Cultural History of France: The History of Journalism in Modern France

This course considers a crucial aspect of French cultural history in the modern period, namely journalism and the press. We follow the development of the press from the French Revolution to the end of the First World War, focusing on the press and politics; journalism as a form of literature; the press as the first mass medium; the penny press; the reporting of crime and the faits divers; scandal and the Dreyfus Affair; feminism and the press; journalism as a profession; and journalism and war.

In addition to the weekly readings, you will write a research paper of 25-30 pages that uses newspapers from this period as your primary historical source. Bobst library has placed on reserve for your use several hundred microfilm reels of four of the most important papers of the period, Le Journal, Le Petit Journal, Le Matin and Le Petit Parisien. In addition, Bobst has shorter runs of several other newspapers and periodicals that will be valuable for your research. You may devote your research to a single newspaper or to the coverage of a particular event. Alternatively, you may want to compare the narrative style or ideological tone of two or three papers, or examine the work of one or more prominent journalists of the period. The only steadfast rule is that you focus your work on one or more of the newspapers published during the time period of this course. The paper is due on Wednesday, May 5.

Week I. (Jan. 21) Introduction

Week II. (Jan. 28) Revolutionary Reporting
Jeremy D Popkin, Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799

Week III. (Feb. 4) Journalists and Journalism in Post-Revolutionary France

Week IV. (Feb. 11) Balzac's Journalistic Comedy
Honore de Balzac, Illusions perdues.

Week V. (Feb. 18) Origins of the Modern Press
*Marc Martin, Médias et journalistes de la république, pp. 9-82
*Thomas Ferenczi, L'invention du journalisme en France : naissance de la presse moderne a la fin du XIXe siecle, ch. 1

Week VI. (Feb. 25) The New Journalism of the Third Republic
Ferenczi, L'invention du journalisme en France, pp. 47-182 (Third Republic, politics, journalism and literature)

Week VII. (March 4) The Penny Press
*Micheline Dupuy, Le petit parisien

Week VIII. (March 11) Journalism at the Fin-de-Siècle (Panama, Scandals, Dreyfus Affair, feminism, Belle Epoque)
*Michael B. Palmer, Des petits journaux aux grandes agences, pp. 171-206
Thomas Ferenczi, L'invention du journalisme, pp. 183-212
Week IX. (March 25) Journalism and the Fait Divers
*David H. Walker, Outrage and Insight: Modern French Writers and the ‘fait divers’): 1103-1139

Week X. (April 1) Crime and the Press
*Dominique Kalifa, L'Encre et le sang

Week XI. (April 8) Journalism as a Profession
Palmer, Des petits journaux, 65-101
Marc Martin, Médias et journalistes, pp. 119-58
Ferenczi, L'invention du journalisme en France, pp. 243-70

Week XII. (April 15) Journalism and the Trenches of War
Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Men at War, 1914-1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War

Week XIII. (April 22) Research and Writing

Week XIV. (April 29) Research and Writing