

January 25, 2017

AMERICANS IN PARIS
100:107
Gilman 400

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SYLLABUS IS PROVISIONAL. THE TOPICS WILL REMAIN THE SAME, BUT READINGS WILL BE ADDED.

ABOUT THE COURSE:

Seminars are an opportunity to play with ideas and to consider multiple perspectives on history. That's what we will be doing this semester. We are going to be looking at the different experiences of a diverse group of American men and women, most of whom passed through Paris rather than spend the rest of their lives in the city. Not all of these Americans liked Paris or the French, but the common thread is that the city in some ways either changed their lives or reinforced their prejudices. That leads to several questions we'll discuss in our first meeting and over the next few months. My incomplete list—in no particular order—is the following:

Certain cities seem to have a “personality” or “spirit,” Paris and New York among them. Yet cities change over time. The Paris in which Thomas Jefferson lived was far different from the one in which Jim Morrison died in 1971. Yet, by most accounts, it's still Paris. Why do we believe that? (No sooner than I wrote these sentences a message came through the internet about a 7 billion dollar project that will supposedly “transform New York by 2035.”)

A natural follow-up question is what do you see as changing and not changing over the time period covered by the course?

Why do expatriates stay in Paris? What do they find there that's missing in the U.S.?

What commonalities and differences do you see among different groups of Americans in Paris—men, women, African Americans, artists, tourists, expatriates, entertainers, and a book store owner?

What would the gain (or loss) be if the course have considered readings critical of Paris's darker side? After all, one of the great works nineteenth-century European literature is Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.

CONTACTING ME:

My office is 302 Gilman and Office Hours are Tuesdays 2 to 4 or by appointment.

Email address: rgw1@jhu.edu My office telephone is 410 516-7588, but email is better.

SEMINAR MEETINGS:

- 1/30 No reading or Internet assignment, but do come prepared to talk about cities—why certain ones seem special (in positive ways).
- 2/6 Patriots in Paris: Jefferson in Paris and a bit about Ben Franklin.
- 2/13 Antebellum Travelers to Be Named
- 2/20 Literary Lions in France: Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark Twain
- 2/27 Paris as Dystopia: Americans React to the Paris Commune of 1871
- 3/6 American Artists Go to Paris/European Art Comes to New York
- 3/13 WWI: African American Soldiers and Musicians in France
- 3/20 Spring Break
- 3/27 Josephine Baker: Dancer Singer, Entrepreneur, and Toast of Paris
- 4/3 Lost in Paris: The Post WWI Generation and a Great Bookstore
- 4/10 Another World War, More Alienation, and a New Generation of Black Writers
- 4/17 Americans Learn How to Make Omelets: Julia Child, Alice Waters, and Others
Julia Child makes an omelet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RThnq3-d6PY&t=179s>
- 4/24 Almost Contemporary Americans Tell Stories of Living in Paris, Mostly Positive
- 5/1 This Is the End: From “The Whole World is Watching” to Jim Morrison’s Grave

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

I give the percentages below as a rough guide to my grading. The rough part is that I tend to take improvement into account and participation in discussions.

Written Assignments:

First Paper, due 2/22: At this early stage in the course, are you seeing patterns in travelers’ responses to Paris or are the responses either quite varied or, in some cases, very weak? 6 to 8 pages. 10% of final grade.

Second Paper, due 3/30: So far in the course, most of the travelers you’ve (with exception of Franklin, Jefferson, and Elihu Washburne) have to some degree been

outsiders or exceptional people: artists, writers, musicians, and African Americans. How did that shape their observations? Or did it? 8 to 12 pages. 25% of final grade.

Final Paper, due 5/4:: A common definition of History as a discipline is that it is the study of change over time. What changed from our first Americans in Paris to our final ones? Or did not much change? Roughly 12 to 15 pages and 55% of the final grade, with participation rounding up to 100% or a little more.

I am reserving the right to add an alternative to the second and final papers.