

INTRODUCTION TO FRENCH LITERATURE AND CULTURE

• **Name of the instructor**

Pr. Dimitri Roboly (Associate Professor of French and Comparative Literature, University of Athens)

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• **Type of class arrangement**

Type 7 (July 1 to 12, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, 08:30-12:00)

• **Course description**

This course has a twofold purpose. First, to present students a general overview of French literature, from Middle Age to our days. Second, to familiarize them with the elements of different literary genres (poetry, fiction and drama), movements and tendencies. Focusing on major texts of French literature from all periods, it investigates the writer's purpose and techniques and the ways a reader can discern them.

Designed to introduce students to the French culture, the course provides opportunities to develop reading, writing and speaking proficiency in French. It offers an elementary introduction to understanding of French literature and culture. Finally, the course plays special attention to influence and connections between French and Chinese cultures focusing on literary texts of French travelers in China.

• **Course language**

French

• **Level of students**

All (no prerequisites)

• **Course objectives**

By the end of the course, students will

- acquire a general knowledge about French culture
- become familiar with French literature and develop interest for French authors
- be able to discern most important movements and literary tendencies
- acquire fluency in the oral and written discussion of literary texts.

• **Main topics**

Introduction of concept of literature – Poetry of troubadours – Humanism and Renaissance – Baroque and classicism – Enlightenment – Romanticism – Realism and Naturalism – Symbolism – Modernism – Surrealism – Existentialism and absurdism – China in French literature and culture

First week

Tuesday

Introductory Lecture: all about this course

What is literature? Beginnings of French poetry/fiction/drama

Troubadours and cavaliers poets

Reading: *La Chanson de Roland* (extract)

Humanism and Renaissance

La Pléiade and the “Defense and Illustration of the French Language”

Reading: Joachim du Bellay, « Heureux qui comme Ulysse... »

Wednesday

Baroque and classicism

The ideal of “the upright man” (*l'honnête homme*)

The notions of order, clarity, moral purpose and good taste

Reading: Racine, *Andromaque* (extract)

French comedy in the 17th century

Comedy of manners (*comédie de mœurs*), comedy of character (*comédie de caractère*)

Molière and the others...

Reading: Molière, *Le Misanthrope* (extract)

Thursday

The Age of Enlightenment and the *Philosophes*

The notions of liberty, toleration and progress

French Revolution and *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*

Reading: Voltaire, *Zadig* (extract)

French theater in the 18th century

Theater and politics

The influence of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*

Reading: Beaumarchais, *Le Mariage de Figaro* (extract)

Friday

French novel in the 18th century

Autobiography, novel of feelings and pre-romantics

Reading: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (extract)

Test in class

Second week

Tuesday

French romanticism

Notion of passion. Bien-Mal, Ciel-Enfer, sublime-grotesque

Battles of romanticism in theatre

Reading: Alexandre Dumas, *Antony* (extract)

Sentimental poetry

Sense of loss, disillusion, *mal du siècle*

Art and Melancholy

Reading: Alphonse de Lamartine, « Le Lac »

Wednesday

Realism and Naturalism

Role of industrialism and social sciences

The working class in literary texts

Reading: Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (extract)

Symbolism and Modernism

New forms of poetry

Reading: Charles Baudelaire, « L'ennemi » (*Les Fleurs du mal*), Paul Verlaine, « Mon rêve familial » (*Poèmes saturniens*)

Thursday

French literature in the 1900

From the Belle époque to the surrealism

Reading: Paul Éluard, « La Terre est bleue comme une orange... » (*L'Amour, la poésie*)

Existentialism and absurdism

Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir

The case of Albert Camus

Literature after World War II

Reading: Ionesco, *La Cantatrice chauve* (extract)

Friday

The events of May 1968 and literary texts at the end of the 20th century

French contemporary culture and literature

China in French literature

Test in class

• **Teaching method**

Lectures containing seminars devoted to special topics.

• **Assessment**

Continuous assessment: 2 in class tests (definitions and easy questions) or take-homes.
No final exam.

• **Recommended readings**

The Course will recommend the following bibliographical aids as introductory texts but will also stress the importance of reading original texts as much as possible throughout the course of lectures.

Michel Brix, *Histoire de la littérature française. Voyage guidé dans les lettres du XI^e au XX^e siècle*, Louvain-la-Neuve, De Boeck Supérieur, 2014

Xavier Darcos, *Histoire de la littérature française*, Paris, Hachette, 2013

Dimitri Roboly, *Panorama de la littérature française. Du Moyen Âge au XX^e siècle*, Athènes, 2009