

HIS 237-01

## The Spectacle of Modern France

Spring Semester 2023

Mon/Weds 1:00-2:20 pm, HSSC N2118



L: Josephine Baker, 1970, by Michael Ochs, Getty Images

C: *gilets jaunes* protests, 2018, by Véronique de Viguerie, Getty Images

R: limited edition commemorative gold medallion, 2024 Paris Olympics

### INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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### OVERVIEW

The history of France from the eighteenth century is traditionally told through a narrative focused upon recurring political crises. France is said to have an uneasy relationship with modernization, colonization, and economic competition, sliding instead into hazy nostalgia for a triumphant past rooted in the myths – and realities – of tradition, of powerful national leaders like Louis XIV and Napoleon. This class examines the ideals and contradictions of liberal democracy articulated during the revolution, with its reliance upon image-making and theater. We then explore the interconnected challenges of class, race, gender, and sexuality to the status quo as we move forward chronologically to the mid twentieth century. We attend to the centrality of culture, ideas, and especially the spectacle of the human body as a site for expressing – and attempting to control – anxieties rooted in the profound complexities of the modern French nation.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are:

- to become familiar with the principle events and thematic threads of French history from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth
- to engage critically with a range of primary sources, learning to interrogate their authorship, biases, contexts, and variably interpretable meanings
- to examine the work of modern scholars, identifying their arguments and use of evidence, and positioning their arguments in relation to one another
- to cultivate speaking and listening skills and the clear presentation of ideas in class discussions
- to practice essential writing skills through frequent, in-class free-write sessions; consultations with class writing mentors; thoughtful revisions; and a final portfolio of short, polished articles
- to present and discuss short case studies of individually-chosen current events at the end of the course clearly, thoughtfully, and engagingly

## PRINCIPLES, REQUIREMENTS, & GRADING

### Principles

As you enter the classroom each day, please bear in mind the THRIVE principles codified at the College in the spring of 2020. These emphasize transparency, health and safety, inclusion, vulnerability, and empathy. Taken together, this means that above all, we are working TOGETHER as a community to learn, to push each other, to respect each other, and to be humans together. So I am doubling down here on the necessity for us to embrace mutual support and grace as we move through the semester. Requirement number one, then, is that we all do our best as humans.

### Class Meetings

This course is based in large part on discussion because it is the most effective format for inquiry-based learning. Online lectures provide a historical framework for the material we cover; then our class meetings center upon analyses of assigned materials exploring various themes, and it is through the free and open posing of questions and exchange of ideas that we all benefit the most from the class. Your preparation and engagement, then, are crucial to its success. Please arrive on time to class and be prepared to stay through the scheduled end of the meeting. **Come to class having done the work listed on the syllabus for that day and collected in advance your thoughts, questions, and comments for discussion.** Additionally, remember that participation can come in many forms, and both speaking AND listening and responding to others' ideas make for the richest experiences for all of us.

Because discussion figures so heavily in the way we spend class time and wrestle together with the course materials, I may sometimes send out discussion questions via email (at least 24 hours before we meet) as a tool to help us focus on common themes and issues. You should use these prompts as guideposts through the assigned readings – though by no means should they restrict your interpretations – and come prepared with answers, questions, or counterarguments in response.

Finally, please do not use laptops or digital readers unless 1) they are equipped with annotation capabilities so that you have notes and comments on readings for class, and pages are easily accessible during discussions, 2) all applications unrelated to class are closed, and/or 3) in the case of special learning needs to be discussed with me at the beginning of the semester.

### Attendance

Because of the nature of the C19 pandemic and its effects, I am not implementing a hard and fast penalty for absences from class. However, pandemic or no, I DO value communication with you above all things. If you must miss class for whatever reason, please alert me via email as soon as possible. We can discuss ways to get materials that you missed to you.

Similarly, because participation in discussions is such an integral part of the class (see below), your grade will suffer from extended absences from class. Please do your best to keep up at all times.

### Deadlines

There are a number of different, small assignments connected to the course and each has reasonable deadlines for completion. As with attendance, however, I recognize that there are many things happening in your lives of which this course is but one piece. I am much more interested in you doing your best on an assignment than in you handing it in “on time” per se, as long as we can strike a balance and avoid debilitating procrastination or the triumph of crippling perfectionism. Please try to meet deadlines, communicate with me if you are unable for any reason, and we can work together to make arrangements from there.

<b>Participation</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>In-class writing drafts</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Current events scaffolding assignments</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Current events roundtable</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Final writing portfolio</b>	<b>20%</b>

In addition to preparing for and **participating in regular class discussion**, there are two major assignments that carry through the entire semester and develop with considerable flexibility, sensitive to each student’s individual schedule and preference. 1) Frequently, we spend in-class time on **free-write drafts** in response to a prompt drawn from that day’s materials. These initial drafts are submitted at the end of the week, discussed with assigned writing mentors, revised, and collected into a selective **final writing portfolio** at the end of the semester. There are **four required meetings** with your mentor built into the syllabus to help you work toward this goal. 2) Students spend outside-of-class time during the semester familiarizing themselves with a **current event** in France of their choosing. One or more of the following English language news outlets is recommended (or another of your choosing, with permission):

*Al Jazeera* – [aljazeera.com](http://aljazeera.com)

*The Economist* – [economist.com](http://economist.com)

*Le Monde* – [lemonde.fr/en/](http://lemonde.fr/en/)

*New York Times* – [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com)

*The Times* (London) – [thetimes.co.uk/](http://thetimes.co.uk/)

At the end of the semester, each student participates in a **roundtable discussion, providing a 5-6' summary of their chosen current event and its connections to the historical precedents covered in class** and then engaging in an extended conversation with the other student experts for the day and responding to questions and comments from the class/audience. As with the writing portfolio, short scaffolding assignments embedded in the syllabus ensure that students build up expertise over the course of the semester and prepare appropriately for these roundtables.

## **PARTNERS & RESOURCES**

I want every person in this class to succeed and am deeply committed to creating an environment that helps make that possible. I encourage students with documented disabilities in any form to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. If you have not yet, please start a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to Jae Hirschman, Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, at [hirschma@grinnell.edu](mailto:hirschma@grinnell.edu).

We are very fortunate to have two peer writing mentors assigned to this course: Charis Board and Oliver Palmer. Each of you will work with one of them outside the classroom on your writing portfolios. **Their job is not to grade your papers nor to answer questions about course content: these responsibilities remain with the professor.** They are, however, well-positioned to help you identify the strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities in your drafts. Every single author, at every stage of development, can benefit from sharing their work in progress, and our class requires four visits with your assigned mentor. Failing to submit your draft or honor your meeting with Charis or Oliver will adversely affect your grade.

Finally, in addition to the expertise provided by Charis and Oliver, Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. Make an appointment online: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Robin Mitchell

*Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France*  
University of Georgia Press, 2020 [ISBN: 0820354316]

Maud Casey

*City of Incurable Women*

Bellevue Literary Press, 2022 [ISBN: 978194658863]

Additional materials (indicated by a bullet [•]) will be available on PWeb, on JSTOR, on the web, or handed out in class. Be aware that the scheduling of all assignments is subject to change based on the ebb and flow of class discussions.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### M Jan 23 Course Introduction

#### W Jan 25 Setting the stage: Absolutism and Enlightenment

- The Château of Versailles, “Louis XIV” (2’47’)  
<https://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history/great-characters/louis-xiv>
- Bossuet, *Politics Derived from the Words of Holy Scripture* [excerpts] (1709)
- Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance* [excerpts] (1763)

Modern France (Lecture 1): The French Revolution (1’11’)

History Weekly

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXQvd\\_aPxog](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXQvd_aPxog)

### M Jan 30 Revolutionary First Steps

- *Cahiers de Doléances* [excerpts] (1789)
- Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789)
- Petition of the Jews (1790)
- Olympe de Gouges, Declaration of the Rights of Woman (1791)

**PLEASE SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH YOUR MENTOR BETWEEN 2/1 and 2/17 TO DISCUSS FEEDBACK AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT ON YOUR FIRST FEW FREE-WRITES**

### W Feb 1 Insiders/Outsiders I

- Joan Wallach Scott, “French Feminists and the Rights of ‘Man’” *History Workshop* 28 (1989) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4288921>

### M Feb 6 Revolutionary Radicalization

- Robespierre, “Report on the Principles of Political Morality” (Feb 1794)
- The Festival of the Supreme Being (8 June 1794)
- Babeuf, *The Plebeians’ Manifesto* [excerpts] (1795)

Modern France (Lecture 2): Napoleonic Empire (31’)

History Weekly

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1ggVcQN\\_dE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1ggVcQN_dE)

### W Feb 8 Revolutionary Retreat

- Napoleonic leadership (1790s-1800s)
- Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [excerpts] (1790)

Toussaint L’Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution (56’)

Sudhir Hazareesingh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04LaVptc-Tg>

### Th Feb 9 Initial idea(s) re: Current Event topic due – 5:00 p.m. via email

- M Feb 13      Insiders/Outsiders II
- Johnhenry Gonzalez, “The New World ‘sans-culottes’: French Revolutionary Ideology in Saint-Domingue” in Hendrix and Baumgold, eds., *Colonial Exchanges* (2017), pp.100-115 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvnb7mcv.9>
  - Constitution of Haiti (1805)
  - Akala, Oxford Union Address [excerpt on the Haitian Revolution] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVBoy2bg7Jo>
- W Feb 15      Revolutionary Memory
- Nathan H. Dize, “Monumental L’Ouverture: French/Haitian Sites of Memory and the Commemoration of Abolition” (2018) <https://ageofrevolutions.com/2018/04/09/>

**PLEASE SCHEDULE A MENTOR MEETING BETWEEN 2/20 and 3/15 TO DISCUSS REVISION STRATEGIES FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO DRAFTS**

- M Feb 20      Outsiders and the Body in the Early Nineteenth Century  
Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies*  
preface, acknowledgements, introduction, + Chapter I, pp. xiii-30
- W Feb 22      Mitchell, *Vénus Noire*  
Chapters 2 + 3, pp. 51-103
- Modern France (Lecture 4): The Conquest of Algeria (33’)  
History Weekly  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASgIknO7fns>
- M Feb 27      The Violence Continues: Algeria
- Jennifer Sessions, “‘Unfortunate Necessities’: Violence and Civilization in the Conquest of Algeria” in Lorcin and Brewer, eds., *France and Its Spaces of War: Experience, Memory, Image* (2009), pp. 29-44
- Modern France (Lecture 5): 1848 and the Second Empire (37’)  
History Weekly  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zFiNPI4GS8->
- W Mar 1      Hausmannized Paris: Baudelaire and Duval
- Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* and *Paris Spleen* [excerpts] (1857, 1869)
  - Mitchell, *Vénus Noire*, Chapter 4, pp. 105-135
- Modern France (Lecture 7): The Founding of the Third Republic (33’)  
History Weekly  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPV455yVWWw&t=1385s>
- Th Mar 2      Current Event annotation due - 5:00 p.m. via email**

- M Mar 6 Echoes of the Revolution: The Paris Commune  
• Proclamation (15 Sept 1870) through Announcement (28 May 1871)
- W Mar 8 Consumerism and Spectacle  
• Émile Zola, *The Ladies' Paradise* (1883), Chapter 4
- M Mar 13 Controlling Bodies in the Late Nineteenth Century I  
• Patricia O'Brien, "The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth-Century France" *Journal of Social History* 17/1 (1983)  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3787239>
- W Mar 15 Controlling Bodies in the Late Nineteenth Century II  
• Andrew Israel Ross, "Dirty Desire: The Uses and Misuses of Public Urinals in Nineteenth-Century Paris" in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 53 (2009): 62-88  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035641>

SPRING BREAK

**PLEASE SCHEDULE A MENTOR MEETING BETWEEN 4/3 and 4/24 TO DISCUSS THE CONTENTS OF YOUR FINAL PORTFOLIO**

- M Apr 3 Controlling Bodies in the Late Nineteenth Century III  
• Maud Casey, *City of Incurable Women* (2022)
- John Merriman, *France Since 1871* (Yale)  
The Origins of World War I (13), Trench Warfare (14), The Home Front (15)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQvB1e4t9jg&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=13>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd6hBBPWVhg&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=14>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZyo7koBa04&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=15>
- W Apr 5 Outsiders and the Body in/after World War  
• Taylor Morrow, "African-American Soldiers in France" (30')  
<https://www.thefrenchhistorypodcast.com/african-american-soldiers-in-france-with-taylor-morrow/>
- M Apr 10 Outsiders and the Body in the Interwar Period  
• Mitchell, *Vénus Noire*, conclusion, pp. 135-140  
• Jennifer Boittin, C1 "Josephine Baker: Colonial Woman" in *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (2015)
- W Apr 12 GCL Print Room
- Th Apr 13 Current Event main voices and themes due – 5:00 p.m. via email**



John Merriman, France Since 1871 (Yale)  
The Dark Years: Vichy (18), The Resistance (19)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4-BGTJDBY8&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=18>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5NNaMiXQ-4&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=19>

- M Apr 17 Vichy: Occupied Paris and/as Spectacle
- David Pryce-Jones, “Paris during the German Occupation” in *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation 1940-1944* (1989)
  - <https://www.messynessychic.com/2016/10/12/where-the-nazis-hung-out-in-occupied-paris/>

John Merriman, France Since 1871 (Yale)  
Vietnam and Algeria (21)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhB7ctAG7vE&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=21>

- W Apr 19 Frantz Fanon and Decolonization
- Fanon, “On Violence,” “On National Culture,” and “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” [excerpts] from *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)

John Merriman, France Since 1871 (Yale)  
May 1968 (23)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkh\\_cJ7ol9A&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=23](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkh_cJ7ol9A&list=PLE653BF062C136B62&index=23)

- M Apr 24 1968 and Revolutionary Echoes /Decolonization and Memory
- “Amnesty of Blinded Eyes,: “Join the Revolutionary Commune of the Imagination,” and graffiti from May 1968
  - Celine Mitchell, “Remembering the Algerian War Through Hip Hop” (21’)
- <https://www.thefrenchhistorypodcast.com/remembering-the-algerian-war-through-hip-hop/>  
Roundtable planning

**PLEASE SCHEDULE A MENTOR MEETING BETWEEN 4/26 and 5/10 TO DISCUSS STRATEGIES FOR COMPLETING AND POLISHING YOUR FINAL PORTFOLIO**

W Apr 26 WORKING DIFFERENTLY DAY – no class

**M May 1 CURRENT EVENTS ROUNDTABLE #1**  
**W May 3 CURRENT EVENTS ROUNDTABLE #2**

**M May 8 CURRENT EVENTS ROUNDTABLE #3**  
**W May 10 CURRENT EVENTS ROUNDTABLE #4**

FINALS WEEK

**F May 19 FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE**  
**12:00 noon via email**