

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Department of French and Italian
Fall 2003

FRENCH 383
French Women Writers
Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00 - 3:20 PM WPH 203

Professor Danielle Mihram (213) 740-3783 dmihram@usc.edu
Office Hours (Levey 301B): Tuesday & Thursday: 11:00 AM - Noon, or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to acquaint the students with the lives and works of important women writers in the history of French culture and literature. In the context of this course the term “French women writers” is used broadly to mean generally European women who have written in French and who have identified with French culture and intellectual life: for example, Marguerite Duras was not born in Europe but authorship in French and an adult life lived in France permit her inclusion as a “French woman writer”.

We shall examine the various aspects of the creation of a literature produced by women from the Middle Ages to the present (with writers ranging from Marie de France, Mme de Sevigné, Madame de Staël, Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Duras, and many others). We shall probe the influence of gender on the choice and handling of themes, and we shall focus on the complicated relation between sexual identity and literary practices, between gender and genre, between politics and poetics.

A sampling of the questions that we shall examine includes: What does it mean to be a woman and to write in a French-speaking environment? What is “le mythe de la femme?” or “L’idéal féminin?” What is the place that feminine texts have occupied in the French literary tradition, and to what extent are they significant with respect to the situation of women in society throughout the ages?

We will read a variety of materials: novels, poems, essays, letters, manifestos, interviews. Films and web-based resources will further enhance our understanding of those writings, as will the work and scholarly contributions of the *Women in French* association [WIF (started in the 1990s) – affiliated with the *Modern Language Association* (MLA)].

During the semester students will do one oral presentation (an exposé on a topic chosen among a list distributed at the beginning of the course) and work on a semester-long written research project (on a topic discussed with the professor and written in French). There will also be a mid-term and a final exam.

The course is taught in French.



REQUIRED TEXTS

- Marie Cardinal. *Les Mots pour le dire*. Paris: Grasset – Livre de Poche, 1975.
- Claire de Duras. *Ourika* (Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée – Présentation et étude de Roger Little). University of Exeter Press, 1998.
- Marguerite Duras. *L'Amant*. Paris: Minuit, 1984.
- Rachilde. *La Jongleuse*. Paris: Des femmes, 1983.

- Leila Sebbar. *La Jeune fille au balcon*. Paris: Seuil, 1996.

N. B.: Supplemental required texts and readings have been placed in folders on “Reserve” at the Leavey Library’s Circulation Desk. Abbreviation (in syllabus): [R].

REQUIRED REFERENCE READINGS

- Sartori, E. M. and D. W. Zimmerman. *French Women Writers – a Bio-Bibliographical Source Book*. New York: Greenwood, 1991.

Leavey Reserve Desk: PQ149.F73 1991; also: Doheny Reference PQ149.F73 1991

- Sartori, E. M.. *The Feminist Encyclopedia of French Literature*.

Doheny Reference PQ149.F47 1999.

Also available on USCWEB (electronic resource) PQ149.F47 1999eb

- Stephens, Sonya, ed. *A History of Women’s Writing in France*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.

Leavey Reserve Desk: PQ149.H57 2000.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

⇒ **Participation:** Your presence in class and your active oral participation are *essential* in this course. *Lack of participation may impact negatively on your final grade.*

Absences will need to be justified: more than three (3) unexcused absences will impact negatively on your final grade.

⇒ **Assignments:** One oral presentation (an exposé on a subject chosen among a list distributed at the beginning of the course) and work on a semester-long written research project (on a topic discussed with the professor and written in French). There will also be a mid-term and a final exam, both “take home” assignments.

⇒ **Grading:** Oral presentation = 15%; Research project = 40%; Mid-term exam = 20%; Final exam = 25%.

General Course Policies – See: Syllabus Attachment



SYLLABUS

It may be necessary to make some adjustments in the syllabus during the semester.
Abbreviation [R] = Item is on Reserve

AUGUST

Tue 26 Introduction to the course
“La Querelle des Femmes”: Hier [1398-1402] et aujourd’hui.

Th 28 Marie de France (1140? – 1190?). “Prologue aux Lais” [R]
“Le Laüstic” [R]
☞ “Le Lai du Laüstic: from Physicality to Spirituality” Robert D. Cottrell. *Philological Quarterly*. XLVII(4): 499-505, October 1968. [R]

SEPTEMBER

- Tue 2 Christine de Pisan (1364-1434). Ballades: “Les Douceurs du mariage”; “Solitude”; “Cent balades ay cy escriptes” [R]
Ci dit des infortunes des femmes [R]
Distributed assignment list and guidelines for paper preparation.
- Th 4 Louise Labé (1522-1566). Sonnets: “Je vis, je meurs”; “Baise m’encor”; “On voit mourir toute chose animée”; “Oh, si j’étais en ce beau sein ravie”; “Tant que mes yeux pourrons larmes épandre” [R]
A Mademoiselle Clemence de Bourges Lionnoize [R]
- Tue 9 Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549). Extrait: *L’Heptaméron: Nouvelle XV* [R]
☞ “Les femmes et le développement de la culture du livre (XVI-début XVIIe siècle). Colette H. Winn. *Women in French Studies 10* (Special Issue): 10-24, 2002. [R]
- Th 11 **Film:** *La Reine Margot* [videorecording] / a film by Patrice Chereau. Paris : Pathe Video [distributor], c2000. 1 videodisc (**138 min.**)
LVYDVD 782 LVY-RESERV desk
- Tue 16 Madame de Sévigné (1626-1696) “Lettres à Madame de Grignan” [R]
☞ “Writing and Mother Love: The Letters of Madame de Sevigné.” Katharine A. Jensen. *French Literature Series XVI*: 38-52, 1989. [R]
☞ “Love and *amitié*: Madame de Sévigné’s letters.” Catherine Montfort. *Women in French Studies 7*: 24-45, 1999. [R]
- Th 18 Madame de Staël (1766-1817). Extraits: *De la Littérature; Delphine; De l’Allemagne*. [R]
- Tue 23 *Ourika*, Claire de Duras (1778-1828).
☞ Waller, Margaret. “Introduction,” pp. vii-xxi in *Ourika – The Original French Text*, edited by Joan DeJean, New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1994. [R]
- Th 25 *Ourika*, Claire de Duras (cont.)
☞ “Madame de Staël, Madame de Duras, and the question of race.” Richard Switzer. *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 20(3): 303-316, 1973. [R]
- Tue 30 Madame Roland (1754-1793). *Mémoires particuliers*. Extrait: Première partie. [R]
Olympe de Gouges (1755-1793). “Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne” [R]
☞ “Rethinking the Universal, reworking the political: Postmodern Feminism and the French Enlightenment.” Natania Meeker. *Women in French Studies 3*: 20-33, 1995 [R]

OCTOBER

- Th 2 **Film:** *Saint-Cyr* [videorecording] / Denis Freyd présente ... un film de Patricia Mazuy. [France?] : Universal, c2000. 1 videodisc (**114 min.**)
LVYDVD 783 LVY-RESERV desk
Mid-term Exam (Home assignment) due

- Tue 7 *La Jongleuse*, Rachilde (1862-1953).
- Th 9 *La Jongleuse*, Rachilde (cont.)
Mid-term exam returned and discussed.
- Tue 14 *La Jongleuse*, Rachilde (cont.)
- Th 16 Extrait: *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) [R]
- Tue 21 **Video:** Hélène Cixous (1937--) *Hélène Cixous* [videorecording] / a Wall to Wall Television production for Channel 4. Princeton, NJ : Films for the Humanites & Sciences, 1998. 1 videocassette (**39 min.**) LVYVID 558
Luce Irigaray (1930--) Extrait: *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, [R]
- Th 23 **Film:** *Sans toit ni loi* [videorecording] / Janus Films ; Ciné-Tamaris présente un film de Agnès Varda ; production, Ciné-Tamaris, Films A 2 ; cinécrit et réalisé par Agnès Varda. [Irvington, NY]: Criterion Collection, c2000. 1 videodisc (**105 min.**) LVYDVD 727
LVY-RESERV desk
- Tue 28 *L'Amant*, Marguerite Duras (1914-1996)
- Th 30 *L'Amant*, Marguerite Duras (cont.)
- NOVEMBER**
- Tue 4 *L'Amant*, Marguerite Duras (cont.)
☞ "Duras and Colette; Love, Performance and Identity," Victoria Best. *Women in French Studies* 5: 225-232, 1997 [R]
☞ "L'Écriture au féminin singulier: L'Amant de Marguerite Duras." Yvette Went-Daoust. *French Literature Series XVI*: 149-163, 1989. [R]
- Th 6 **Film:** *Le jardin parfumé. The perfumed garden* [videorecording] / [presented by] La Sept ARTE, Bandits Longs, Dominant 7 ; a film by Yamina Benguigui. New York, NY : First Run Icarus Films, 2000. 1 videocassette (**56 min.**)
LVYVID 398 LVY-RESERV desk
- Tue 11 *La Jeune fille au balcon*, Leïla Sebbar (1941--)
☞ "A la recherche "du devenir-femme" dans le troisième espace de culture: Schérazade: 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts de Leïla Sebbar. Valerie Orlando. *Women in French Studies* 2: 19-31, Fall 1994. [R]
- Th 13 *La Jeune fille au balcon*, Leïla Sebbar (cont.)
Research project due.
- Tue 18 *La Jeune fille au balcon*, Leïla Sebbar (cont.)
☞ "Algérie. Le regard de l'exil. Entretien avec Leïla Sebbar." Monique Houssin. *Regards*. 36 Juin 1998. [R]
- Th 20 *Les Mots pour le dire*, Marie Cardinal (1929-2001)

☞ “Divided selves: The Language of the body in Assia Djebar’s *L’Amour, la fantasia* and Marie Cardinal’s *Les Mots pour le dire*.” *Women in French Studies* 7: 142-154, 1999. [R]

Research project returned and discussed.

Tue 25 *Les Mots pour le dire*, Marie Cardinal (cont.)
☞ “Entretiens avec Marie Cardinal.” Claire Marrone. *Women in French Studies* 4: 119-131, 1996, [R]

THANKSGIVING RECESS: NOVEMBER 27-29

DECEMBER

Tue 2 *Les Mots pour le dire*, Marie Cardinal (cont.)
☞ “French and Francophone Women’s Autobiography in the Twentieth Century.” E. Nicole Meyer. *Women in French Studies* 10 (Special Issue): 123-141, 2002 [R]

Th 4 Conclusion to the course
☞ “Qu’est-ce qu’un homme?” Elizabeth Badinter. *XY De l’identité masculine*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 1992. [R]

Th 11 **Final Exam (Home assignment) is due in my office by noon: Leavey 301B.**

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GENERAL COURSE POLICIES (SYLLABUS ATTACHMENT)

Class Participation

Your presence in class and your active oral participation are essential in this course. Absences will need to be justified: **Five points will be subtracted from your final grade** for each absence following three (3) unexcused absences.

- Because a good deal of class time will be spent discussing the assigned readings, you must have completed all reading assignments for a particular topic *before* we have class on that topic. When in class you should demonstrate your understanding of the reading material (or alternatively have a set of thoughtful question about it) and be prepared to offer comments or a point of view about the issues being addressed.

N.B. This course includes a lot of information and it is necessary for you to keep up with your reading assignments every week and come to class prepared. If you are not prepared to spend at least 6-8 hours a week on this class, please drop it now.

- You should be prepared to discuss, if called on, the substance of ideas and concepts from the assigned texts and web sites. If you are consistently able to do this, you will receive an **extra credit** for your effort. If you participate regularly in class by asking cogent questions and by answering knowledgeable the questions posed by me, you will receive **extra credit**.

This extra credit is usually awarded in the form of one grade up from your earned points: e.g., a B+ would become an A.

Academic Accommodations

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Course Assignments and Grading

Assignments:

1. One oral presentation (an exposé on a subject chosen among a list distributed at the beginning of the course). Guidelines for oral presentations will be distributed in class on 2 September. Schedules for oral presentations will be developed early in the semester .
2. A semester-long written research project (on a topic discussed with me and written in French). List of topics and guidelines will be distributed in class on 2 September. This assignment is due on 13 November
3. Two take home assignments: mid-term and final exams.

All assignments will be collected, on the scheduled day, at the beginning of the class. Unexcused late assignments will not be accepted.

Grading: Oral presentation = 15%; Research project = 40%; Mid-term exam = 20%; Final exam = 25%.

Key Assignment dates

- September 2** Assignment list and guidelines distributed.
October 2 Mid-term Exam (Take Home assignment) due.
November 13 Research project due.
December 11 Final Exam (Take Home assignment) due

Paper Preparation

- Papers must be type-written or word-processed, double-spaced, with fonts usually 12 points. Margins should be at least an inch all around, although the left margin is usually 1.25 inches. Papers should be stapled in the top left corner.
- **Before you turn in a paper be sure that you keep a copy of it.**
- Before you turn in a paper ask yourself: Did I fully understand the question, and did I mention all the important facts and issues?
- In grading your essay/presentation I will consider whether you have (a) developed a clear and thoughtful thesis, (b) supported your thesis in a well-reasoned and well-organized discussion, (c) taken into account opposing points of view, (d) demonstrated your familiarity with course materials, and (e) followed the rules of proper French grammar and spelling. See below: *Paper/Presentation Grading Criteria*.
- Make-up exams, paper extensions, and/or incompletes will be considered **only** in the case of *verifiable* medical or family emergencies. Otherwise, missed exams and late papers will receive a “fail”. **Excused** late papers will be penalized one full grade (e.g., an A becomes a B) if turned in late. Because you are given plenty of time to write your papers no allowances will be made for last minute problems with typists, computers, or printers.
- Please read carefully the university’s policy on cheating and plagiarism (in *Scampus*): a failing grade in the course and, in some cases, dismissal from the university. If you are having problems in the course please come and talk to me about it: there are always reasonable solutions to a problem.

Grading Scales:

For assignments graded 15 points:

15-14 = A
13-12 = A-
11-10 = B+
9-8 = B-
7-6 = C+

For assignment graded 30 points:

30-27 = A
26-23 = A-
22-19 = B+
18-15 = B-
14-11 = C+

For assignments graded 20 points:

20-19 = A
18-17 = A-
16-15 = B+
14-13 = B
12-11 = B-
10-9 = C+

For assignments graded 40 points:

40-37 = A
36-33 = A-
32-29 = B+
28-25 = B-
24-21 = C+

Lower grade = Assignment must be reworked

Paper/Presentation Grading Criteria

Excellent [A] Work

- Addresses itself solely to the topic
- Has a logical organization of ideas

- Has effective word choice
- Includes substantial variety of sentence structure/patterns
- Contains no more than 5 mechanical and stylistic errors
- Uses complete, relevant, convincing supportive material
- Contains a well-organized bibliography of sources consulted

Superior [B] Work

- Addresses itself to the topic
- Has a logical organization of ideas
- Has reasonably effective word choice
- Includes a variety of sentence structures/patterns
- Contains no more than 10 mechanical and stylistic errors
- Uses complete, relevant, convincing supportive material
- Contains a short bibliography

Competent [C] Work

- Responds to the topic
- Has discernible organization
- Has adequate word choice
- Includes some variety of sentence structure/patterns
- Contains no more than 15 mechanical and stylistic errors
- Includes relevant, mostly convincing supportive material
- Contains one or two bibliographical notes

Inadequate [D] Work

- Rambles or strays from the topic
- Is weak in organization
- Lacks clarity and/or variety in word choice
- Includes monotonous or awkward sentence structure
- Contains 20 or more mechanical and stylistic errors
- Lacks supportive materials
- Lacks a bibliography

Failed [F] Work

- Is usually done at 5:00 o'clock the morning it is due
- Is not proofread
- Makes no attempt to respond to the topic
- Is roughly half of the assigned length
- Shows little or no thought, logic or planning
- Shows little or no depth or supportive material
- Lacks a bibliography

Please note: As the semester progresses, you will become more familiar with the subjects covered, and you will become more and more experienced writers, speakers, and thinkers at the same time. It is in your best interest to examine your returned papers and presentation comments so as to review corrections, even if you earned an A- or an A. It is also in your best interest to revise all individual written work because revising teaches almost as much as the original work.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS: Guidelines

The presentation of each selected topic should contain the following four parts (grades will take into account any missing part):

1. The historical context/background of the selected topic: any information relating to all of several of the following: author or political and governmental situation; social and economic conditions of the period; religious movement(s) (if applicable).

(3 points)

2. Your analysis topic:

If you are discussing a work indicate:

- Its format: epistolary (letters)?; treatise? essay? poem?
- Its style (e.g., language, tone, vocabulary, imagery, other?).
- The author's possible intent: to describe (to chronicle)? to criticise? to enlighten? to persuade? and why?

If you are discussing a specific topic or movement indicate:

- Its genesis
- Its relevance its the century
- Why has it endured as a French cultural icon?

(5 points)

3. The current state of the research on the topic:

- In view of the volume of sources indexed in scholarly online databases is the work/topic/movement a major research subject? (Explain briefly).
- What are some interesting topic of research that you have found about this work/topic/mouvement?

(5 points)

4. Give your opinion about the topic, and indicate why, in your view (and that of other critics), that topic is important.

(2 points)

Total: 15 points

Time for each presentation

15 minutes **maximum** + 5 minutes for questions - total = 20 minutes **maximum** for each presentation.

Handout:

How to Give Successful Presentations: A Five-step Process.



HOW TO GIVE SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATIONS - A FIVE-STEP PROCESS

1. PLAN

Always know exactly what you want your presentation to accomplish and what you want your audience to do with your message. Everything you will say and do in the course of your presentation must be selected according to this prime performance objective.

Questions to ask of yourself as you plan your presentation:

- What is the **key point** of your presentation?
- Identify 4-6 key ideas
- **Create an outline** in short sentences for distribution
- On a sheet of paper (to refer by you at time of presentation: Condense your ideas to key words)

Choose a **presentation technique**:

- Will you reinforce your key ideas by providing *evidence* for your points (key facts, statistics, analogies or demonstrations)?
- Will you use visuals (charts or graphs; images or pictures; quotes or cartoons)?
- Will you want to involve your audience? How? (Will you invite audience to ask questions? Will you ask questions of your audience? Will your handout provide discussion points?)

2. PREPARE

Establish a positive mindset: after serious planning, visualize your success; accept nervous tension.

Know your material: Review key ideas, present your view (you are not necessarily the expert on the subject, but you have views that you can express in sentences such as “this is what I am thinking about ...”; “from my perspective ...”

Select a snappy title, prepare an engaging opening sentence

Prepare a memorable set of closing remarks: offer a challenge; stress relevance of your presentation to the field; summarize key points.

Your preparation, once completed, should have the following features:

- Quality of content
- Eye-appeal and visibility
- Memorability

Prepare and pull together all the tools you'll need to succeed as far in advance as you can:

- your personal speaking skills,
- your audience-focused presentation text, all your handout materials and any product, props and audiovisual equipment you'll need.

Review:

- Important background information
- Detailed data, models, graphs
- Citations or bibliography
- Be sure your handout includes: title of presentation, your name, course title and course number, your email address.

3. PRACTICE

Always run through your entire presentation exactly as you plan to present it so you'll know all the parts work together before you get in front of an audience. Think ahead about distracting elements that may take away attention from your message.

Ask a friend to listen to your presentation:

- Check your mannerisms
- Check volume, tone of your voice
- Check your visuals

4. PERFORM

Every presentation is a personal performance. The more you put of yourself into the presentation, the more effectively you'll communicate your message. Keep the audience involved by having good eye contact, dynamic body movement, carefully crafted verbal phrasing and a well-balanced vocal variety.

- Establish good rapport: Be yourself; Be sincere; Talk to your audience's expressed interests; Involve your audience.
- Hold their attention: Speak slowly; Breathe naturally; Be clear, concise; Tell a story; Use vivid words; Be enthusiastic
- Don't forget to ... *watch your time!*

See below: "Top Ten Major Mistakes" of presenters.

5. POLISH

Good presentations always depend on good follow-up evaluation. Always ask for and use objective evaluations from yourself and others to help you improve with each new effort. Every professional speaker does this and so should you.



Top Ten Major Mistakes (Malouf, 1993)

10. Lack of enthusiasm
9. Lack of eye contact
8. Inappropriate pace (not too much material to cover; **restrict yourself to 4 key ideas**).
7. Distracting or very detailed visuals; Distracting verbal expressions
6. Failure to practice-practice-practice
5. Poor preparation
4. Material is too technical
3. Your presentation suffers from information overload
2. Material is not suited to your audience
1. Failure to speak to time

Source:

Malouf, Doug. *How to Create and Deliver a Dynamic Presentation*. American Society for Training and Development, 1993.