G46.1610: HISTORY OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE, 1770-1880
Institute of French Studies, New York University

Fall 2006

Prof. Stéphane Gerson
Wednesdays, 2-4:30 19 University Place, #625 (998 8718)  
15 Washington Mews stephane.gerson@nyu.edu  
Office hours: Th. 4:30-6:30, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“The nineteenth-century, an extremely restless model, so difficult to keep in place.” So wrote Balzac about a century that, by common agreement, began with a revolution and ended with a war, but lacked its own defining event or moment or figure. Gustave Flaubert and others hated the century’s bourgeois stupidity, with good reason perhaps, but it is Balzac’s restlessness that captures the attention. It is the perpetual flux and unnerving perception of flux; the marches towards democracy and reaction; the social changes that contemporaries embraced while seeking to escape them; the economic innovations that brought in the new without displacing the old; the technologies that altered experiences of time and space (though not for all, and not at the same time); the dialectical dance between forces of reason and belief, competing for religiosity and the sacred; the conflicting drives towards unity and individuation; the outward march of the colonial empire, bringing civilization without citizenship. The nineteenth century was nothing if not restive, unsure of its own destiny, and self-contradictory.

Beginning with the waning Old Regime, we will seek to capture and understand a century that was anchored in tradition and inherently modern. Analyzing primary and secondary sources alike, we will gain a triple introduction to French history, key historiographical debates, and historical method. Class time will be divided between lectures and discussions in which students engage critically with the sources and outline their own nineteenth century, alongside Balzac’s and Flaubert’s.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Attendance and Participation. Attendance and punctuality are required. This class rests on your close and critical reading of diverse sources. Please be ready to discuss them in class every week (and always bring the course readings to class!). Make sure that your comments pertain to what has just been said and please respect every opinion—even if you disagree. Some weeks, I will ask you to email questions for discussion prior to class (20% of your grade).

2. In-Class Mid-Term Exam (two-and-a-half hours): essay questions and source analyses (35%).

3. Final Exam (two-and-a-half hours): will cover material since the mid-term exam, using the same format (45%).

READINGS

The books below have been ordered at the NYU bookstore. The other readings may be downloaded from the course’s Blackboard website.  
Keith Baker, ed., The Old Regime and the French Revolution (Chicago, 1987)  
David Garrioch, The Making of Revolutionary Paris (California, 2002)  
Lynn Hunt, ed., The French Revolution and Human Rights (Bedford, 1996)
Auguste Comte, Introduction to Positive Philosophy (MacMillan, 1970)
Honore de Balzac, Lost Illusions (Vintage, 2001) — available in French and English
Mark Traugott, ed., The French Worker: Autobiographies from the Early Industrial Era (California, 1993)
Ruth Harris, Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age (Penguin, 1999)

CLASS SCHEDULE

September 6 INTRODUCTION

September 13 THE OLD REGIME: STASIS AND CHANGE

Primary

Charles Loyseau, A Treatise on Orders (1610), in Keith Baker, ed.,

Secondary

David Garrioch, The Making of Revolutionary Paris (2002), 1-44,
64-111, 142-206, and 226-92.
Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere,” in Steven Seidman, ed., Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics (1989), 231-36.

Background:


September 20 1789 — AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS
Primary:

Jean-Baptiste Sieyès, What is the Third Estate? (1789), in Baker,
Old Regime, 154-mid 172 & 176-79.
Decrees of the National Assembly, in Baker, Old Regime, 226-31 and 237-42.

Secondary

Albert Soboul, “The French Revolution in the History of the
Contemporary World,” in Gary Kates, ed., The French Revolution: Recent
Timothy Tackett, “Nobles and the Third Estate in the Revolutionary Dynamic of the National Assembly, 1789-1790”

Background:

Popkin, History of Modern France, chs. 5-7.
September 22 RADICALIZATION AND TERROR
Primary

Documents on the Jacobins, the Sans-Culottes, and the Terror, in Baker, Old Regime, 290-96, 330-40, and 368-78.
Reports by Agents of the Ministry of the Interior and Questionnaire of the Committee of Public Safety (1794).

Secondary


Background:

Popkin, History of Modern France, ch. 8.

October 4 WHO IS A CITIZEN?
Primary

The October Days (1789), in Baker, Old Regime, 232-35.

Secondary

Suzanne Desan, “‘Wars Between Sisters’: Egalitarian Inheritance and Gender Politics,” from her The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France (2004), 141-77.

October 11 THE QUEST FOR STABILITY
Primary

Selection from the Civil Code (1804).
Alexis de Tocqueville, Introduction to Democracy in America (1835).
Auguste Comte, Introduction to Positive Philosophy (1830-42), 1-33.

Secondary

Sean Quinlan, “Physical and Moral Regeneration after the Terror: Medical Culture, Sensibility, and Family Politics in France, 1794-1804,” Social History 29, no. 2 (May 2004): 139-64.

Background:

Popkin, History of Modern France, chs. 9-11.

October 18 IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM
October 25 BOURGEOIS FRANCE
Primary

Honoré de Balzac, Lost Illusions (Les illusions perdues) [1843].
Background Popkin, History of Modern France, pp. 93-101 and 105-13

November 1 WORKERS AND REVOLUTION
Primary

Autobiographies of Martin Nadaud and Norbert Truquin, in
Etienne Arago, “To the Electors of the Seine” (1848)
Secondary

William H. Sewell, Jr., “Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of
the French Working Class, 1789-1848,” in Ira Katznelson and Aristide
in 1848” and “A Statistical Representation of Work: La Statistique de l’industrie à Paris, 1847-1848,” in her Gender
Background:


November 8 PARIS, CAPITAL OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
Primary

Emile Zola, The Ladies’ Paradise (Au bonheur des dames) [1883].
Background:

History of Modern France, chs. 15-16.

November 15 CATHOLICISM AND ITS OPPONENTS
Primary

Ernest Renan, The Life of Jesus (1863), 13th preface (1867).
Secondary

Ruth Harris, Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age (1999).

November 22 NO CLASS — THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 29 WHAT IS A NATION?
Primary

Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” (1882), in Stuart Woolf, ed.,
Nationalism in Europe: 1815 to the Present (1996), 48-60.

**Secondary**


**Background:**


**December 6 WHAT IS A FRENCHMAN?**

**Secondary**


**December 13 RACE AND THE COLONIAL EMPIRE— ABROAD AND AT HOME**

**Primary**

Jules Ferry, speech of 28 July 1883.

**Secondary**


**Dec. 15 (Friday) FINAL EXAM (9:00-11:30)**