Cultures & Contexts: Multiculturalism in France

Class code  
CORE-UA9547.001; IDSEM-UG9305.001

Instructor Details  
Professor Beth Epstein  
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Office hours by appointment

Class Details  
Tuesday 10h45-12h15/Thursday 13h00-14h30  
Room 4.10 (Tuesday), 5.05 (Thursday)

Class Description  
France and the U.S. have a habit of looking at one another as anti-models when it comes to discussions of assimilation and difference, “race,” identity, community and diversity. In this course, we explore this comparison as a productive means for re-considering these terms. Why is the notion of “ethnic community” so problematic in France? And why do Americans insist on the “homogeneity” of the French nation, even as, at various points throughout modern French history, France has received more immigrants to its shores than the United States? Through readings, film screenings, and site visits we explore the movements and encounters that have made Paris a rich, and sometimes controversial, site of cultural exchange. Topics include contemporary polemics on questions such as headscarves, the banlieue, the new Paris museums of immigration and “primitive” art, affirmative action and discrimination positive, historic expressions of exoticism, négritude, and anti-colonialism. Conducted in English.

Expected learning outcomes  
• Learn about diversity issues in France in their contemporary political, social, and economic contexts  
• Learn about French colonial and immigration history as means for better understanding present day  
• Use French case to think critically, and reflexively, about how social, cultural, and racial categories are used in contemporary multicultural discourse.

Assessment Components  
• Class participation (class participation & directed reading/response papers); 15%  
• Directed reading questions & film/current events response papers (5 total).  
 Directed reading questions -- Students are to prepare responses to questions on designated readings, due in class the day the reading is due (see class schedule).  
 Response papers -- Students are to submit response papers either on current events relevant to topics discussed in class, and/or on any of the recommended films listed on the syllabus. Response papers should include a brief summary of the event and/or film, and a discussion that ties the event/film to topics discussed in class. A total of 5 reading/response papers are due in all, at least 2 of which must be directed reading questions.  
• Review essay on visit to the CNHI, due October 7; 5-7 pages, 20%. Papers must be in my box or sent via email by 17h on date due.  
• Mid-term exam, October 23; 20%  
• Position papers on questions for debate. Each student is to write two position papers (3-5 pages) in preparation for in-class debates; each student will prepare and lead, as part of a group, one of two debates. Papers due on the day of debates (November 18 and
December 11; 20%
• Final exam, December 16; 25%

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

**Assessment Expectations**

A/Outstanding to Excellent: Work that is well argued and structured, that considers and seeks to move beyond arguments developed in class and in the readings, that makes good use of evidence, that shows originality, particular flair or insight.

B/Very Good to Satisfactory: Work that takes up the key issues and debates, that makes good points or questions, but which does not show a good sense of argument or structure, which does not consider adequately the evidence, and/or which is weak on independent thinking or originality.

C/Average to Below Average: Work which may raise some interesting questions but which remains superficial, undeveloped, or poorly structured, and/or shows insufficient grasp of the subject matter.

D/Poor: Work which presents incorrect or confused information, which is poorly written and structured, which pays no attention to form or academic convention (appropriate use of quotes and citations, etc.)

F/Fail: Any work that is plagiarized, not submitted, completely off-subject and/or that shows no effort, will receiving a failing grade.

**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.

Beginning Fall 2014, at all Global Academic Centers, unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade.

Other guidelines specific to NYU Paris 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.

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1 NYU’s "Policies and procedures for students studying away at a Global Academic Center"
Late Submission of Work

Any work handed in after the due date and without a written medical excuse will have points marked off for lateness. Students may receive extensions only in exceptional circumstances and upon having received prior permission from the instructor.

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 NYUP 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 detailed below.

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.
- No laptop computers in class unless permission is expressly given by your professors.
- Leaving class to go to the bathroom or yawning in class is considered rude in France.

Required Text(s)


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2 NYU’s Expository Writing Department’s Statement on Plagiarism
3 NYU Statement on Plagiarism
4 NYU Statement on Plagiarism
## Supplemental Texts (on reserve in NYUP library)

**Books**

**Films**
- Cantet, Laurent *Entre les Murs* (The Class, 2008)
- Haneke, Michel *Caché* (2005)
- Sembene, Ousmane *La Noire de…* (1966)

## Week 1
### Peoples & cultures: what makes the nation?
- **9/9:** Introduction

## Week 2
### Notions of empire: savage & civilized

**Directed reading questions due**


## Week 3
### Notions of empire: savage & civilized
Week 4  Mid-century: Race, reaction, and resistance
10/2: CLASS CANCELLED


Directed reading questions due
Recommended film: La Noire de… (1966) by Ousmane Sembene

Week 7  10/21: Review
10/23: Mid-Term Exam

Week 8  The trouble in the suburbs
10/30: Reading: Gaspard, ch. 3, pp. 101-148 (optional: Conclusion, pp. 149-177).

11/6: The Veil, cont.

Week 10  11/11: Armistice Day, NYUP CLOSED
11/14: Site visit: Walking tour with Douce Banlieue

Week 11  11/18: In-class debate: details TBA
11/20: Site visit: Musée du Quai Branly

Week 12  Post-colonial history & memory
11/27: Site Visit: Grande Mosquée de Paris and plaque on the Seine
Recommended film(s): Caché (2005) by Michel Haneke; Days of Glory (2006) by Rachid Bouchareb

**Week 13**

**“Culture” in post-modern times**
Directed reading/site visit questions due

12/4: Film screening: Entre les Murs (The Class, 2008) Laurent Cantet

**Week 14**


12/11: In-class debate: details TBA

**Week 15**

12/16: Final Exam

*About your professor*

Beth Epstein holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from NYU, and a B.A. from Princeton University. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she is Academic Director at NYUParis. Her research focuses on intersections in the history and meaning of race and “difference” between France and the United States, and the way these relate to the perception of troubles in the French banlieue. She also examines questions of civic life, and the way these are inflected through urban policy and practice in France. She has conducted extensive fieldwork in both rural and urban France, and taught numerous courses on social issues in contemporary French society. In 1993 she co-directed the documentary film Kofi chez les Français about a man of Togolese origin who was elected mayor of a small village in rural Brittany and subsequently became known as a national symbol of “perfect integration.” It was work on this film that largely inspired her dissertation research on integration in France. Her book Collective Terms: Race, Culture & Community in a State-Planned City in France was published in 2011 by Berghahn Books.