

Fren 220 Intermediate French II (3 cr) Diversité
2:45-4:00 p.m.
NH 242

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Vision Statement and Course Description:

This course is designed as Diversity-Intensive, meaning that it will examine questions concerning linguistic and cultural difference and marginalization, sexism, racism, and oppression and resistance. We will explore the socio-cultural construction of identity formations through language, ethnicity and power relations between oppressed and oppressor throughout the francophone world in the 20th and 21st centuries. Readings include contemporary novellas or short stories in French blending communication-based reading strategies with an effort to diversify and enrich the French curriculum. Written between 1944 and 2000, the stories take place in the francophone world in Africa and the Maghreb, Europe, Canada (Québec), Vietnam, Haiti and the Antilles. Poems are also included from Louisiana (the Cajun experience) and from Québec. Films are selected to create an on-going authentic presence of linguistic, racial, and ethnic groups which have been marginalized in the francophone and anglophone global arena. Readings and films will provide students with the opportunity to use their language skills to immerse themselves in the language, literature, and culture of the francophone world in the context of diversity. From these readings and films we will explore and analyze the ways in which these various groups have constructed their identities, how they have lived the power dynamics in linguistic, social, political, and cultural situations, their successes, problems, and above all their resistances. "Intersectionalities" (multiple layers of identities and the interrelationship between or among these identities) are heavily reflected in the course content; for example, we will explore the case of a physically challenged Québécoise and her deaf, blind and mute child who must negotiate their identities in the context of the resisting ethnic minority in a majoritarian oppressive anglophone society. In the words of Maryse Condé, « Thus, in addition to a deepened knowledge of the French language, these readings will permit American readers to grasp the complexity and richness of the cultural ensemble which, although from different points of departure, is being built, using that language as its base. » Finally, because students will be reading, listening, writing, and speaking in French, they will experience first-hand the important goal of liberal learning, that is, their native language and culture will be « the Other », providing an authentic personal experiential dimension to the exploration of questions of alterity and diversity.

Texts :

Gaasch, Budig-Markin, *Diversité*, 2nd edition (New York : Houghton Mifflin), 2000.
On reserve : Yves Thériault, « Un Père et son fils » (from *La fille laide*, Editions Beauchemin, 1996).
Films and videos are integral to the course and will be viewed in class and in the library.

Class Format :

The class is student-centered, which means that it is based on class discussions of readings and films, with work in pairs and small groups, in-class writing and reflection pieces, and student leadership of discussions. Students will write reflection papers (1 ½-2 pages in length) on topics covered in discussion and films. Classwork is done in French. All students will be required to attend classes, complete the readings, and actively lead and participate in class discussions. We

will listen, read, write, and talk about readings and films with an open mind and interest in exploring new ideas and interpretations in an open forum conducted in French. Clarity and precision in writing will be developed on the intermediate level in French. The significance of self-examination will be an important goal, as students analyze not only the topical questions and issues of diversity which constitute the course, but also do so in the context of a foreign language which entails questioning one's own linguistic and cultural assumptions and values in an on-going format. In addition, general, experiential-based questions will be explored at the beginning of each unit in order to set a lexical and personal base-line for discussions of readings and filmed materials. For example, in the first unit on « Suffering, eloquence and resistance », students will consider questions such as, « What constitutes suffering and oppression for you ? », « What do you do to overcome your suffering in differing circumstances ? », « What is the effect of economic oppression and poverty on a family, in your opinion ? », « How do you think people express their suffering (what is the importance of eloquence, or giving a voice to the disenfranchised and repressed) ? ». After discussing these general questions, students write a short in-class piece which either summarizes their discussion or provides personal insights drawn from discussion. They then view the film « Résistans » concerning poverty and political oppression in Haiti, and they read a short story by a Haitian woman exploring poverty's effects on the family through the eyes of a child.

Course Evaluation :

Attendance, in-class writings	15%
Discussion and discussion leadership	25%
Reflection papers	25%
Analysis of films & videos	15%
Final paper or project (see below)	20%

Course Organization :

Unit I : Suffering and eloquence : Resistance

Week One : Aug. 20-22

Film : *Résistans* (Haiti, Katherine Kean, 1997) A featured film in the 1998 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, the documentary features Haitians who « speak out about political events in their country following the rise of Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide after Duvalier's exile, through the military coup that sent Aristide, Haiti's first elected president, into exile.... » In English, French and Creole with subtitles.

Reading : Marie-Thérèse Colimon-Hall, « Bonjour, Maman ! Bonne fête, Maman ! » (1979). (Poverty and economic repression as seen through the eyes of a child in Haiti).

Reading : Michèle Lalonde, « Speak White » (on audiotape on reserve) (Eloquence and resistance through performance poetry during the Quiet Revolution of 1968 in Québec)

Week Two : Aug. 27-29

Film : *Bélizaire the Cajun* (Louisiana, Glen Pitre, 1986) Set in 19th-century Louisiana Cajun country, the film « ...was unable to get US distribution until it was showered with praise at the Cannes Film Festival....Bélizaire, unofficial spokesman for his people, butts heads with local bigots who want to rid the area of Cajuns. » Multi-dialect in English, French, and Cajun creoles.
Reading : Jean Arceneaux, « Je suis Cadien » (« Schizophrénie linguistique ») (Linguistic schizophrenia caused by oppression and political and linguistic resistance and activism in the US)
Reading and music : Zachary Richard (website with zydeco music and lyrics : <http://www.zacharyrichard.com/richardfrench/poetry.html>) (Cultural resistance through music and poetry)

Week Three : Sept. 5

Film : *Indochine* (France, Régis Wargnier, 1992) Set in Indochina of the 1930's to 1955, the film won an Oscar for Best Foreign Film, portraying an unrealistic, nostalgic Franco-centric view of colonialism and its end. In French and Vietnamese with subtitles.
Reading : Pham duy Khiêm, « L'ombre et l'absent » (1944, Viet Nam) (oppression and resistance during war ; re-education of francophone readership about Vietnamese culture)
Reading : Pham Van Ky, « Une Nuit de délire » (Viet Nam) (finding a voice and empowerment through poetry and transgression of cultural boundaries)

Unit Two : Power dynamics : the woman excluded

Week Four : Sept. 10-12

Film : *L'Amant* (France, Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1992) Based on the autobiographical novel of the same title by Marguerite Duras, the film is set in 1929 French colonial Vietnam and became best-known in the US primarily for its sexually explicit scene rather than for its postcolonial abstract, metaphoric treatment of identity formation of a young francophone woman during the colonial experience. French with English subtitles.
Reading : Marguerite Duras, « L'Amant » (extr) (intersectionalities : francophone experience of a young woman negotiating identity formation)
Reading : Gabrielle Roy, « Pour empêcher un mariage » (Québec) (intersectionalities : francophone Québécoise negotiating family and personal identity within social class and cultural boundaries)
Reading : « Rien n'a encore pu me détruire » entretien avec Catharine A. MacKinnon » (2005, Paris) (interview with American feminist on the eve of her first significant intellectual and popular dissemination and reception in France)

Week Five : Sept. 17-19

Film : *Daughter of Keltoum* (Algeria, Mehdi Charef, 2001) The award-winning Global Film Initiative's « Global Lens Series » film explores the story of a young woman's journey, « one of multi-tiered discovery in terms of her relationship to her extended family, traditional Berber culture, and her need to find her mother. » In French, Arabic, and English with subtitles.

Reading : Yves Thériault, « Un Père et son fils » (Québec) (intersectionalities : francophone Québécois woman negotiating her identity in face of socio-economic oppression, physical challenges and minoritarian status of herself and her deaf, blind, and mute child.
Reading : Suzanne Dracius, « La Montagne de Feu » (2000, Martinique) (a woman's affinity with Caribbean women exiled in France negotiating their African and Caribbean identity under economic oppression)

Unit Three : Power dynamics : Culture and difference

Week Six : Sept. 24-26

Film : *La Haine* (France, Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995) The film « explores themes of racism, violence and disaffected youth in modern suburban Paris » as three young adults—Jewish, Arab and black—attempt to construct their identities in the context of urban violence of the mid-90's. We will explore the worsening of urban violence and racisms in 2006 France in the context of this film. In French with subtitles.

Reading : Abdelhak Serhane, « Le cauchemar » (1993, Maroc) (cultural tensions and racism in the Maghreb)

Reading : Lori Saint-Martin, « Pur polyester » (1999, Québec) (cultural tensions and racisms, including the question of Québécois xenophobia, cultural differences and racisms)

Week Seven : Oct. 1-3

Film : *Xala* (Sénégal, Ousmane Sembène, 1975) Based on the 1973 novel by the same name, the film is a sharp postcolonial satire of the outset of Sénégal's independence from France and uses sexual impotence as a metaphor for Sénégal's postcolonial condition of « independence... uprising and revolution by those who are oppressed against their oppressors. »

Readings : Ousmane Sembène, « La Noire de... » (1962, Sénégal) (cultural tensions, sexism, racism)

Readings : Ousmane Sembène, « Xala » (extr) (satire of emerging identitarian and tensions due to cultural differences in Sénégal just after its independence)

Week Eight : Oct. 10

Film : *Visages des femmes* (Côte d'Ivoire, Désiré Écaré, 1985) Written and produced by Désiré Écaré, the film explores identity formation of two women who seek to establish a sense of self and worth in their personal lives, in their family, and in their socio-economic environment in postcolonial Côte d'Ivoire through dialogue, song and dance. Produced as a tribute to « the African woman », the film scandalized African audiences because of its sexually explicit scenes but was praised in France for its realistic story-line and won the Prix Fipresci at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival. In French with subtitles.

Reading : Reda Bensmaïa, « L'Année des passages » (Algeria) (intersectionalities : Algerian exile negotiating identity in France and the US under intellectual, political, and cultural oppression)

Reading : Kateb Yacine, « Polygone étoilé » (cultural tensions and racial hatreds in Algeria on the eve of war)

Unit Four : Power dynamics : Couples, Crises and Others

Week Nine : Oct. 15-17

Film : *Les Silences du Palais [Samt el qusur]* (Tunisia & France, Moufida Tlatli, 1994) Set in the ruler's compound on the eve of Tunisia's independence from France, the film portrays the suffering of servitude and oppression, the pain of identity formation and transformations, and the problems of silence and finding a voice for empowerment. In French and Arabic with subtitles.

Reading : J.-B. Tati Loutard, « La fièvre » (1980, Congo) (personal relations in crisis both personal and societally-influenced)

Reading : Julien Green, « Moïra » (France) (intersectionalities : negotiating emergent identity as a gay Protestant fundamentalist born in the US, raised in France as a Catholic, in face of societal oppressions and repressions)

Week Ten : Oct. 22-24

Film : *La Rue Cases-Nègres* (Martinique, Euzhan Palcy 1983). The film, made by Martinique's first woman film director, is a postcolonial retelling of Joseph Zobel's autobiographical novel of the same title. It examines 1930's Martinique in the throes of colonialism, and Palcy seeks to reveal the transformation of identity in a poverty-stricken family of cane-workers who aspire to create an educated, francophone bourgeois existence. In Creole and French with subtitles.

Reading : Myriam Warner-Vieyra, « Le mur ou les charmes d'une vie conjugale » (1988, Guadeloupe) (personal relations in crisis in face of cultural, political boundaries)

Reading : Suzanne Schwartz-Bart, « Ton Beau Capitaine » (extr) (Guadeloupe) (couple in crisis in face of economic exile, separation and societal oppression)

Unit Five : Revolt and hope

Week Eleven : Oct. 29-31

Film : *La Bataille d'Alger* (Algeria, Gillo Pontecorvo, 1965). The film, which won the Venice Golden Lion Prize in 1966, has attracted controversy in France and in the US, both as a « terrorist primer » and as a commentary on decolonization and violence. "It is a film that manages to be both impartial and partisan without any piety....[It] voices the anger of the powerless, dispossessed and humiliated. Banned in France for years after its release, the film has most recently been adopted by US military tacticians in the war on terror. In French and Arabic with subtitles.

Reading : Kateb Yacine, « Le cadavre encerclé » (extr) (Algeria, 1959) (revolt and hope in face of violent cultural oppression)

Reading : Kama Kamanda, « Amertume » (1993, Congo) (revolt and promise of the future)

Week Twelve : Nov. 5-7

Film : *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (Algeria, Assia Djebar, 1978) « This classic film...is essential viewing for an understanding of women in Algeria. Taking its title from the

“nouba”, a traditional song of five movements, this film mingles narrative and documentary style to document the creation of women’s personal and cultural histories...[It gives] an engaging portrait of speech and silence, memory and creation...” In Arabic, Berber, and French with subtitles.

Reading : Assia Djebar, « L’Amour la fantasia » (extr) (intersectionalities : structuring identities as women, intellectuals, Algerian and Berber francophone and non-francophone)

Reading : Assia Djebar, « Il n’y a pas d’exil » (1980, Algeria) (hope and resistance in face of religious and cultural oppression of women and intellectuals)

Week Thirteen : Nov. 12-14

Film : *Mémoires : des souvenirs=remembering memory* (France, Lara Fitzgerald, 2000) “...This intimate program explores [Hélène Cixous] literary universe by tracing her genealogy, beginning with her family’s immigration and ending with her own immigration to France as a teenager.” She speaks of her multicultural experiences in the context of feminism in France today. In French and English with subtitles.

Reading : Hélène Cixous, « Photos des racines » (extr) (France, 1999) (negotiating identity as exiled Algerian francophone woman of Jewish origins, an intellectual in face of sexism, racism, religious intolerance)

Reading : Albert Camus, « La femme adultère » (Algeria & France, 1947) (cultural and identitarian differences, resistance and hope)

Week Fourteen : Nov. 19

Film : *Afrique, je te plumerai !* (Cameroun, Jean-Marie Teno, 1992) The film « moves from present to past, peeling away layer upon layer of cultural forgetting.” Teno examines the colonial and postcolonial situation in Cameroun as part of his hypothesis of cultural genocide, as he criticizes his own Eurocentric education during the 1960’s. He pursues an authentic and rigorous “deconstruction” of Africa’s past and present. In French with subtitles.

Reading : Mongo Beti, « Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba » (extr) (Cameroun, 1956) (cultural and personal resistance and revolt and hope)

Reading : Gaëtan Brulotte, « Les triangles de Chloé » (Québec, 1994) (the promise of the future through literature and action)

Week Fifteen : Nov 26-28

Film : *Maryse Conde parle du cœur* (Guadeloupe, US, Ann Armstrong Scarboro, 2003). One of Guadeloupe’s most widely-read authors « ...talks freely about her childhood, her passion for honesty, her compassion for women, her love of family, and her respect for the craft of writing. She...describes her experiences with racism in France and the US, the controversy her books have caused...and her view of what it means to be independent.” In French with subtitles.

Reading : Maryse Condé, « Traversée de la mangrove » (extr) (Guadeloupe, 1989) (resistance and hope through language and cultural differences)

Reading : Aimé Césaire, « Les Armes miraculeuses » (extr) (Martinique, 1946) (resistance and hope through linguistic, literary and political engagement)

Final Paper or Project : Presentations begin Dec. 3 & continue during Final Exam Period

Students will develop a final paper topic or project during the first half of the semester, selecting a particular topic, country, author, or cultural and literary movement as a focus for their research. For example, a student may research Zydeco music as a final project, comparing and contrasting musical production and lyrics as cultural artifacts representing a minoritarian culture and language struggling for survival in Louisiana, and may present selections in live concert (vocal or instrumental) or on tape with commentary and relevant background material during the final exam period. This project would have the learning outcome of enabling the student to experience music as a form of activism or cultural and political engagement. Other examples of projects might include the study of one film director's production in light of course topics (Assia Djebar, Ecaré, Sembène, Tlatli, etc.). Research paper topics are expected to be individualized in much the same way as the final projects, i.e. students will select a topic for research during the first half of the course and will conduct research including primary and secondary sources ; a final paper (7 pages, in French) will be presented to the class during the final exam period.