

Paris: Biography of a City

Humanities 375.03
Sarah Curtis

Fall 2015
T 4:10-6:55

“America is my country and Paris is my hometown..” (Gertrude Stein, American author)
“Paris is always a good idea.” (Audrey Hepburn, British actress)
“Secrets travel fast in Paris.” (Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of the French)

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, music, 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, ISBN 0192831801)
Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (Simon and Schuster, ISBN 0020519605)
Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder* (UC Press, ISBN 9780520218789)

Other readings will be extracts from larger works, available either via the internet (see URL on syllabus or link on iLearn) or electronic reserve (see eReserves button in lower right-hand corner of iLearn page; abbreviated eReserves on syllabus).

Course requirements:

Students will be expected to complete the reading assignments by Tuesday of each week and come to class prepared to discuss them. Discussion questions and resources will be posted on iLearn, which you should consult before coming to class. Most discussions will occur after the class break; you are expected to remain until the end of class.

In advance of each week, I will post a short assignment on iLearn, to be answered on the forum. You are required to do 10 such responses during the semester (no more than one per week). They must be completed BEFORE class time on Tuesday. Late responses will not be accepted.

There will be a midterm and final, which will require critical reflection on the reading and lecture material. Additionally students will complete a short paper based on a film featuring contemporary or historical Paris. Details on the film paper are at the end of the syllabus.

Grading and deadlines:

responses, participation, discussion (ongoing)	25 %
midterm (Oct. 20)	25 %
film paper (Dec. 1)	25 %
final (Dec. 15)	25 %

Students who wish to take the course CR/NC can change their grading status via “My SFSU” until October 19 at midnight.

Makeup for the midterm and final only allowed if student has a documented absence due to illness or other emergency. Late papers will be marked down one half grade (e.g. A to A-) if turned in by Thursday of the same week; one full grade (e.g. A to B) if turned in one week late; papers more than one week late will not be accepted. Forum responses must be completed before class time and cannot be submitted late.

If you are unable to complete the course requirements by the end of 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 September 4; the last day with a “W” (except in extreme circumstances) is November 20.

Disability statement policy:

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu).

Required university statement on sexual violence:

“SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact: The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/ Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>. For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>.”

Office hours and contact information:

Tuesday 1:00-2:00 and Thursday 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

office location: Science 267

phone: (415) 338-2250

e-mail: scurtis@sfsu.edu

website: <https://faculty.sfsu.edu/~scurtis/home>

Schedule:

August 25
Ancient Paris

September 1
Medieval Paris

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

September 8
Royal Paris

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

September 15
Revolutionary Paris

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

September 22
Romantic Paris

September 29
Rebuilding Paris

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

October 6
Impressionist Paris

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

October 13
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" (eReserves)
Vanessa Schwartz, "Public Visits to the Morgue" (eReserves)

October 20
Avant-Garde Paris
MIDTERM (in class)

October 27
Expatriate Paris
Reading: Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*

November 3
Interwar Paris
Reading: George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, chaps. 1-10
(http://www.george-orwell.org/Down_and_Out_in_Paris_and_London/index.html)

November 10
Occupied Paris
Reading: Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder*
Janet Flanner, "Paris, Germany" (eReserves)

November 17
Left Bank Paris
Reading: Janet Flanner, "Paris Journal, 1968" (eReserves)

November 24
THANKSGIVING BREAK

December 1
Immigrant Paris
Film paper due

December 8
Contemporary Paris

December 15
FINAL (4:10-6:55)

Paris in the Movies (paper due Tuesday, December 1)

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?

How does the film relate to the themes of this course?

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. Please upload a copy of the paper to Turnitin (on iLearn) and bring a paper copy to class.

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)

Midnight in Paris (2011)

*Available to view at Library Media Services:

Info at <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/about/depts/mac.php>