

Making Paris Modern: A Secret History of the City of Light

Ari Blatt, Associate Professor of French (UVa) and Director, J-Term in Paris
Casey Shannon, Teaching Assistant and Ph.D. Student in French Studies (UVa)

ajb6f@virginia.edu

J-Term Study Abroad

Weds, December 28, 2016 (Arrival) - Tue, Jan 10, 2017 (Departure)

Paris, France

FRTR 2553 / FREN 3553 (for French majors)

3 credit hours (approx. 60 contact hours)

Syllabus subject to modification

Important Contact Info

Prof. Blatt's cell in France: (+33) 07 89 98 72 17

Casey Shannon cell in France: (+33) TBD

"But now imagine a city like Paris...imagine this metropolis of the world...where history confronts us on every street corner."

—Goethe, May 3, 1827

"Every city is a language that one learns and speaks"

—Jean Christophe Bailly, from *La Phrase urbaine* (2013)

"Que deviendra Paris? (What will become of Paris?)"

—Louis Sebastien Mercier, *Le Tableau de Paris* (1781-1788)

"A walk about Paris will provide lessons in history, beauty, and in the point of Life."

—Thomas Jefferson

Course Description

In this J-Term study abroad course, students will consider the ghosts of history that haunt yet still continue to shape the spaces and places of France's majestic capital city. We will explore some of Paris' most popular and oft-visited sites—like the Musée d'Orsay, the Garnier Opera, Montmartre, and the Centre Pompidou—but we will do so with an eye toward unearthing the past. For Paris is like a massive palimpsest, made up of multiple layers of faintly visible memories. As such, our itinerary will include a number of other places that reveal traces of these layers and provide a deeper, more complete, and decidedly more panoramic understanding of the city today: from the streets of the Left Bank that exploded during the riots of May 1968 and the site where one of the world's first department stores was born on the Right Bank, to neighborhoods marked by the horrors of the Nazi Occupation, historically working class and immigrant areas like Belleville and the Goutte d'Or, and the new residential and business quarter that has recently emerged parallel to the Seine. Participants will also descend those spaces that provide access to the hidden, yet historically significant, underbelly of Paris underground (the catacombs, sewers, and metro lines). We will begin by learning about the layout of the city to

understand why central Paris looks the way it does today. Over the course of two weeks we will study what made Paris a modern metropolis—what Walter Benjamin referred to as the “capital of the 19th century”—how it continued to flourish, at times struggle, and eventually evolve over the course of the 20th, and how it continues to renew itself at the dawn of 21st.

Our analysis of readings in fiction, poetry, history, art history, cultural studies, ethnography, and urban studies, along with discussions of photographs, paintings, and films, will permit us to read the city “between the lines” and ponder how Paris’ storied (and sometimes traumatic) past continues to emanate from the city’s twenty-first-century streets. Daily walking tours and site visits will strive to make visible the tale of Paris’ incredible march toward modernity.

Course goals include developing inter-cultural competency, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own deeper understanding of a foreign culture, and fostering an awareness of how the past contributes to the consistent reinvention of Paris in an increasingly globalized world. The course will also invite participants to craft an experience of the city that is more meaningful than a purely “touristic” approach would allow. To that end, students will have frequent opportunities to explore sites that they might find most relevant to their own scholarly and professional interests. They will also be invited to stop, look, and listen closely as the world goes by in a place where, as in most modern metropolises today, the hurried pace of life often prevents its own inhabitants, and most visitors, from ever doing so. Your guide in this endeavor, Ari Blatt (Associate Professor of French at UVA), has lived, worked, taught, and studied in Paris for many years, beginning with his first long stay in 1994-95. He looks forward to sharing his passion for, and knowledge of the city over what will certainly be an intense and rewarding two weeks.

Essential Materials

There are no required texts to purchase for this course. All readings and images will be available via our course Collab site. Students should therefore come to Paris with a laptop computer or tablet device through which they can access the site daily. Much of the material will be posted well before the departure date, and participants are encouraged to get a **healthy** head start on the reading.

Navigational Tools

Since you will be spending some time navigating the city streets on your own or in small groups, I recommend purchasing a decent guidebook that includes a complete street map (the DK Eyewitness guides are excellent). You might also consider purchasing a “Petit Plan de Paris par arrondissement” once you arrive (4-5 euros). Alternatively, a downloadable Paris map application would be helpful for those with smartphones (a number of apps are available to be used with devices offline). Make sure to spend some time prior to your arrival in France perusing a map of the city (and its metro/bus system).

Evaluation

- 4 discussion board posts a week (for a total of 8, each around 100-200 words minimum) in response to readings and site visits. What sorts of things have you

been noticing? What are you learning? What aspects of the course are you finding most (or least) intriguing, and why? These posts will be visible to all participants of the seminar, so you might wish to respond directly to a previous post to create a virtual discussion online. ***Note that you MUST incorporate material from at least one course reading on the syllabus into AT LEAST 2 posts each week. ***Note that there are 2 separate discussion board links, one for those enrolled in FRTR 2553 (in English) and another for those enrolled in FREN 3553 (in French) (30%)

- A 1000-1200 word essay in response to a question to be distributed shortly before arrival in Paris. (30%) SEE the ASSIGNMENTS FOLDER in the RESOURCES section of the Collab site. *Due on the Collab Drop Box site no later than 5PM on Weds. Jan. 13. ***Students taking the course for FREN 3553 credit will write this essay (obviously) in French.
- A detailed, annotated contribution to our seminar's collective Google MyMaps page. Students will be asked to visit a site aligned with their own intellectual and/or professional interests (upon consultation with Prof. Blatt). SEE the ASSIGNMENTS FOLDER in the RESOURCES section of the Collab site for more details. (20%) ***FREN 3553 students will post their text to the MyMaps site in English, but will also turn in a French version to the Collab Dropbox.
- A brief (which is to say 3-5 minute) introduction and critical appreciation of ONE of the readings under consideration on the syllabus. To be presented either at our morning meeting/seminar, or at some point when we're out and about during the day. Each of you will be assigned a particular day to present (see syllabus: "BRIEFING ON READING"), but the choice of text to prepare is up to you (you should coordinate with your partner so you each choose a different text). During your presentation you should present one or two key points or ideas in the text. What aspects did you find most interesting or compelling, and why? How does the text resonate with your experience of the city so far? (10%) ***FREN 3553 students will make these brief presentations in ENGLISH.
- Active participation in discussions and site visits. **NOTE that students enrolled in the FREN 3553 section of the course (for credit toward the major and minor) will meet regularly with faculty for small group discussions in French. (10%)

Academic Responsibilities and Expectations

Students are required to attend all seminars and site visits (ON TIME!), and to come prepared with questions and comments about the texts under consideration **each day**. While we will usually conduct our class and discussion "on the go" and on site, we will also meet in a calm corner of the hotel to share our thoughts about readings and prepare our itinerary for the day. Students can expect around 1-2 hours of preparation, reading, thinking, and writing each day. We will usually meet in the morning and finish in the early to late afternoon, though there are a few exceptions to this general rule. Students will have most evenings free, save a few compulsory dinners and group outings (all of which are covered in the program fee).

*****A pre-departure meeting will be held in Charlottesville on WEDS, DECEMBER 7 from 5-6:30 PM in the French Dept. Conference Room (CAB 349). This meeting is MANDATORY FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (the 7th is a reading day, with no exams**

scheduled). Enrolled participants wishing to meet with Prof. Blatt individually should contact him to schedule an appointment. .

***For more general policies and regulations, see the J-Term in Paris Handbook.

Some fun suggestions for the weeks prior to departure

- Watch J-P Jeunet's *Amélie*, Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*, or the collective *Paris, Je t'aime* (or one of the many other films with a focus on the city of lights)
- Listen to David Sedaris riff on life in Paris in a series of radio pieces hosted on NPR (or read about it in his book, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*)
- Virtually stroll the neighborhood around the hotel, or other places you'd like to visit, with Google's Street View function (for a more panoramic view of the city check out www.paris-26-gigapixels.com)
- Read *New Yorker* staffer Adam Gopnik's wonderful book about a year spent in Paris with his family in *Paris to the Moon* or David Lebovitz's food-focused collection of essays *The Sweet Life in Paris: Delicious Adventures in the World's Most Glorious – and Perplexing – City* or Rosecrans Baldwins' very recent, cliché busting memoir of a year spent working at a Parisian Advertising Company in *Paris I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down*.
- Check out Olivier Magny's funny (yet surprisingly true) blog "Stuff Parisians Like" online: <http://www.o-chateau.com/stuff-parisians-like>
- Listen to the various versions of Lucien Boyer's 1926 classic "Ça c'est Paris" available on youtube
- Skim through Polly Platt's classic *French or Foe: Getting the Most Out of Visiting, Living, and Working in France* (or for more laughs, read Stephen Clarke's *Talk to the Snail: Ten Commandments for Understanding the French*)
- Watch the 100th Anniversary episode of Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations* about the recent revolution in the Parisian restaurant scene. Potentially still available on YouTube. Or, check out his show on Paris from the Layover: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyiojos6gAg>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed DAILY SCHEDULE, including Readings, will be available in your handbook • All Readings will be made available on Collab. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER DOWNLOADING <u>ALL</u> COURSE READINGS INTO A FILE ON YOUR HARD DRIVE (OR PRINT THEM OUT IN A COURSE PACKET) <u>BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR PARIS</u> to be sure that they are accessible in the hotel in case internet access is slow or limited. • Since there is a fair amount of reading for the first few days, I recommend you look through much of this material WELL BEFORE you arrive in Paris. • Readings should be prepared for the day they are assigned. Make sure to make note of your thoughts, insights, and questions. • All meals labeled "Group Lunch or Dinner" are included in the program fee • All site visits and museum entry fees are covered under the program fee unless specified • The schedule is subject to modification |
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