

## Culture and Society in the Belle Epoque

History 740  
M 4:10-6:55

Fall 2014  
Sarah Curtis

This graduate seminar will focus on European cultural and social history in the decades leading up to the outbreak of the First World War. On the surface, the Belle Epoque was a period of unparalleled European power, prosperity, and cultural creativity; underneath, Europeans experienced a mounting sense of crisis. We will examine both sides of this paradox through readings and discussion on such topics as the social impact of modernization, the “culture wars” over religion, the rise of mass culture, changing patterns of city life, the beginnings of modernism, the Freudian revolution, art nouveau, feminism and the “new woman,” and the cultural anxiety caused by impending war. Methodologically, I am interested in the ways that cultural approaches to history can provide new insights in political, social, and intellectual history.

Readings will be located mainly in France with occasional excursions to Berlin and Vienna, but you will have an opportunity to pursue areas of particular interest through historiographical essays. In consultation with me, you may use this seminar to fulfill the field requirement in Gender in History instead of Europe Since 1500.

### Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore. Books with an asterisk are also available as e-books in the library catalogue.

\*Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France*

Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in a Secular Age*

Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*

\*Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*

Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*

Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*

Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style*

Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France*

\*Edward Berenson, *The Trial of Madame Caillaux*

### Electronic reserves:

Some of the readings are available on electronic reserves at the library, which you can access via the iLearn page for this course. These readings are indicated on the schedule with the abbreviation ER. Journal articles are available on the library database JSTOR.

**Prerequisites:**

This is a graduate history seminar. Graduate standing in history or permission of the instructor is required for enrollment.

**Course requirements:**

Attendance at seminar sessions is required. If you have to miss a class, please inform me *in advance* of the meeting by telephone or e-mail. More than one absence will affect your grade. You should come to class prepared to discuss that week's reading, and I expect every student to participate in every class.

There will be three short (4-5 pp.) papers to allow you to expand on ideas from our discussions in several of the assigned readings. I will provide 2-3 "default" questions or you can propose one of your own. These papers will be due September 22, October 6, and November 3.

Late papers will be marked down one half grade if they are turned in by Wednesday afternoon of the same week and one full grade if they are turned in the following Monday. Papers more than one week late will not be accepted without proof of illness or natural disaster.

The final project for the course will consist of a 15-20 page review essay and presentation on a selection of books and articles (approximately 5-7) on a topic of your choosing that falls within the scope of this class. This is an opportunity to expand on a topic we have already discussed or extend the discussion to a new place or topic (within the framework of Europe 1870-1914).

In addition to presenting his or her research, each student will choose a short reading (an article or book chapter) for the class to read as a whole and lead a discussion on that reading on the assigned date. We will have no more than three such discussions per class period. More details about the logistics of this assignment will be given in class.

A proposal and bibliography for your final paper will be due November 10. The presentation will be scheduled for one of the last class sessions (December 1, 8, or 15), and the final paper will be due on December 17 (not a class day).

**Grading:**

Grades will be determined as follows: participation: 25 %; short papers: 30 %; review essay proposal: 2.5 %; presentation: 7.5 %; review essay: 35 %

**Office hours and contact information:**

Monday 1:00-2:00 and Wednesday 9:30-10:30 and 3:30-4:00, and by appointment  
Science 267, (415) 338-2250, scurtis@sfsu.edu

**Schedule:**

**August 25**  
**Introduction**

**September 1**  
**Labor Day: no class**

**September 8**  
**The Modernization of Rural Europe?**

Required reading:

Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*  
Part I: chaps. 1-2, 4, 7, 11, skim other chaps.  
Part II: chaps. 12-20  
Part III: 27-29, skim other chaps.

Further reading:

Dossier: Revisiting Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen*, *French Politics, Culture, and Society*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Summer 2009)  
Charles Tilly, "Did the Cake of Custom Break?" in *Consciousness and Class Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. John Merriman  
Michael Burns, *Rural Society and French Politics*  
Pierre-Jakez Hélias, *The Horse of Pride* (memoir)  
Emile Guillaumin, *The Life of a Simple Man* (memoir)  
Martine Segalen, *Love and Power in the Peasant Family*  
Judith Devlin, *The Superstitious Mind*  
Barnett Singer, *Village Notables in Nineteenth-Century France*  
Stephen Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940*  
Mary Jo Maynes, *Schooling for the People: A Comparative Local History of Schooling in France and Germany, 1750-1850*  
Leslie Page Moch, *Paths to the City: Regional Migration in Nineteenth-Century France*

**September 15**  
**Culture Wars**

Required reading:

Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, eds., *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, chaps. 1-2 (ER)  
Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in a Secular Age*, introduction, chaps. 1-4, chaps. 7-10, epilogue

Further reading:

David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth-Century German Village*

Detmar Klein, "The Virgin with the Sword: Marian Apparitions, Religion and National Identity in Alsace in the 1870s," *French History* 2007.

Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*

David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*

Thomas Kselman, *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France*

Richard Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970*

Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany*

Sarah Curtis, *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France*

**September 22**

**Mass Culture**

**First short paper due**

Required reading:

Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*

Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in *The Invention of Tradition* (ER)

Further reading:

Charles Rearick, *The Pleasures of the Belle Epoque*

Rosalind Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France*

W. Hamish Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market, 1850-1914*

Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*

Richard Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*

Douglas Mackaman, *Leisure Settings: Bourgeois Culture, Medicine, and the Spa in Modern France*

Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*

Robert Sackett, *Popular Entertainment, Class and Politics in Munich, 1900- 1923*

Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France*

Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914*

**September 29**  
**Urban Culture**

Required reading:

Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*

Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, chap. 2, "The Ringstrasse, Its Critics, and the Birth of Urban Modernism"

Further reading:

Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920*

Emile Zola, *Ladies' Delight* (novel)

Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain, eds., *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939*

Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End*

William Cohen, *Urban Government and the Rise of the French City*

Donald Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna*

T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*

Dean de la Motte and Jeannene Pryzblyski, eds., *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France*

James Smith Allen, *In the Public Eye: A History of Reading in Modern France, 1800-1940*

Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917*

**October 6**  
**The Birth of Modernism**

**Second short paper due**

Required reading:

Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, chaps. 1-8

Further reading:

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*

F. W. Hemmings, *Culture and Society in France, 1848-1898*

H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought*

J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914*

Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990*

**October 13**

**Individual meetings to discuss paper topics**

**October 20**

**The Freudian Revolution**

Required reading:

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 78-125, 160-69, 273-74 (ER)

\*Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, chap. 4, "Politics and Patricide in Freud's Interpretation of Dreams"

Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, introduction, pp. 7-50 (ER)

Jan Goldstein, "The Hysteria Diagnosis and the Politics of Anticlericalism in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *Journal of Modern History* 54 (1982): 209-39 (JSTOR)

Further reading:

Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures in Psycho-Analysis*

Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century*

Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline*

Ruth Harris, *Murders and Madness: Medicine, Law, and Society in the Fin-de-Siècle*

William McGrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The Politics of Hysteria*

Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady*

**October 27**

**The New Art**

Required reading:

Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*, introduction, chaps. 1-5, 8, 11, 15

Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, chap. 5, "Gustav Klimt: Painting and the Crisis of the Liberal Ego"

Further reading:

Peter Paret, *The Berlin Secession: Modernism and Its Enemies in Imperial Germany*

Robert Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Arts in France, 1885-1918*

Richard Mandel, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair*

Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930*

Janet Wolff and John Seed, eds., *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class*

**November 3**  
**The Dreyfus Affair**

**Third short paper due**

Required reading:

Ruth Harris, *The Dreyfus Affair: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century*

Further reading:

Jean-Denis Bredin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus*

Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics*

Christopher Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood*

Nancy Fitch, "Mass Culture, Mass Parliamentary Politics, and Modern Anti-Semitism: The Dreyfus Affair in Rural France," *American Historical Review* 97, 1 (February 1992): 55-95

**November 10**  
**The New Woman**

**Review essay proposal and bibliography due**

Required reading:

Karen Offen, "Depopulation, Nationalism, and Feminism in Fin-de-Siècle France," *American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984): 648-76 (JSTOR)

Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France*

Further reading:

Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*

Steven Hause, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the Third French Republic*

James F. McMillan, *Housewife or Harlot? The Woman Question in France under the Third Republic*

Jo Burr Margadant, *Madame le Professeur: Women Educators in the Third Republic*

Jo Burr Margadant, *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France*

Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*

Ruth Brandon, *The New Women and the Old Men: Love, Sex and the Woman Question*

Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers*

Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*

Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*

**November 17**  
**The Coming of the Great War**

Required reading:

Edward Berenson, *The Trial of Madame Caillaux*  
Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, chaps. 9-11

Further reading:

Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*  
Kevin McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-Siècle Germany*  
Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*  
Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*  
George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*  
Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*

**November 24**  
**Thanksgiving week**  
No class

**December 1**  
**Student presentations**

**December 8**  
**Student presentations**

**December 15**  
**Student presentations**

**Review essay due Wednesday, December 17 by 4 p.m. in my office**