Americans in Paris

“America is my country and Paris is my hometown.” – Gertrude Stein

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Office Hours: TR 12:12:30, 2:45 – 3:15 p.m., and by appointment

Course Description:
American writers and artists – from Thomas Jefferson to Henry James, Edith Wharton to Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald to Shay Youngblood – have viewed the French as a people who value art and creativity, the aesthete and the intellectual, more highly than Americans. Those Americans marginalized or discriminated against in the U.S., such as Josephine Baker and James Baldwin and a variety of jazz musicians, have judged Paris to be a place where they can live and love and create as they please. In this seminar we will discuss what Americans hope to find in Paris that they don’t find in the United States, we will locate where the Paris of their dreams departs from reality, and we will compare their quests across generations and demographic groups. We will also be on the lookout for how the writers’ narratives can sometimes be at odds with the structures, both film and fiction, that contain them. Throughout the semester we will attempt to think more complexly about American stereotypes of Paris and French people, both positive and negative; about why these stereotypes exist and what functions they serve for Americans. But we will also consider how Americans are perceived by the French and why, and the effects of misperceptions on both sides of the Atlantic. The topics highlighted in the course outline – from cosmopolitanism to globalization – will make their way into our discussions throughout the semester.

Primary Texts:
Alexis de Tocqueville. Democracy in America, 1835.
F. Scott Fitzgerald. Tender Is the Night, 1933.

Films:
Works on Electronic Reserve:
To access the following selections, go to the Boatwright Library’s home page, http://library.richmond.edu/, scroll down and click on “Course Reserves” under “Students.”


Books related to social, cultural, and political history on 4-hour reserve in Boatwright Library:


Online resources:
U.S. Bill of Rights, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rights1.asp

Boatwright Library also has these volumes. DC 330.Z44.

Course Outline:
Tues. Aug. 24 Introduction: France in the American Imagination
Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone” 33-40

Tocqueville, from *Democracy in America*, Vol. II
Part One, “Intellectual Movement,” Chapters 1 -2 (p. 493-503), Chapter 8 (p. 521-523), and Chapter 11 (p. 537-541)
Part Three, “Customs” Chapters 1-3 (p.649-660), Chapters 13 -15 (700-709), and Chapter 19 (p. 728-734)

Tues. Aug. 31  Wharton, *French Ways and Their Meaning*

**Place and Identity: Paris in the 1780s**

“[Mr. Jefferson] desired to bring my mother back to Virginia with him but she demurred. She was just beginning to understand the French language well, and in France she was free, while if she returned to Virginia she would be re-enslaved.”

– Madison Hemings


Ellis, chapter 2 of *American Sphinx*, “Paris: 1784-89” (discussion on 9/7)
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rights1.asp
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp
http://www.constitution.org/fr/fr_drm.htm

Tues. Sept. 7  Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*

“Thomas Jefferson” 105-157; “Sally Hemings” 158-223;
“Summary of the Evidence,” 224-235

Thurs. Sept. 9  *Jefferson in Paris* and an excerpt from *Sally Hemings: An American Scandal*

**Out of Place: In Search of a Cosmopolitan Life**

“All that is not Paris is the provinces.” – Plaque near Notre Dame

James, “Collaboration,” 234-255.


**Proposal for first essay due; conferences as needed.**
Exiles at Home: Seeking “America” Elsewhere

“To France,” a sonnet by Countee Cullen, 1932

Though I am not the first in English terms
To name you of the earth's great nations Queen;
Though better poets chant it to the worms
How that fair city perched upon the Seine
Is lovelier than that they traveled to;
While kings and warriors and many a priest
In their last hour have smiled to think of you,
Among these count me not the last nor least.
As he whose eyes are gouged craves light to see,
And he whose limbs are broken strength to run,
So have I sought in you that alchemy
That knits my bones and turns me to the sun;
And found across a continent of foam
What was denied my hungry heart at home.

Thurs. Sept. 30 The Josephine Baker Story; Princess Tam Tam

Tues. Oct. 5 First Essay Due, writing workshop

Thurs. Oct. 7 Baldwin, from Collected Essays

“A Question of Identity,” 91-100
“Stranger in the Village,” 117-129

Jazz sampler from the 1930s:

Fall Break

Escapes into the Sensual and the Sensuous

“Dinners, soirées, poets, erratic millionaires, painters, translations, lobsters, absinthe, music, promenades, oysters, sherry, aspirin, pictures, Saphhic heiresses, editors, books, sailors. And How!”

– Hart Crane’s 1929 postcard, postmarked Paris, to Samuel Loveman


“My Arrival in Paris,” 7-34
“Gertrude Stein in Paris, 1903-1907,” 35-66
from “After the War, 1919-1932” (meeting Hemingway), 260-271

Stein as art connoisseur and collector: Picasso, Matisse and more
http://www.google.com/images?hl=en&as_epq=Picasso&as_oq=&as_eq=&num=10&lr=&as_filetype=&as_sitesearch=&as_qdr=all&as_rights=&as_octl=any&cr=&as_nlo=&as_nhi=&safe=images&q=Gertrud e+Stein+%22Picasso%22&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&ei=4llqTK39AoP78Aain8GFBQ&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&ct=title&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQsAQwAA&biw=955&bih=502
Hemingway, from *A Moveable Feast*
- “A Good Café on the Place St. Michel” 1-8
- “Miss Stein Instructs,” 9-21
- “Une Génération Perdue,” 23-31
- “Shakespeare and Company,” 33-38

**Revision of First Essay Due**

**Tues. Oct. 19**
*The Moderns*

**Thurs. Oct. 21**
Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, 1-108

**Tues. Oct. 26**
Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, 108-209
Hemingway, from *A Moveable Feast*
- “Scott Fitzgerald,” 147-176
- “Hawks Do Not Share,” 177-186

**Thurs. Oct. 28**
Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, 209-315

**Tues. Nov. 2**
Percy, “The Loss of the Creature,” 46-56
Eisenberg, “Holy Week” from *Under the 82nd Airborne*
“Across the Lake” from *All Around Atlantis*

**Thurs. Nov. 4**
Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*

**7 p.m.**
**Reading by Deborah Eisenberg**, Brown-Alley Room, Weinstein Hall

**Tues. Nov. 9**
Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*

### Expatriation and its Limits

“In my necessity to find the terms on which my experience could be related to that of others, Negroes and whites, writers and non-writers, I proved, to my astonishment, to be as American as any Texas G.I. And I found my experience was shared by every American writer I knew in Paris.”

– James Baldwin

**Thurs. Nov. 11**
Youngblood, *Black Girl in Paris*, 1-118

**Tues. Nov. 16**
Youngblood, *Black Girl in Paris*, 121-236
Baldwin, “The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American” 137-142

**Proposal for second essay due; conferences as needed.**

**Thurs. Nov. 18**
*Le Divorce* based on the novel by Diane Johnson

**Tues. Nov. 23**
**Second Essay Due, writing workshop**

**Thanksgiving**
Globalization and Americanization

“The worry that America constitutes a challenge to France is a rather recent phenomenon.”
– Richard Kuisel


Revision of Second Essay Due

Tues. Dec. 14  Due: 500 -1000 word reflection paper on your current perceptions of Paris and French culture and/or society. Have they changed since August? If so, what readings and/or films and/or class discussions provoked the change. Explain.

Requirements
1. Two oral presentations and short research essays. Before your presentation, consult with me about your plans. Follow MLA citation style for each essay. When you have polished your essay for the final time, it will be posted either on a Google map of Paris and/or on our class blog, uramericansinparis.wordpress.com (or both), and eventually linked to a map of Paris, which will be public.

   **A. Biographical analysis.** Choose an author, historical figure, or product (e.g. McDonald’s) that we will be reading about and write a short two-page research essay (500-600 words) explaining why and when this person or product came to Paris and what the encounter with France was like. Using Google images find an appropriate image of the person or product if you can, maybe one that corresponds to the time period. Also pinpoint on a map the location in Paris; using Google Earth find a current image of the place of significance to go with your analysis. If the place has changed, find an old image as well, if you can. On the day that we discuss that author, historical figure, or product, you will present your findings orally to the seminar, taking about 5 minutes to share your most significant findings (including images). By the end of the semester, we will have created an illustrated, annotated map of famous Americans or American products in Paris. We will also create a timeline so be sure to note when your subject was in Paris.

   **B. Historical analysis.** Choose a historical time period, which provides the background for a film or reading and discuss in a short two-page research essay (500-600 words) what was happening in France and/or Paris at the time. Be sure to make historical connections to the work we’re reading or viewing and focus on subjects or situations that might have engaged the author or historical figure, or might have been of significance for the product. On the day that we discuss the work, make a 5 minute oral presentation about your findings to the seminar.

2. Class participation. Because participation in class discussion will count as part of your final grade, absences will lower your final grade. So will failure to do the readings scheduled by the dates due.

3. Two Formal Essays. Two 1250- to 1500-word essays, typed and double-spaced are due on the dates noted above. Pledge your work. Late papers will be lowered one grade for each day late. Before you
begin writing your essay, you must turn in a proposal. Feel free to submit your proposal before the due date if you would like to get started early. I will be glad to help you explore a topic, formulate a thesis, and/or choose a mode of organizing your ideas. Be prepared for me to ask you to rework your thesis and to resubmit the revision. Include the following information when you email me your proposal, due at 9 a.m. on the dates above:

- **Subject** (What work(s) and what issue will you focus on?)
- **Thesis** (What question will you answer or what assertion will you prove about your subject?)
- **Organization** (How do you plan to structure your argument?)

On the day that the paper is due, bring a hard copy to class and email me an attachment. A writing consultant, senior English major Nadine Weiss, has been assigned to our seminar and available to consult with you about your essay drafts and revisions.

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements, all of which are described in detail on the “Common Expectations” handout:

- Academic Skills Center ([http://asc.richmond.edu](http://asc.richmond.edu) or 289-8626)
- Career Development Center ([http://cdc.richmond.edu/](http://cdc.richmond.edu/) or 289-8141)
- Counseling and Psychological Services (289-8119)
- Speech Center ([http://speech.richmond.edu](http://speech.richmond.edu) or 289-8814)
- Technology Learning Center (289-8772)
- Writing Center ([http://writing.richmond.edu](http://writing.richmond.edu), Nadine Weiss is the writing consultant for our seminar.)

**Grading**
Your grade will be based on two formal essays (25% each), two oral presentations and two short research essays (15% each), and class participation (20%). Your essays will be graded on content, form, style, and mechanics. See grading standards below.

**Related Events**
You can receive extra credit in the class participation portion of your grade by writing a short reaction paper (250-350 words) to Harvard Professor Werner Sollors’ lecture on Thursday, September 30, and/or to short story writer Deborah Eisenberg’s reading on Thursday, November 4. Your reaction paper should be an analysis, not a simple summary. I will be on the lookout for other events on campus and in the city that relate to Americans abroad. Let me know if you hear of any events that you think might be of interest to our seminar.

**Criteria for Grading Written Work**

A Superior essay which 1) develops and follows a clear, sophisticated and consistent thesis based upon a thorough and comprehensive reading of the text, 2) is well organized into unified, clearly developed paragraphs which make thorough use of textual evidence that is fully explained and analyzed to support the central assertion or argument of that paragraph, and 3) displays skill not only in analyzing the work as a whole, but in returning to the work and clearly and fully analyzing how specific techniques produce meaning in the text as a whole. The paper as a whole displays careful reading and original, thoughtful presentation of the theme of the work and the way that the text works to present that theme. There should be no major grammatical or syntactic errors.
B A well-developed, coherent essay which 1) develops and follows a clear and consistent thesis based upon a careful reading of the text, 2) is well organized into unified, clearly developed paragraphs which contain adequate textual evidence that is explained and analyzed to support the central assertion or argument of that paragraph, though there may be one or two places where an assertion is made without completely adequate support or development, and 3) attempts not only to analyze the work as a whole, but to return to the work and analyze how specific techniques function within the framework of the work. There should be no major grammatical or syntactic errors, and few typing errors.

C A generally coherent essay which 1) usually follows a consistent thesis based upon a careful, if not always thorough, reading of the text, 2) follows a generally reasonable organization of paragraphs (though some disorganization may be apparent) which makes some use of textual evidence and displays an attempt to analyze that evidence to support the paragraph's central argument, though the explanation is not always clear or the analysis not always complete, 3) shows several lapses in tone such as repeated use of colloquialisms, ill-conceived attempts at humor, and a tendency to fall back upon impressions as a source of support, and 4) displays little attempt to explore the techniques of the work beyond what is just necessary to support the argument, and thus misses important techniques or skips over sections of the work which complicate the work's meaning. There may be a few points where clarity suffers from awkward phrasing, poor grammar, garbled syntax, or poor diction, but these problems should be somewhat isolated.

D A poorly developed, vague essay which 1) suggests a tentative thesis, but fails to fully articulate or develop it, and tends to digress towards barely related discussions, or presents no thesis at all but still manages some enlightened, if unstructured discussion of the work, 2) has serious problems with organization and often contains un-unified, short, and underdeveloped paragraphs which make inadequate use of textual evidence, or provide some evidence but no supporting analysis, 3) contains several major misreadings which suggest a serious lack of understanding of the work, 4) displays a completely inappropriate tone, and 5) displays no attempt to analyze or understand the work beyond a few isolated places in the text which are used as the shaky basis of the paper's meaning. The clarity of the essay is likely to be seriously marred by very awkward phrasing, poor grammar, garbled syntax, or poor diction (although major problems in the areas listed here could justify a D grade in even a grammatically perfect essay).

F An essay which, 1) follows no thesis, even though one may be a stated somewhere in the essay, 2) is thoroughly disorganized, containing very short paragraphs with no support, development, or relationships from one to the next, 3) offers no interpretation at all, but merely a string of insubstantial observations about the work, 4) displays a completely inappropriate tone, and 5) displays no attempt to pursue any analysis of the text. The essay may be completely unclear or incoherent.

Criteria for Grading Class Participation

A A student who works at this level demonstrates excellent preparation. S/he has not only read the text, but has analyzed the text exceptionally well and relates it to other readings and other discussions. S/he offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. S/he keeps analysis focused on the
text and the issues involved, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to co-operative interpretation, suggests alternative readings, and helps analyze which approaches and interpretations are appropriate.

**B**  A student at this level demonstrates good preparation. S/he knows the text well and has thought through some of the implications. S/he contributes regularly, comments on more than just the facts, responds to other students' points, questions them in a constructive way, and offers and supports his or her own independent interpretation backed up by the text.

**C**  A student at this level demonstrates adequate preparation. S/he has read the text but shows no evidence of trying to analyze or interpret it. S/he contributes infrequently and without elaboration. S/he rarely offers to contribute to discussion, but does so when called on.

**D**  A student at this level does not contribute, and if called on, does not offer much.

**F**  Student at this level is absent.