, queer people, trans people, people with disabilities, and other minoritized subjects have begun to be taken seriously either as cultural producers or as writers or actors in history, and these gains remain precarious. I have felt this exclusion myself in classrooms, felt that I—as a woman, a lesbian, a Kansan, a grandchild of a Holocaust survivor—was not represented in what I was learning. It was this exclusion that led me to feel a sense of vocation as a teacher, to counter the homophobia, sexism, racism, xenophobia, ableism, anti-Semitism, and anti-intellectualism that made knowledge and culture something that did not seem to belong to me or my friends.

It is my intention that we will create an inclusive space that values our diversity and respects our differences of opinion. How we build this space will in part be up to each of you and we will begin the quarter by discussing (both anonymously and as a group) what we think best practices are, to make sure that everyone feels included, across differences of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, religion, and ability.
Mental Health and Wellness

College can be overwhelming under normal circumstances, and we have been living through some truly abnormal circumstances. Please let me know if you are struggling to keep up with your course work for any reason (or if your course work is not leaving you with any time for self-care) and we will work to find a solution. The Counseling Center also has many helpful resources for discussing personal, family or health-related concerns, and can help you develop a potential academic and personal plan.

Class Schedule

Week 1
3/31: The Spirit of Revolution

Week 2
4/5: The Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Part I: Monarchy Restored
   Read: Balzac, Père Goriot, Introduction through the end of Chapter Two (“Entry on the Social Scene”)
4/7: The Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Part II: A Bourgeois King?
   Read: Balzac, Père Goriot, Chapters Three and Four

Week 3
4/12: Class Struggle, Part I: 1848 and the Second Empire
   Read: Roger Price, Documents on the French Revolution of 1848, Introduction (30 pages) and selected revolutionary documents
4/14: Class Struggle, Part II: The Commune
Week 4
4/19: Installing the Republic


4/21: Republican Empire

Read: Jules Ferry on Colonization (1884)

Julia Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria,” in Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism (University Press of Virginia, 1998), 154–174

Week 5
4/26: Mass Culture and Mass Politics

Read: Schwartz, Spectacular Realities, Chapter 1, 13–44.

Zola, “J’Accuse”

4/28: No Class

Read: Start Céline

Take home, open-book MIDTERM due at 5pm

Week 6
5/3: World War I and the Loss of Innocence: Technology and Death

Read: Céline, Journey to the End of the Night, pages 1–203.

5/5: A Shattered World

Read: Céline, Journey to the End of the Night, pages 204–297.

Week 7
5/10: Interwar Paris and Americanization

Read: Céline, Journey to the End of the Night, pages 298–435.

5/12: World War II: Days of Glory?


Week 8

5/17: Occupation and Collaboration

Read: *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, Introduction and pages 48–89; 241–262

Watch (in class): sections of Ophuls, *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) [if you want to watch more of it, it is available via the Seattle Public Library’s Kanopy Subscription – you can get a library card online if you don’t already have one!]

5/19: Comfort “Here,” Violence “There”: Modernization and Decolonization


Week 9

5/24: Revolt and Revolution Against Bourgeois Culture


5/26: Whose Revolution?


Week 10

5/31: Gender Trouble, Race Trouble: or, is the Republic Straight? Is it White?


Watch: Emmanuelle Saada, *Without Distinction of... Sex*: The Constitutional Politics of Race and Sex in Contemporary France (50-minute lecture)
6/2: Beyond France, Toward Freedom?

Read: Chamoiseau, “In Praise of Creoleness” 75–94; 113–114

*Final Project due June 9 at 5pm*