

FRENCH 21 Approaches to Literary Analysis

Spring 2005

Office Hours:

M 11-12

H 2-3:30 and by appt.

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Required Texts:

Jean Racine, *Phèdre*

Jean Genet, *Les Nègres*

Assia Djebar, *Les Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*

Coursepack: photocopied selections of poetry and prose

Recommended:

A good French-English dictionary such as the Robert Collins.

Course Goals:

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the principles and methods of textual analysis in order to prepare you for advanced coursework in francophone literature and culture. Its goal is to present you with a wide range of literary texts from various periods, genres, and regions, and to provide you with a conceptual vocabulary and sets of questions to help you make sense of them. Through modeling and practice, you will learn to formulate your own questions when confronted with an unfamiliar text, to utilize a range of concepts and resources to formulate an answer those questions, and to synthesize your responses into a cogent literary analysis.

The course is organized in two parts: the first half of the semester introduces you to the major literary genres—poetry, narrative and drama. You will learn to identify the major formal elements of each genre and analyze how they function to create meaning in a specific text. Although the main focus of this part will be on formal analysis, we will also consider such questions as the gendered construction of the lyric subject and the relation of a text to its historical, social and political contexts as well as our own.

The second half of the course will expand on this introduction to present you with a series of "case studies": texts that have been chosen to illustrate literary strategies used by writers to address particular problems such as racial identity or national memory, as well as critical strategies used by readers to elucidate how these problems are worked through in a text.

A secondary goal of the course is to help you think about literature as one form of signifying practice among many, so that as you develop your analytical reading skills you may use them beyond the classroom to "read" and critically engage with other discourses, including film, advertising, news media, music and the like, that make up the world around us.

Assignments and method:

1. Reading: This course is primarily a reading and discussion course. Reading in this case means reading, rereading, looking up all unfamiliar words, answering assigned questions on the text, thinking about and noting your own questions on your reading, and reading and rereading again. Texts will be short to facilitate close analysis.

2. Discussion: Discussions and oral participation constitute a significant amount of the work in the class. Come prepared to discuss in French: study the technical vocabulary, prepare your own questions, feel free to point out areas which present you with difficulty. Articulating your thoughts verbally in class helps prepare you for the written assignments.

3. Leading Discussion: In addition to regular class discussion, you will be asked to work in groups of two to lead a class discussion of the reading for the day. You should prepare a list of questions to distribute in the class session prior to your assigned discussion; I will meet with each group in advance to go over your questions with you, to answer any questions you may have and offer comments and suggestions.

4. Oral explication de texte. Each student will present a 15 minute oral textual analysis of a short passage or poem to the class. You will prepare a handout with any unfamiliar vocabulary (if you had to look it up, chances are everyone else would, too) as well as an outline of your presentation. Practice and rehearse your presentation in advance; I will ask you to speak from notes and be in control of what you want to say, rather than read from a written text.

5. Quizzes and written work. To help you learn the technical terms and identify their function in a text, I will give occasional quizzes which allow me to monitor your learning and provide feedback. You will also be given questions on your reading to prepare in writing for class discussion; these will occasionally be collected and graded with comments.

6. Papers. You will write two short (5 pages) analytical papers on a given text. I will provide the topic in advance and we will go over in detail in class how this paper is to be written. The paper will be evaluated on the quality of your analysis, the organization and presentation of your ideas, and the clarity of your written French. You will be offered the opportunity to revise the paper if you wish, based on my comments and suggestions.

7. Midterm and Final exams. The mid-term and final will be composed of questions similar to those found on the quizzes, as well as short-answer questions and a short passage for analysis. The final will be cumulative, with an emphasis on material covered in the second half of the semester.

8. Resources. Texts that you will find helpful include a French-French dictionary with etymological entries, such as *Le Petit Robert*; histories and dictionaries of French literature such as the *New History of French Literature* by Denis Hollier, or the

Dictionnaire des oeuvres du Xxe siècle: littérature française et francophone by Henri Mitterand. The bulk of your reading, however, should be spent on the primary rather than secondary texts.

If you need help with your writing, The Writing Center (M02 THAW; 4-6556) is a highly recommended resource. They work in English, so cannot help you with language issues, but can help you in organize your ideas and structure your essay.

Policies:

In order to succeed in this course you must come to class well-prepared. Attendance and regular preparation are critical. More than three unexcused absences will result in a lowered course grade. If you miss class you are responsible for finding out from a classmate what you missed and what is due for the next class.

All exercises and writing assignments are to be turned in IN CLASS on the due date assigned; no late work will be accepted except in the case of excused absences (a written note from the Student Health Center) and by prior arrangement with me. All written work must be submitted in hard copy, typed and double-spaced, carefully revised for errors and must be your own work

If you have any special needs for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Method of evaluation:

Oral Participation:	25%
Quizzes, written work:	10%
Two short papers:	30%
Mid-term:	15%
Final:	20%

Reading Schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings & Assignments</u>
1	<u>Introduction: What is a Text?</u> 16 th century map; 20 th century advertisement; 1931 Colonial Exposition <u>The Literary Text</u> Ronsard, "Comme on voit sur la branche" Chamoiseau, <i>Solibo magnifique</i> (extrait)
2	<u>Poetry: The Lyric</u> Les troubadours Christine de Pizan, <i>Le livre de la cité des dames</i> (extrait)
3	Hugo, "Coccinelle"; Baudelaire, "Spleen", "Correspondances" Senghor, "Femme noire", "Joal"; Damas, "Hoquet"
4	<u>Introduction to Narrative</u> Gourmont, "Jose et Josette"
5	"Jose et Josette", suite Travail écrit #1
6	<u>Introduction to Theater</u> <i>Phèdre</i> Acte 1 <i>Phèdre</i> Acte 2
7	<i>Phèdre</i> Actes 3, 4 <i>Phèdre</i> Acte 5
8	Révision Examen de mi-semestre
9	Case Study: Satire 2e rédaction du travail écrit #1 Voltaire: <i>Micromégas</i>
10	Voltaire, <i>Micromégas</i> Identity and Performance Jean Genet, <i>Les Nègres</i> (pp. 9-39)

- 11 *Les Nègres* (pp. 39-61)
 Les Nègres (pp. 61-96)
- 12 *Les Nègres* (pp. 96-122) **Travail écrit #2**
- Case Study: Plural Readings
 Djébar, *Les Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*
 and and écriture féminine
- 13 *Les Femmes d'Alger* and Intertextuality
 A Postcolonial reading of *Les Femmes d'Alger*
- 14 Poetry: La Fontaine, "La Cigale et la fourmi"
 Césaire, "Barbare", Ponge, "Le Pain" "L'Huître"
- 15 Conclusion and review **2e rédaction du travail écrit #2**

Examen final