THE FRENCH SHORT STORY

John Moran

In this course we will read, explore, analyze, and discuss short texts from the Middle Ages, the 17th century, the Age of Enlightenment, the 19th century, and the modern age. For the Middle Ages we will examine three “pre-short story” genres, and for the remaining periods we will spend a week to three weeks examining a specific author and/or theme.

This course will give you the opportunity (1) to improve you ability to understand literary texts from different historical periods, (2) to appreciate more deeply various literary styles, (3) to analyze a text more skillfully and in more depth, (4) to present and convincingly support your own opinions and interpretations of a text, (5) to enrich your critical and analytical vocabulary, and especially (6) to have fun reading some of the best known works in the world of francophone literature (and even some lesser known works!).

To succeed in this course, it is necessary that you read, and read regularly! Almost all class discussion (and there is a lot of class discussion, both in small groups and together as a full class) is based on the assigned texts. Thus, if you don’t read the text, you’ll have nothing to say, and your classmates’ opinions will mean little to you. If you’ve prepared a text well, you’ll be ready to ask meaningful questions and present your ideas and opinions to the class.

The final grade for this class is based on a combination of a participation grade (for active participation!), three take-home essay grades, a series of quizzes, and a final (longer) essay, also to be composed outside of class. The reading list as it stands now includes the lais of Marie de France, passages from Le Roman de Renart, several fabliaux, several stories by Perrault, Micromégas by Voltaire, “L’Attaque du moulin” by Emile Zola, several short stories by Guy de Maupassant, L’Exil et le royaume by Albert Camus, and finally Stupeurs et tremblements by Amélie Nothomb. (This list is subject to change between now and the beginning of the semester.)