

# NYU Paris

## FREN-UA 9865,

### May'68 and its Legacy

#### Instructor Information

- TBA

#### Course Information

- In May 1968, waves of anger and hope, of lofty rhetoric and provocative slogans, swept over France. Emerging in a period of unprecedented growth, and within a highly unstable international context, these youthful anti-authoritarian revolts affected all strata of the professional work world. Arising in the universities, the revolts spread to businesses and factories—ultimately challenging all social hierarchies. The interpretation of these events has always been controversial: they have been viewed as both a moment of intense creativity that generated emancipatory values, as well as the start of a new 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 and society? What has their impact been beyond France? We will try to answer these questions by means of historical and cultural analyses of diverse sources: both graphic and written documents produced during the events, as well as intellectual essays and artworks stretching from the mid '60s to the present day—from Georges Perec to Raymond Aron, from Jean-Luc Godard to Alain Badiou. This course will also be an occasion to inquire into the historically shifting condition of what it is to be a student, between 1968 and today.

#### Course Overview and Goals

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

- Obtain a good understanding of the French intellectual and political culture of the 60's, and of its influence until today;
- Learn about the history of the French university system and French education more broadly;
- Gain critical skills in filmic and literary analysis;

- Gain skills necessary to read and confront philosophical texts of “French Theory”;
- Improve skills in the writing of a research paper (methods of investigation and rhetorical techniques).

## ● Course Requirements

Active participation in class: 10%

Midterm exam: 20%

2 oral presentations (10 min maximum) on a specific text or film: 20%

2-page field trip report (on Nanterre’s archive or other): 15%

8-page final paper on a specific topic (to be discussed with instructor): 35%

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

## Course Schedule

### Week 1

*French Youth Before May: From Boredom to Leftist Temptations*

June 4-5

After a general introduction, we will consider the French and international political context of the late sixties in an effort understand what led to the events of May.

Main works assigned:

- Georges Perec, *Things*, London: Collins Harvill, 1990, p. 75-90.
- Robert Merle, *Behind the Glass*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972, 379 p.

Assigned films:

- Chris Marker, *Joli Mai*, Brooklyn New York: Icarus Films, 2013.
- Éric Rohmer, *La Collectionneuse*, San Francisco: Kanopi Streaming, 2014.
- Jean-Luc Godard, *La Chinoise*, Paris: L’avant-scène, 1971.

Required screening (tbc): *La Chinoise*

Guest Speaker: Chloé Thomas (Paris 8) about Robert Merle

### Week 2

*Various Views on the Events: From Parisian Intellectuals to the Bourgeoisie of the Countryside*

June 11-12

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

Main works studied:

- Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: the left-wing alternative*, London: Deutsch, 1968, p. 11-34.
- Daniel Bensaïd, *An Impatient Life: A Memoir*, New York: Verso, 2013, p. 35-55.
- William Klein, *Grands soirs, petits matins*, Paris, 1978.
- Julia Kristeva, *The Samurai*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 86-105.
- Alain Touraine, *The May Movement*, New York: The Random House, 1971, p. 156-193.

Required screening: Louis Malle, *May Fools*, France-Italy, 1990 (tbc)

### Week 3

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

During this week, we will focus on artistic and intellectual works that were 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*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 53-62.
- Maurice Blanchot, *Political Writings*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, p. 79-84.
- Michel de Certeau, *The Capture of Speech*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 3-25.
- Raymond Aron, *The Elusive Revolution*, New York: Praeger Publisher, 1969, p. xii-p. 9.
- Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, London: Rebel Press, 1983, p. 6-52.
- Johan Kugelberg and Philippe Vermès, *Beauty in the Street: A Visual Record of May 68' Paris Uprising*, London: Four Corners Books, 2011.

No screening.

First meeting at Nanterre University, for a visit of the May'68 archives of the University's library (BDIC)

Wed 19: mid-term exam

### Week 4

#### *French Theory and May'68*

June 25-26

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*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 161-193.
- Roland Barthes, *Lesson* (Lecture in inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, Collège de France), *October*, Vol. 8, Spring 1979, p. 3-16.

- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, "May'68 did not take place" (online, 3 p.), *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 1-39)
- Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, Seminar 1968-1969*, New York: Norton, 2007, p. 117-128.

Required screening: André Boutang et Michel Pamart, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, "G comme gauche" and "P comme professeur" (Paris: Éd. Montparnasse, 1996), Wednesday afternoon.

Tuesday 24: students present the preliminary ideas of their final paper.

Second meeting at Nanterre University, for a visit of the May'68 archives of the University's library (BDIC). This class will be dedicated to a more specific exploration of the archives depending on students' paper's topics.

## Week 5

### *Change of Lifestyle after May*

July 2-3

If May'68 was not ultimately a political revolution, it 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," in *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought*, Montreal: McGill University Press, 2007, p. 241-262.
- Monique Wittig, "One is not born a woman," in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, p. 103-108.
- Robert Linhart, *The Assembly Line*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981, 160 p.

Films (students select among these films for a short presentation):

- Philippe Garrel, *Regular Lovers*, Montreal: Alliance Altlandis Viva Film, 2006.
- Bernardo Bertolucci, *Innocents: The Dreamers*, Beverly Hills: Fox entertainment, 2004.
- Michelangelo Antonioni, *Zabriskie Point*, Burbank, Warner, 2009.
- Olivier Assayas, *Après mai*, Orland Park: MPI Home Video, 2013.
- Jean-Luc Godard, *Tout va bien*, Paris: Gaumont 2001.
- Jacques Doillon and others, *L'an 01*, Paris: MK2, 2006.

Required screening: Jean Eustache, *La maman et la putain*, Paris: Elite Films, 1973.  
(tbc)

## Week 6

### *What is the Legacy of May '68 in Contemporary France?*

July 9-10

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. It is unclear however whether French society maintains an enthusiastic or negative image of these events. Fifty years later, is May '68 celebrated or maligned?

Main works studied:

- Kristin Ross, *May'68 and its Afterlives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 1-17.
- Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La Pensée 68: An Essay on Antihumanism*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990, p. 349-370.
- Michel Houellebecq, *The Elementary Particles*, New York: Knopf, 2000, p. 55-85.
- Jacques Rancière, *Althusser's Lesson*, New York: Continuum, 2011, p. 1-24.
- Alain Badiou and Alain Finkielkraut, *Confrontation*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014, p. 8-106.

Tuesday: Visit of the Sorbonne

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

Wed: Final paper due.

## Course Materials

### Required Textbooks & Materials

- A reader should be bought. Books about May'68 are available at the Library.

### Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](http://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **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

### 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 a 2% 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](http://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](mailto: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.

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