

NYU Paris

“Literature, Art, and the Path of Life”

Instructor Information

- Renée Champion
- Office Hours: Tuesday 12h30-14h30
- Room 606

Course Information

- Literature, Art and the Path of Life
- Tuesday and Thursday 10h45-12h15
Room TBA

Course Description

How can Literature and Art guide us on the Path of Life ? This course will seek answers to this question by studying writers and artists who are either part of the French literary and artistic tradition or those who have been inspired by the French (or European) experience. We will focus on coming-of-age narratives, or *Bildungsromane*, which emerged as a distinct literary genre at the end of the 18th century in Europe. Our chronological study will begin with the antecedents of the *Bildungsroman* in France, with excerpts from works that are considered cornerstones of French culture : *The Fables* by La Fontaine, Montaigne’s *Essays*, and Rousseau’s *Emile, on Education*. Historical and social context will be emphasized as we study the evolution of the genre with close readings of 19th century novels by Balzac and Henry James. Examples from the 20th century will allow us to explore relationships with other literary forms (memoir, short story, autobiography, graphic novel) and pay particular attention to questions of gender, class, trauma, race and ethnicity, colonialism and migration, as they are linked to self-development and self-realization. Visual and performing arts will also be taken into account as well as *Bildungsfilm*. Although the works and mediums are quite different, in form, content and historical context of production, they share the theme of someone seeking meaning, seeking a life path, and as such they are all works of education. Our aim is to seek what meanings we can give to the various experiential aspects of such a path as we determine how they resonate with each other, as well as with our own lives.

Course Overview and Goals

Upon Completion of this Course, engaged students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate a variety of coming-of-age narratives in terms of content and form
- Deploy close analytical reading techniques to a range of literary texts and art forms

- Demonstrate skillful writing techniques for analyzing and interpreting works of literature and art
- Constructively reflect on their own education and life path

Course Requirements

Class Participation :

Students are expected to complete the reading assignments and actively participate in class discussions. Our focus will be on literary and artistic analysis and interpretation. Glossaries of useful terms will be provided in class but you should be prepared to discuss major themes and ideas, styles and techniques as we study expressions of transformative experiences, moments of self-reflection and character change. Leading discussion will be on a rotating basis. Announced and unannounced quizzes, as well as short writing exercises in class or as homework, will count toward your participation grade. Please note that there are two mandatory museum visits outside class-time, each with a two page response paper, due at the beginning of the class following the visit.

Oral presentation :

Students will choose partners for oral presentations of 15 minutes from a list of suggested bildungsfilm. You are welcome to suggest a relevant topic (not limited to film), subject to instructor approval. Sign-ups will be the third week of class. Presentations will be scheduled throughout the semester.

Written Assignments: Response Papers

Three response papers will either compare and contrast texts or themes discussed in class, or respond to a prompt. Further guidelines will be provided. 4-5 double spaced pages.

Printed version to be submitted at the beginning of class on the due date.

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Class participation	20%
Oral Presentation	15%
Response Paper 1	20%

Response Paper 2	20%
Response Paper 3	25%

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points	Description
A	16-20	Outstanding
A-	15	Excellent
B+	14	Very Good
B	13	Good
B-	12	Satisfactory
C+	11	Above Average
C	10	Average
C-	9	Below Average
D+	8	Unsatisfactory
D	7	Low Pass
D-	6	Low Pass
F	5	Fail

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

Week/ Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
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Week 1, 4 Feb.	Introduction, review syllabus		
6 Feb.	An Overview of the History of the Bildungsroman: Focus on the French tradition	<i>The Fables of La Fontaine</i> , Book 1, pp. 5-26; Book VIII, pp. 155-159; Book IX, pp. 234-236	
Week 2, 11 Feb.	Michel de Montaigne: The First Blogger?	M. Sharpe, "Guide to the classics", 8 p.; Montaigne, <i>The Essays</i> , pp. 37-73	
13 Feb.	Jean-Jacques Rousseau: <i>Emile, or On Education</i> , the first Bildungsroman in France?	JJR, Excerpts <i>Emile</i> , 10 p.; Rousseau, <i>Emile</i> , Book IV, pp. 221-237; pp. 112-117	
Week 3, 18 Feb.	Balzac: <i>Père Goriot</i> , "Money is Life"?	Balzac, <i>Old Man Goriot</i> , Introduction and Parts 1 and II (pp. 3-83)	Sign-ups for oral presentations
20 Feb.	Balzac	Balzac, <i>Old Man Goriot</i> , Parts III, IV, V, VI (pp. 84-232)	
Week 4, 25 Feb.	Balzac	Walking Tour, Goriot's Paris	Response Paper 1 due
27 Feb.	Henry James: <i>Daisy Miller</i> , an Outsider in European Society	James, <i>Daisy Miller</i>	
Week 5, 3 March	Colette: Life Choices	Colette, <i>The Vagabond</i> , Introduction and pp. 5-95	Oral Presentation 1 Colette (Westmoreland, 2018): birth of a writer
5 March	Colette	Colette, <i>The Vagabond</i> , pp. 96-223	Watch <i>At Eternity's Gate</i> (Schnabel, 2018)
Week 6, 10 March	Van Gogh: Finding one's purpose	<i>The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh</i> , excerpts, pp. 65-75; 397-411; 416-419; 488-495; 502-507	Oral Presentation 2 <i>At Eternity's Gate</i> : an aesthetic life
12 March	Mandatory Visit : Musée d'Orsay , Meet in front of the Museum, next to the Rhinoceros 17h (5 p.m.)		

Week 7, 17 March	George Orwell: Observing poverty	Orwell, <i>Down and Out</i> , Introduction and pages 1-117	Musée d'Orsay visit response paper due, 2 pp.
19 March	Orwell	Orwell, <i>Down and Out</i> , pp. 118-230; Kirby, "On the trail of George Orwell's outcasts"	Watch <i>Jeux Interdits (Forbidden Games, Clément, 1952)</i> : the loss of childhood innocence
Week 8, 24 March	Irène Nemirovsky: Confronting the tragedies of History	Nemirovsky, <i>Dimanche and other stories</i> , "The Spectator" and "Mr. Rose"	
26 March	Nemirovsky		Oral Presentation 3 <i>The Two of Us (Le vieil homme et l'enfant, Berri, 1967)</i> : empathy
Week 9 31 March	Simone de Beauvoir: Becoming a Woman	S de B, <i>The Independent Woman</i>	Oral Presentation 4 <i>Cléo 5 à 7 (Varda, 1962)</i> : mortality
2 April	James Baldwin: Reflecting on identity	Baldwin, <i>Collected Essays</i> , excerpts, pp. 85-129; A. Davis, <i>An Autobiography</i> , pp. 117-145	Oral Presentation 5: <i>The Price of the Ticket (Thorsen, 1989)</i> : engagement Response Paper 2 due
Week 10, 7 & 9 April	Spring Break !		
Week 11, 14 April	Sonia Delaunay and a Life in Color	Clare Rendell, "Sonia Delaunay and the Expanding Definition of Art"	
16 April	Mandatory Visit : Centre Pompidou , Meet inside, in front of the Bookshop, 17h30 (5:30 p.m.)		
Week 12, 21 April	" <i>Issue de</i> ": second generation immigrants coming of age	Charef, <i>Tea in the Harem</i> , pp. 200-202; Begag, <i>Shantytown Kid</i> , pp. 167-179; Guène, <i>Dreams from the Endz</i> , pp. 1-18	Centre Pompidou visit response paper due, 2 pp.
23 April	Transnational Identities	<i>The Good Immigrant</i> , pp. 144-155; pp. 208-223	Oral Presentation 6 <i>Le Grand Voyage (Ferroukhi, 2004)</i> :

			intergenerational communication
Week 13, 28 April	Marjane Satrapi: Transcultural coming of age	<i>The Complete Persepolis</i> , Books 1 and 2	
30 April	Satrapi	<i>The Complete Persepolis</i> , Books 3 and 4	Oral Presentation 7 <i>Persepolis</i> (Parronaud & Satrapi, 2007): emancipation
Week 14, 5 May	<i>Polina, danser sa vie</i> (Müller & Preljocaj, 2016)		Response Paper 3 due
7 May	Julia Child, MFK Fisher: Discovering a vocation	Child, <i>My Life in France</i> , pp. 13-19 Fisher, <i>Long Ago in France</i> , pp. 29-51	Oral Presentation 8 <i>Ma Vie de Courgette</i> (My Life as a Courgette, Barras, 2016): solidarity
Week 15, 12 May	Bintou Dembélé: Memory of the body in dance	Excerpts from ZH and Indes Galantes	Watch Toni Morrison at the Louvre, "The Foreigner's Home"
14 May	Kate Tempest		Oral Presentation 9 <i>The Class</i> (Entre les murs, Cantet, 2008): multiculturalism Oral Presentation 10 <i>Welcome</i> (Lioret, 2009): hospitality
Week16, 19 May	Conclusions		

Course Materials

Required Textbooks & Materials

- Literature, Art, and the Path of Life Course Reader, available for sale at Mistral Photo, 40 rue St Jacques, Paris 75005
- H. Balzac, *Old Man Goriot*, translation by Olivia McCannon, Penguin, 2011
- Colette, *The Vagabond*, translation by Enid McLeod, Farrar, Straus and Young, 2001
- George Orwell, *Down and Out in London and Paris*, Penguin Modern Classics, 2001

- Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis*, Vintage, 2008

Optional Textbooks & Materials (See the Reserve Shelf!)

Resources

- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

Class-room etiquette: No lap-top computers or telephones

Attendance and Tardiness

- 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 be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsher penalties including failure.
- Unexcused absences affect students' grades: unexcused absences will be penalized with deduction from the students' final course grade.
- Absences are excused only for illness, religious observance, and emergencies.

Illness: For a single absence, students may be required to provide a doctor's note, at the discretion of the Associate Director of Academics. In the case of two consecutive absences, students must provide a doctor's note. Exams, quizzes, and presentations will not be made up without a doctor's note.

Religious Observance: Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their instructor and the Academic Office in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If exams, quizzes, and presentations are scheduled on a holiday a student will observe, the Associate Director, in coordination with the instructor, will reschedule them.

Please note: if you are unable to attend class, you are required to email your professors directly to notify them.

Late Assignment

Late submission or work will be accepted only with justifiable reasons of health or family emergency.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.

Plagiarism: *presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one's own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:*

- *a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks*
- *an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work*
- *the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one's own*
- *submitting evaluations of group members' work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member*
- *altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.*

For further information, students are encouraged to check www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Your instructor

Renée Champion holds a Ph.D. in the History and Semiology of Texts and Images from the Université de Paris VII and a B.A. from James Madison University. Her research interests include women travellers to the Middle East and North Africa, and women writers. Recent publications include articles on Gertrude Bell and Alexine Tinne. She has been teaching at NYUP since 2014.