HISTORY OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE, 1770-1880
G46.1610, G45.1500. New York University

Fall 2009
Tuesday, 4:05-6:35
15 Washington Mews
Office hours: Wednesday 5-6, or by appointment

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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. By analyzing both primary and secondary sources, 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). Will include definitions of concepts/events, analyses of primary sources, and essays (35%).

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

The books below have been ordered at the NYU bookstore. The other readings may be downloaded from the course’s Blackboard website.

Auguste Comte, *Introduction to Positive Philosophy* (Hackett, 1970)
Honoré 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)

CLASS SCHEDULE

September 15 **INTRODUCTION**

September 22 **THE OLD REGIME: STASIS AND CHANGE**

**Primary**

**Secondary**

**Background:** Popkin, *History of Modern France*, chs. 1-4.

September 29 **1789 — AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS**

**Primary:**


**Secondary**

**Background:** Popkin, *History of Modern France*, chs. 5-7.

**October 6**

**RADICALIZATION AND TERROR**

**Primary**
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 13**

**WHO IS A CITIZEN?**

**Primary**
The October Days (1789) and Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Women* (1791), in Baker, *Old Regime*, 232-35 and 261-68.

**Secondary**
Suzanne Desan, “Wars Between Sisters’: Egalitarian Inheritance and Gender Politics,” from her *Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (2004), 141-77.
October 20  **THE QUEST FOR STABILITY**

**Primary** Selection from the Civil Code (1804).
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 (2004): 139-64.

**Background**: Popkin, *History of Modern France*, chs. 9-11.

October 27  **IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

November 3  **BOURGEOIS FRANCE**

**Primary** Honoré de Balzac, *Lost Illusions* (*Les illusions perdues*) [1843].


November 10  **WORKERS AND REVOLUTION**

**Primary** Autobiographies of Martin Nadaud and Norbert Truquin, in Mark Traugott, ed., *The French Worker* (1993), 183-308.
Etienne Arago, “To the Electors of the Seine” (1848)


November 17  **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 24  WHAT IS A NATION?**

**Primary**


Charles Péguy, account of the 1889 inauguration of the Place de la Nation monument [in French — recommended reading].

**Secondary**


**Background:** Popkin, *History of Modern France*, chs. 17-18.

**December 1  WHAT IS A FRENCHMAN?**

**Secondary**

**December 8  SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND THE SUPERNATURAL**

**Primary**
Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (1863), 13th preface and ch. 15.

*Nouveaux et vrais pronostics de Michel Nostradamus* (1832) [recommended].

“Nostradamus the Astrologer,” *Every Saturday* (23 May 1874).

**Secondary**


**December 15  RACE AND THE COLONIAL EMPIRE**

**Primary**

Jules Ferry, speech of 28 July 1883.

Maurice Barrès, *Les déracinés* (1897), selection [recommended]

**Secondary**


Dec. 18 (Friday) **FINAL EXAM** (9:00-11:30)