

**University of Arizona
College of Humanities
Humanities Seminars Program
Tuesday, 9am-12pm
March 16, 23, 30, April 6, 13 and 20, 2021**

Topic: French Connections

This seminar “French Connections”, is taught by several professors from the College of Humanities at the University of Arizona. Every week, we will address a different topic that connects France with other nations. All the professors will return for a final joint session during the last week.

Week 1 (March 16, 2021)

Dr. Alain-Philippe Durand, “Brazilian French Literature”
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Brief description

From the nineteenth through the first half of the twentieth century, accounts of French voyages in the Americas generally began with a description—detailed, dry, and for the most part, wearisome—of an extended journey by boat; of the ship’s equipment; of conversations between the ship’s passengers; of its restaurant and food; and of its stops in Lisbon and Dakar. Often, to satisfy publishers and accommodate the tastes of contemporary readers, these tales emphasized exotic details and sensational anecdotes.

In similar if somewhat subtler fashion, a demand for exoticism is reflected in contemporary French novels and stories published at the end of the twentieth and the start of the twenty-first century, in works whose action similarly unfolds in the Americas. As Rita Olivieri-Godet has explained, these works tend to present ethnographic questions through picturesque, stereotypical images of the local culture. In other cases, French authors (such as Roger Bastide, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, or Claude Levi-Strauss to only name a few) explore a more personal filiation or connection to the Americas.

In this class, I will focus on Brazil, and present and discuss these themes and connections, whose pervasive presence in *American and Latin American French Literature* is hardly accidental. It is indeed a direct consequence of the developing of American and Latin American studies in France. And I will argue that the works of these specific authors are central when it comes to understanding how the developing of American and Latin American studies occurred in France.

Optional Suggested Readings*

Amado, Jorge. *Jubiabá*. 1935. Trans. Margaret A. Neves. New York: Bard/Avon Books, 1984.

Bastide, Roger. *The African Religions of Brazil*. 1960. Trans. Helen Sebba. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *Hard Times: Force of Circumstance, Volume II: 1952-1962*. 1963. Trans. Peter Green. New York: Paragon House, 1992.

Blas de Roblès, Jean-Marie. *Where the Tigers Are at Home*. 2008. Trans. Mike Mitchell. New York: Other P, 2013.

Camus, Albert. "The Growing Stone." *Exile and Kingdom*. Trans. Carol Cosman. New York: Vintage, 2007.

Durand, Alain-Philippe. "Jorge Amado." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Vol. 307. *Brazilian Writers*. Eds. Monica Rector and Fred Clark. Columbia, SC: Brucoli, 2004. 26-39.

Durand, Alain-Philippe, and Ralph Schoolcraft III. "Jorge Amado and Albert Camus: Formative Literary Visions and Prewar Politics." *PMLA* 124.3 (2009): 918-25.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Tristes Tropiques*. 1955. Trans. John Weightman. New York: Penguin Classics, 2012.

Rufin, Jean-Christophe. *Brazil Red*. 2001. Trans. Willard Wood. New York: Norton, 2004.

**Students may still enjoy the class without reading any of the above*

Week 2 (March 23, 2021)

Dr. Carine Bourget, "Islam and Immigration in France Through Yamina Benguigui's Documentaries"

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Brief description

This class looks at Islam and immigration in France in the second half of the XXth century through Yamina Benguigui's lense. Her documentaries, including *Mémoires d'immigrés*, *Le plafond de verre*, and *9-3 Mémoire d'un territoire*, trace the history of various policies of the French government, their consequences for postcolonial immigrants, and the challenges faced by their children.

Suggested Films and Readings*

- Benguigui, Yamina. *Immigrant Memories*. Canal+, 1997.

- Benguigui, Yamina. *9-3, mémoire d'un territoire*. Canal+, 2008.
- Benguigui, Yamina. *Le plafond de verre* [The Glass Ceiling]. MK2, 2004.
- « Dreams and Realities. » Lallab.org
- Ben Jelloun, Tahar. *Islam Explained*. Trans. Franklin Philip. New York: The New P, 2002.
- [Bowen](#), John. *Can Islam be French: Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. (excerpts)

**While students may still enjoy the class without watching/reading any of the above, they will get more from the class if they watch all the films prior to coming to class. The three films listed above are available with English subtitles at the University of Arizona's libraries.*

Week 3 (March 30, 2021)

Dr. Barbara Kosta, "Berlin-Paris"
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Brief Description

This class explores the significance of France, especially Paris, for many German filmmakers, artists and writers. Topics that we will address are: G.W. Pabst's film *Comrades* (1931); the significance of Paris (Joinville) for the production of multi-language films with the introduction of sound, German émigrés like Erich Pommer, Fritz Lang and Billy Wilder who sought refuge in Paris when Hitler came to power, and German expats like Marlene Dietrich who made Paris her home.

Readings:

Alastair Phillips, *City of Darkness City of Light* pages 21-73 and 149-171.
 Thomas Elsaesser, "The German Émigrés in Paris in the 1930s: Pathos and Leave-taking"

Week 4 (April 6, 2021)

Dr. Bryan Carter, "When African Americans Came to Paris"
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Brief Description

African American expatriates in Paris were present before the turn of the 20th Century, going there for a variety of reasons: Racism in the States, opportunities abroad, and the ability to be oneself without the stigma of race attached to that identity were among those reasons.

The year 1900 was a year to celebrate at the Universal Exposition of Paris. 50 million visitors came to the banks of the Seine to marvel at the achievements of the outgoing century and have a preview of the new. All the great nations of the world leapt at the chance to show off their greatness at the elephantine extravaganza.

Also leaping at this opportunity was one of the most important figures in African American history, W.E.B. Du Bois, then a sociologist at Atlanta University. A brilliant scholar – the first African American to earn a doctorate at Harvard – DuBois had also studied in Europe and traveled extensively on the Old Continent– Paris included. So he was the natural choice to create an exhibit of African American life for the 1900 Exposition. With meager funding from the US government, DuBois and his team in Georgia created an exhibit and brought it to Paris. But when they got there, the official United States pavilion offered them no space. So they went down the river to a more modest venue and installed it there. The “Exhibit of the American Negro” became a hit with the fair-goers! What made it work was its pioneering use of photography – and the freshness of the story it had to tell. In hundreds of photos, it revealed a side of Black American life of which few people were aware. This was the world of urbanized, educated African Americans in the South, only 35 years after the abolition of slavery. The idea of the exhibition was to show progress, and to show the development of African Americans as a *nation within a nation* after Emancipation, after Reconstruction, in other words, the failure of Reconstruction. It accomplished what DuBois did so well, he considered African Americans as a nation within a nation, but also a nation among many nations with a specific coherent and creative culture. They were also an example of modernity. They were what was possible!

This course explores the fascinating history of African Americans in Paris from artists and musicians to writers, entrepreneurs and statesmen as well as the French fascination with “blackness” from before the turn of the 20th Century; when African Americans came to Paris, life for them at home and abroad changed forever.

Recommended Reading Assignments:

The Harlem Hellfighters

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/one-hundred-years-ago-harlem-hellfighters-bravely-led-us-wwi-180968977/>

Henry Johnson Graphic Novel (PDF attached)

African-American Veterans Hoped Their Service in World War I Would Secure Their Rights at Home. It Didn't

<https://time.com/5450336/african-american-veterans-wwi/>

World War I in the Historical Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-american-history/article/world-war-i-in-the-historical-imagination-of-w-e-b-du-bois/6E248883345B4DAB9C7257CFF147D3F2/core-reader>

African Americans in World War I (Video)

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?452061-1/african-americans-world-war>

Against the Odds: Artists of the Harlem Renaissance (video)

<https://youtu.be/AuV-sTH9vgM>

Week 5 (April 13, 2021)

Dr. Denis Provencher, “Queer French”
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Brief Description

In this session, we will read about issues of language, gender and sexuality in the French LGBT experience. We will explore cinematic, literary, and ethnographic examples of what it means to be LGBT. We will watch Abdellah Taïa’s *Salvation Army* and read his novel *An Arab Melancholia*, as well as read and discuss other life stories in Paris from the instructor’s 2010-2016 fieldwork and essays.

Assigned Materials:

-Film: *L’Armée du Salut*, Abdellah Taïa

https://www.amazon.com/Salvation-Army-English-Subtitled-Mrini/dp/B00VG28TF4/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=salvation+army&qid=1603818958&sr=8-1

-Novel: *A Country for Dying*, Abdellah Taïa

https://www.amazon.com/Country-Dying-Abdellah-Taia/dp/1609809904/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=a+country+for+dying&qid=1603818927&sr=8-1

-Provencher’s *Queer Maghrebi French*, Chapters 1 and 5

https://arizona-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=01UA_ALMA51614429200003843&context=L&vid=01UA&lang=en_US&search_scope=Everything&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=default_tab&query=creator,contains,provencher,%20denis,AND&mode=advanced

Week 5 (April 20, 2021)

Conclusions and general discussion with Profs. Bourget, Carter, Durand, Kosta, and Provencher.