May’68 and its Legacy

Class code: FREN-UA 9865

Instructor Details:
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Office hour: tbc

Class Details:
Every day from 11am to 12:30pm

Prerequisites:
None

Class Description:
In May 1968, waves of anger and hope, of writings and discourses, swept over France. Emerging from a wealthy society in a highly unstable international context, these youthful anti-authoritarian revolts affected every aspect of professional life. Arising in the universities, they spread to companies and factories—ultimately challenging all social hierarchies. The interpretation of these events has always been controversial: they have been viewed both as constituting a moment of intense creativity that generated emancipatory values and as precipitating an era of abusive permissiveness.

What is the significance of May 68? Where does the singular radicalism of these events come from? How do they continue to shape contemporary French culture? What was there impact been beyond France? We will try to answer these questions by means of historical and cultural analyses of diverse sources: discussing not only graphic and written documents produced during the events, but also intellectual productions and artworks stretching from the mid ‘60s until the present day—ranging from Georges Perec to Raymond Aron, and from Jean-Luc Godard to Alain Badiou.

This course will also be an occasion to discuss what it means to be a student, in 1968 and today.

Desired Outcomes:
Students will have good knowledge of the French culture of the 60’s until today.
Students will be able to analyze films and literary works and put them into perspective.
Students will develop skills to read and confront philosophical texts from various traditions.
Students will be initiated to the writing of a research paper.
Students will learn about the history of Universities and will be able to put into perspective their own situation.

Assessment:
Midterm exam: 20%,
Components

2 oral presentations (10 min maximum) on a specific text or film: 20%
2-page field trip report (on Nanterre’s archive or other): 20%,
6 to 8-page final paper on a specific topic (to be discussed with instructor): 40%

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment

Expectations

Grade A: Achievement of outstanding quality
Grade B: Achievement of high quality
Grade C: Achievement of acceptable quality
Grade D: Achievement that is minimally passing
Grade F: The work was not of passing quality

Grading Policy

NYU Paris aims to have grading standards and results in all its courses similar to those that prevail at Washington Square.

Attendance

Policy

Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

As per the Global Academic standard, unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.

Other guidelines specific to NYUParis include:

- Attendance to class and all course-related events, even outside of regularly scheduled course times, is expected and mandatory. Some class outings/make-up classes take place on Fridays.
- Under no circumstances will non-University-related travel constitute an excused absence from class. DO NOT book travel until you have received and carefully studied the syllabus of each of your classes.
- If you are not sick enough to go to the doctor, you are well enough to go to class. Doctor’s notes will be expected for all medical-related absences.
- No tests, quizzes, or exams will be made up. A missed test, quiz, or exam will result in a zero. Questions about this policy should be directed to the Academic Affairs team, not your professor.

Plagiarism

Policy

New York University in Paris, as an academic community, is committed to free and open inquiry, to creating an intellectual and social environment that promotes this, and to upholding the highest standards of personal and academic integrity.

All NYU P students have the responsibility to uphold these stated objectives. As a member of this community, you accept the responsibility for upholding and maintaining these standards, which include refraining from all forms of plagiarism and cheating as

1 NYU’s "Policies and procedures for students studying away at a Global Academic Center"
Cases of plagiarism at NYUParis will be brought to the attention of NYUParis academic administration as well as the implicated student’s home school Dean.

**PLAGIARISM:** a form of fraud, presenting someone else’s work as though it were your own
- A sequence of words from another writer who you have not quoted and referenced in footnotes
- A paraphrased passage from another writer’s work that you have not cited.
- Facts or ideas gathered and reported by someone else
- Another student’s work that you claim as your own
- A paper that is purchased or “researched” for money
- A paper that is downloaded free of charge from the Internet

**CHEATING**
- Copying from another student’s exam or quiz
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance (crib sheets, internet, etc.) during an exam or quiz
- Having someone take your exam
- Accessing an exam or quiz in an unauthorized fashion prior to its administration
- Collaborating with other students or unauthorized persons on a take home exam
- Using the same written material for two courses without the express permission of both instructors
- Fabricating or falsifying data

**Classroom Etiquette**
- No eating in class.
- No cell phones in class.
- Leaving class to go to the bathroom or yawning in class is considered rude in France.

**Week 1**

*Before May: Boredom and Leftism*

May 29 – June 2

After a general introduction, during this week, we will try to describe the French and International political context of the late sixties and will try to understand what led to the events of May.

Main works studied:
- Robert Merle, *Behind the Glass* (Library)
- Georges Perec, *Things* (Reader)
- Chris Marker, *Joli Mai*
- Éric Rohmer, *La Collectionneuse* (Library)
- Jean-Luc Godard, *La Chinoise* (Library)

Friday 2: meeting at Nanterre University at 11 am, for a visit of the May’68 archives of the University’s library (BDIC).

Screening (tbc): *La Chinoise*
We will look at the May events from various perspectives: the perspective of the students, of the factory workers, of various types of professionals (clerics, footballers, lawyers and others) and of De Gaulle’s government.

Main works studied (excerpts):
- Robert Merle, *Behind the Glass* (Library)
- Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism* (Reader)
- Daniel Bensaïd, *An Impatient Life: A Memoir*
- William Klein, *Grands soirs, petits matins*
- Julia Kristeva, *Samurai* (Reader)
- Louis Malle, *May Fools* (Library)
- Alain Touraine, *The May Movement* (Reader)

Friday 9: walk in the 5th district, tracking the various places where the barricades were set.

Screening: *May Fools*

**Week 3**

**Writers, Artists and Intellectuals During the Events**

During this week, we will focus on materials that have been produced during the May events. Do they share common ethical and aesthetic values? How can we interpret their radicalness?

Main works studied:
- Marguerite Duras, *Green Eyes* (Library)
- Maurice Blanchot, *Political Writings* (Reader)
- Michel de Certeau, *The Capture of Speech* (Reader)
- Raymond Aron, *The Elusive Revolution* (Library)
- Texts, drawings and films produced by the «Situationist International»

Thursday 15: mid-term exam

Friday 16: visit of the Sorbonne (tbc)

No screening.

**Week 4**

**French Theory and May’68**

The late sixties and seventies presented a moment of major renewal in French thought. We will study some works that take the May events as an inspiration or as a point of departure for critical thinking. The social role of the University will be specifically questioned.

Main works studied:
- Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Reader)
- Roland Barthes, *Lesson* (Reader)
- Gilles Deleuze, “May’68 did not take place”, *A Thousand Plateaus and Abécédaire* (“gauche”)

Tuesday 20: short presentation presenting the preliminary ideas of the final paper.

Friday 23: meeting at Nanterre University at 11 am, for a more specific exploration of May’68
archives of the University’s library (BDIC), depending on students’ paper’s topics / or description of political “groupuscule”.

Screening: Deleuze, *Abécédaire* (tbc)

### Week 5

**Change of Lifestyle after May**

If May’68 was not ultimately a political revolution, it has certainly modified certain lifestyles – mostly of the youth but not only. We will discuss new ways of conceiving love and sexuality; we will also evoke the critique of consumption and the relation to work.

Main works studied:
- Julian Bourg, “Gender and ’68: Tensions from the Start”
- Philippe Garrel, *Regular Lovers* (Library)
- Bernardo Bertolucci, *Innocents: The Dreamers* (Library)
- André Cayatte, *Mourir d’aimer*
- Michalangelo Antonioni, *Zabriskie Point*
- Olivier Assayas, *Après mai*
- Jean Eustache, *La maman et la putain*
- Robert Linhart, *The Assembly Line* (purchased)
- Jean-Luc Godard, *Tout va bien* (Library)
- Jacques Doillon and others, *L’an 01*

Screening: *La maman et la putain* (tbc)

### Week 6

**Which Legacy in Contemporary France?**

After the critiques of the “New philosophers” in the 80’s, many thinkers of the left, such as Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou, have defended the movement. Though it is unclear whether the French society maintains an enthusiastic or negative image of these events. Fifty years later, will May 2018 be a celebration or a funeral?

Main works studied:
- Kristin Ross, *May’68 and its Afterlives* (Reader)
- Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La Pensée 68: An Essay on Antihumanism* (Reader)
- Michel Houellebecq, *The Elementary Particles* (Reader)
- Peter Dews, « The new philosophers and the end of leftism » (Reader)
- Alain Badiou and Alain Finkielkraut, *Confrontation* (Reader)

Wednesday 5, guest speaker: Pierre Sauvêtre (University of Nanterre), specialist of leftist movements, will speak about “Nuit Debout” and its aftermath (tbc).

No screening.

Friday 7: Final paper due.