FRIT F230. French & Francophone Culture in Context: Short-Term Study Abroad

Paris, France
11-19 March 2017

Instructors: Dr. Kelly Sax & Dr. Lucas Wood

Course Details

• Course counts for 1 credit, graded Pass/Fail. Does not count toward the French major or minor.
• Co-requisite or prerequisite (taken within the academic year): FRIT F222, F225, F226, or F227. Requires application and approval of instructor(s). Representation from more than one co-requisite course preferred.
• Taught in English. No prior study of French required.
• Enrollment: 10-16 students.

Course Description

This intensive, short-term study abroad experience in Paris is specially designed to complement and contextualize coursework undertaken in FRIT F226 and F227. Over the course of a week, we will thoroughly explore the City of Lights from a variety of perspectives. On the one hand, we will visit key architectural, artistic, and cultural monuments (Notre-Dame, Versailles, Sainte-Chapelle, etc.) and museums (Louvre, Musée d’Orsay) that root contemporary Paris and France in a rich history of historical evolution whose traces we will seek out in the temporally layered modern metropolis. On the other hand, we will attend to the spatial and social configurations of Paris as a symbolic environment—a theater of power and of self-fashioning exploited for political and cultural ends—as a living, functioning urban system, including the distinctive character of various neighborhoods and arrondissements and the way boulevards and public transportation networks organize movement through and between them. We will thus develop both conceptual and concrete understandings of how French culture has shaped, and continues to shape, the city of Paris, and how France’s capital has played host to the production of a national culture that has in its turn exerted a powerful influence on the international culture of today.
Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Learn to conceptualize and critically interpret a city as a system of lived spaces, a layered record of both bygone and living histories, and a forum for strategic self-representation by individuals, cultural institutions, and organs of political power.
- Extend in-class exploration of the French and Francophone world's traditions and contemporary realities by experiencing firsthand the themes, concepts, objects and environments studied in co-requisite courses.
- Increase their knowledge of French and Francophone cultures’ modes of symbolic expression and aesthetic conventions, including art, architecture, fashion, food, and the production of urban space, and situating these in their cultural, intellectual and historical contexts.
- Learn about and participate directly in foreign lifeways, developing a more sophisticated and intimate appreciation of cultural specificity and difference.
- Acquire competence and confidence in navigating and adapting to unfamiliar physical and social landscapes.
- Synthesize knowledge developed through class participation and research and communicate it effectively to peers.

Course Texts


Assignments & Evaluation

*Pre- and post-travel reflection papers:* Before and after the trip, students will prepare 4-page papers reflecting not only on what cultural knowledge they anticipate gaining (or have gained) from their study abroad experience, but also, in the post-travel paper, on the methodologies they have learned to apply in studying Paris as a spatial, social, cultural and historical system.

*Guided site visit:* In pairs, students will act as tour leaders for one museum or site visit, combining knowledge acquired in co-requisite classes and through additional course-specific reading assignments with more extensive individual research. As well as assuming an on-site leadership role in guiding peers to engage critically with the social, cultural and historical significance(s) of the site, student tour leaders will be responsible for presenting a prep talk to the group on the evening before the visit.

*Daily journal:* Every evening, each student will write a journal entry (min. 250 words) articulating what the day's activities contributed to his or her understanding of Paris as a spatial, social, cultural and/or historical system. Completed journals will be submitted at the end of the week.
City scavenger hunt: In pairs, students will use their newly acquired knowledge of the city to travel independently through Paris, finding information and documenting (through notes and photos) urban phenomena on which they will report to the group during an evening debriefing session.

Schedule Overview

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<td>Sat. 3/11</td>
<td>Depart Indianapolis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. 3/12</td>
<td>Arrive in Paris</td>
<td>Orientation meeting; intro to neighborhood</td>
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<td>Dinner at Chez Gladines</td>
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<td>Mon. 3/13</td>
<td>Introductory tour of Paris</td>
<td>Cheese and wine tasting</td>
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<td>Tue. 3/14</td>
<td>Montmartre; Basilique du Sacré-Cœur</td>
<td>Champs-Élysées; Grands magasins; Musée Jacquemart-André</td>
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<td>Dinner at Bouillon Chartier</td>
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<td>Wed. 3/15</td>
<td>Notre Dame; Sainte-Chapelle; Rue Mouffetard</td>
<td>Terroir tasting picnic in Luxembourg Gardens</td>
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<td>Louvre</td>
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<td>Thu. 3/16</td>
<td>Versailles</td>
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<td>Fri. 3/17</td>
<td>Paris scavenger hunt</td>
<td>Debrief; dinner at Le Procope</td>
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<td>Sat. 3/18</td>
<td>Boulangerie visit; split groups: Musée de la Mode/Musée de Cluny</td>
<td>Free time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. 3/19</td>
<td>Return to Indianapolis</td>
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Daily Itinerary

*** All reading assignments are to be completed before the corresponding activity/visit. Most readings will be distributed in PDF format.

3/12 3 pm  How to Become Parisian: Quartier, Arrondissement, City
Practical introductory discussion of how to orient oneself in a new Parisian neighborhood: finding local bakers, butchers, cafés and farmers’ markets (and their hours!), identifying the neighborhood’s key landmarks and arteries and using them to find one’s way around, using the metro and bus systems safely and efficiently to access other parts of the city, etc.

7 pm Dinner at Chez Gladines
This local restaurant exemplifies the overlapping of cultures and social groups in the metropolis: it is at once an ambassador for the regional culinary culture of the Basque country in southwestern France and a popular destination for Parisian students, local old-timers, and tourists alike.

3/13 9 am Introductory tour of Paris
Walking and metro tour designed to orient students in the city and develop their understanding of different arrondissements’ and quartiers’ distinctive character, as well as visiting and evaluating various culturally significant social spaces (Tour Eiffel/Champ de Mars, Hôtel des Invalides, the Marais,
Place des Vosges, Place de la Bastille, Belleville, Parc des Buttes Chaumont, etc.) otherwise unrepresented on our itinerary.

**Read:** Hilary Winchester, “Paris”

5 pm *Cheese and wine tasting*
This tasting session will educate students’ palates in the appreciation of typical French products while introducing the cultural politics of food in France, including the concepts of *terroir* and A.O.C., the symbolic values attached to iconic foodstuffs, and the rituals and conventions surrounding culinary connoisseurship.

**Read:** Roland Barthes, “Wine and Milk” and “Steak and Chips”; Thomas Parker, “Terroir and the Culinary Roots of French Identity”

9 pm *Student-led prep talk for following day*

3/14 9 am *Montmartre and the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur*
Mapping the multiple layers of mythology that have developed around Montmartre from the Impressionist era to the film *Amélie* (2001) onto their geographical markers will produce an exemplary case study of cultural accretion in an urban environment. This will also set the scene for our visit to the Musée d’Orsay.

**Read:** Gabriel P. Weisberg (ed.), *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture* (selections)

12 pm *Champs-Élysées and Grands Magasins*
Walking the avenue des Champs-Élysées, we will contemplate it as an example of the politics of urban planning that has symbolized an evolving French nationalism since the late 17th century, then visit Paris’ *grands magasins*—the original department stores—and discuss these now-common establishments’ historical role as innovative temples of consumerism that played a key role in shaping the consumption of fashion and style.

**Read:** Émile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (selections)

2 pm *Musée Jacquemart-André*
Viewing the private home and personal museum of a wealthy 19th-century couple will enable us to examine how the period’s elites carefully crafted their public personae in the “private” space of the home through displays of taste and connoisseurship.

**Read:**

7 pm *Dinner at Bouillon Chartier*
This local institution, established in 1896, preserves the oddly elegant cafeteria atmosphere and simple, homely cuisine of an era when many
restaurants served (especially for bachelors) as daily dining-places. While eating, we will consider the social function of such a restaurant in its historical context and compare it to possible modern analogues.

9 pm  
*Student-led prep talk for following day*

3/15  9 am  
*Notre-Dame and the Sainte-Chapelle*
Comparing and contrasting Paris’ two most important Gothic churches will afford an opportunity to analyze the defining characteristics of Gothic aesthetics and the ways in which these were modified by buildings’ different social functions in the medieval city.

**Read:** Ian Dunlop, *The Cathedrals’ Crusade* (selections)

11 am  
*Rue Mouffetard*
Students will study the organization and use by locals of a famous, but also functional, Parisian market street—and use their observations to purchase supplies for a picnic lunch.

1 pm  
*Terroir tasting picnic in Luxembourg Gardens*
Building on Monday evening’s discussion, this tasting lunch will extend our discussion of terroir products and politics to charcuterie and other regional specialties while we observe how Paris’ central park, the Luxembourg Gardens, functions as a multipurpose configuration of social spaces.

3 pm  
*Louvre*
As well as viewing many masterpieces of French and European painting, we will pay special attention to the museum’s decorative arts sections, notably the preserved, furnished Napoleon III apartments, using their collections to identify the key distinguishing features of French taste in various eras.

9 pm  
*Student-led prep talk for following day*

3/16  9 am  
*Versailles*
While touring Louis XIV’s palace, students will analyze the ways in which the aesthetic and spatial features of the Versailles complex reflected and shaped the social structures and power politics of the 17th-c. court.

**Read:** Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (selections)

5 pm  
*Musée d’Orsay*
We will use representations of urban life in French painting of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to gather data on the evolution and significance of fashion in Belle Époque Paris, thinking at the same time about the methodological questions raised by using works of visual art as historical sources.
**Read:** Alistair Horne, “Belle Époque”

9 pm  *Student-led prep talk for following day*

**3/17** 9 am  *Paris scavenger hunt*

5 pm  *Scavenger hunt debrief*

7 pm  *Dinner at Le Procope*
Dining at Paris’ oldest continually operating restaurant (estd. 1686) will provide an opportunity to reflect on the origins, ongoing evolution, and social significance of restaurant culture.

**Read:** Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, pp. 1-11

9 pm  *Student-led prep talk for following day*

**3/18** 9 am  *Boulangerie visit*
While getting breakfast, we will analyze the functioning of a French culinary and cultural institution: the neighborhood bakery.

10 am  *Musée de Cluny (Musée national du Moyen Âge)*
Students from F226 will practice interpreting the museum’s collection of medieval art and artifacts in the light of what they have learned about medieval French cultural history. The building itself, which shows visible traces of its transformative appropriation by various users since the early 3rd century, will serve as a case study in reading Paris as a historical palimpsest.

**Read:** Colin Jones, “Queen of Cities (c. 1000-c. 1300)”

OR  *Musée de la Mode*
The exhibitions at the museum of fashion and fashion history will provide a curated lesson in reading fashion as art, social performance and cultural intervention.

**Read:** Joan DeJean, “Capitale de la Mode”

12 pm  *Free time*