



Seton Hall University

Department of Modern Languages

*FREN 2214 Special Topics : The Eye of the Other: Identity and Alterity in French
Language Thought and Literature*

L'oeil de l'autre : identité et altérité dans la pensée et la littérature de langue française

Professor Escobar

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Wednesdays 4-6:30 p.m. in FAHY 203A

Office: Fahy 216

Office Hours: Tues. /Thurs. 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. / Wed. 1:30-4:00 p.m.

This course examines the evolution of attitudes in French language writing both on what constitutes identity and how to approach difference (cultural, ethnic or otherwise) beginning with the 16th century inventor of the essay, Montaigne's "Des cannibales" to the 20th century novels of Jorge Semprún and Shan Sa. We will also read short excerpts of texts and poems that deal with identity starting with François Villon's 15th century "Épithaphe Villon".

In addition to the short passages from philosophical, political and poetic texts, we will read two novels both of which were written by writers whose native language is not French and both of whom are now highly respected "French" writers: Jorge Semprún's *Le grand voyage* a novel based on his own personal experience in the French resistance then his deportation to Buchenwald during World War II, and Shan Sa's *La joueuse de go* a recent novel which offers in alternating chapters the perspectives of a young Chinese girl and a Japanese soldier locked in a strategy of attraction and skillful cunning during Japan's invasion of China in 1937.

Most of the following texts will be read in **short excerpts**. All are available on our Blackboard web page in the "Documents du cours" folder (indicated with **BB**) except for the two novels which must be purchased at our bookstore in the editions indicated.

This course will be conducted entirely in French. Participation is essential (and a big part of your final grade!). Make sure to come to each class with comments and above all questions on each text.

Because this course meets once a week it is crucial to never miss class.

☛ **After the first absence, each unexcused absence reduces your final grade by half a letter grade (thus an A becomes an A-, a B becomes a B- etc.). Only one absence is allowed.**

Class work:

* 1 Oral presentation (10-15 min.) on a film or text	10%
* Short quizzes	20%
* 2 papers of 4 pages each on <i>Le grand voyage</i> and <i>La joueuse de go</i>	30%
* 1 final exam	20%
* Active participation in discussions.	20%
	100%

ALL WRITTEN WORK AND PRESENTATIONS MUST BE SENT TO MY SHU EMAIL ADDRESS : escobama@shu.edu in the following format:
LASTNAME_PaperName.doc (ex: "SMITH_Semprún.doc")

For the **first paper only**, I will indicate which corrections need to be made (following a system of codes the key to which may be found on our Blackboard web page), then I will send your paper back with the extra word « CORR » added.

LASTNAME_PaperName_CORR.doc (ex: "SMITH_Semprún_CORR.doc")

You must then send back the text ENTIRELY CORRECTED within 3 days of the day I sent it to you in order to improve your grade. At this point be sure to replace « CORR » with « FINAL »:

LASTNAME_PaperName_FINAL.doc (ex: "SMITH_Semprún_FINAL.doc")

If all corrections have been successfully made then your grade will rise by half a letter grade.

You may download the « Code des corrections » from Blackboard (in the « Pour mieux écrire » folder).

For the presentation you must send me an email at least a week in advance explaining your ideas (a couple paragraphs will suffice).

Class Schedule

Texts preceded by three asterisks *** are optional and may be used for presentations.

Week 1 [Jan 10]: Introduction to course / Cross-cultural encounters. Point of view.
What is identity and how has the notion evolved?
How do we perceive / define ourselves? How do we perceive / define others?
Narrative voice (voix narrative). Writer / Reader Rapport (Rapport écrivain/lecteur).

Historical definitions for “Identité,” “Individu,” and “Inconscient” 3 pages **BB**
Poem: François Villon “L’Épithaphe Villon (Ballade des pendus)” (1461) **BB**

Week 2 [Jan 17]: The Encounter with the Other
Montaigne “Des cannibales” (*Les Essais*, 1580-1595) 1 page **BB**
Regosin “Montaigne and His Readers” (Hollier, *A New History of French Literature*, 1989) pp. 248-253 **BB**
Edward Said “Introduction” *Orientalism* (1978) pp.1-9 **BB**
Textes courts de Bartolomé de las Casas, Montaigne et Jean de Léry 5 pages **BB**

Week 3 [Jan 24]: Consciousness and Identity:
Poem: Charles Baudelaire “Élévation” (1861) **BB**
Descartes *Discours de la méthode* (extraits, 1637) 4 pages **BB**
Thomas Pavel “The Subject of Modern Discourse” (Hollier, *A New History of French Literature*, 1989) pp. 284-288 **BB**
***Charles Taylor “Descartes’ Disengaged Reason” (*Sources of the Self*, Harvard UP, 1989) pp.143-158 **BB**

Week 4 [Jan 31]: The Citizen and the Individual
“Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen” (1789) 1 page **BB**
Tzvetan Todorov “L’individu : pluralité et universalité” *Le jardin imparfait* (1999) 20 pages **BB**
André Gide *L’Immoraliste* (1902, extrait) 1 page **BB**
Jonathan Littell *Les Bienveillantes* (2006, extrait) 2 pages **BB**

Week 5-8 [Feb 7, 14, 21, 28]: Trauma, Consciousness and the Other
Jorge Semprún *Le grand voyage* (novel, 1963). ISBN: 2070362760
***Ofelia Ferrán “Cuanto más escribo, más me queda por decir’: Memory, Trauma, and Writing in the Work of Jorge Semprún” *MLN*, 2001 Mar; 116 (2): 266-94. **BB**
***Kaplan, Brett Ashley “The Bitter Residue of Death”: Jorge Semprún and the Aesthetics of Holocaust Memory” *Comparative Literature*, (2003) 55.4: 320-337.**BB**

Weeks 9-13 [Mar 14, 21, 28, Apr 4, 11]: The Other, Love and War
Shan Sa *La joueuse de go* (novel, 2005). ISBN: 2070305074
***Maalouf, Amin *Les identités meurtrières*

Week 14 [Apr 18]: FILM: Haneke “Caché” (2005)

Week 15 [Apr 25]: (final class) Discussion of “Caché”

EXTRA BIBLIOGRAPHY :

Discours de la méthode (entire text online)

http://perso.orange.fr/minerva/DM/Page_accueil_DM.htm

Descartes et la conscience de soi:

<http://www.philocours.com/cours/cours-conscience.html>

Larmore, Charles. *Les pratiques du moi*. PUF, 2004.

Céline. *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1945, roman).

Films:

Pontecorvo « La bataille d'Alger »

Klapisch « L'auberge espagnole »

Veber « Le dîner de cons »

Veber « Le placard »