This course takes as its subject the Belle Époque, that period in the life of France’s pre-World War I Third Republic (1871-1914) associated with extraordinary artistic achievement, as well as the Second Empire (1851-1871) that preceded it. Not only was Paris during this time the undisputed western capital of painting and sculpture, it also was the most important production site for new works of musical theater and, arguably, literature as well. It was during these decades that Impressionism launched its assault on the academic establishment, only to be superseded itself by an ever-changing avant-garde associated first with the Nabis, then with fauvism and cubism; that the operas of Bizet, Saint-Saëns and Massenet and the plays of Sardou and Rostand filled the world’s theaters; and that the novels of Zola and stories of Maupassant were translated into dozens of languages. Finally, this was the society that gave birth to one of the greatest literary works of all time, Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, the first volume of which appeared just as World War I was about to bring the Belle Époque to a violent end.

In this course, we will attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the artistic works of this era by placing them in the context of the society within which they were produced, France’s Second Empire and Third Republic. Like the United States today, the Third Republic was a polity in which issues of the rights of minorities, freedom of expression, the place of religion in the public sphere, and the proper relationship between democracy and imperialism were subjects of constant debate. Furthermore, like the U.S. but unlike contemporary France, the Third Republic relied much more on the market and less on state subsidies to support artistic endeavors. Among other questions, we will examine to what extent the cultural flowering of this period occurred as a result of, or in spite of, this reliance on market forces. Near the end of the course we will take on the challenge of Proust’s *Swann’s Way*, which we will read together in its entirety.

**Course requirements:** The requirements of this course are: 1) **Attendance at all lectures** 2) Weekly attendance and participation in recitation sections (15% of grade). 3) **Eight** weekly two-page response papers (double-spaced, standard font and margins) on something that **inspired or provoked you** in the week’s reading, and **two** based on visits to a New York cultural institution (Metropolitan Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, etc.) relevant to the course, to be **HANDED IN PERSONALLY** to your preceptor at the **BEGINING of class** each Thursday. **NO PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER CLASS BEGINS.** The papers will be graded check plus (2.5 points), check (2 points), check minus (1 point) and zero (paper not handed in). These papers constitute 25% of your grade. 4) An in-class midterm on **March 24** (25% of grade). 5) A one hour fifty minute final exam on **Thursday, May 14 from 11 to 12.50pm in our classroom** (35% of grade).

**PLEASE NOTE:** THE USE OF COMPUTERS, IPHONES, IPODS OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING LECTURE WITHOUT SPECIAL PERMISSION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL RESULT IN A GRADE REDUCTION
SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

WEEK I
Lecture Topics
1. (Jan. 28) Introduction: France under Napoleon III (1852-1870)
2. (Jan. 30) Charles Baudelaire’s *The Flowers of Evil* (1857)

Required Reading

WEEK II
Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 4) Music in the Second Empire: Gounod and Offenbach
2. (Feb. 6) The “New Painting”: Realism and Courbet

Required Reading

WEEK III
Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 11) The “New Painting”: Manet
2. (Feb. 13) Sex, Gender Relations and Zola’s *Nana*

Required Reading

WEEK IV
Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 18) The “New Painting”: Impressionism
2. (Feb. 20) French Ballet and Degas

Required Reading

WEEK V
Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 25) Neo-Impressionism and Monet’s Series
2. (Feb. 27) Zola’s Novel *The Masterpiece* and Cézanne

Required Reading
WEEK VI

Lecture Topics
1. (March 3) French Opera in the 1870’s: Carmen and Samson et Dalila
2. (March 5) The Democracy of the Third Republic

Required Reading
Guy de Maupassant, Bel-Ami [1885] (Oxford World Classics Edition), Part I (pp. 3-148).

WEEK VII

Lecture Topics
1. (Mar. 10) French Music in the 1870’s and 1880’s
2. (Mar. 12) Politics, the Press and Guy de Maupassant’s Bel-Ami

Required Reading
Guy de Maupassant, Bel-Ami, Part II (pp. 149-290).

WEEK VIII

Lecture Topics
1. (Mar. 24) IN-CLASS MIDTERM
2. (Mar. 26) Decadence and Symbolism in Literature and the Visual Arts

Required Reading

WEEK IX

Lecture Topics
1. (March 31) Religion and Spirituality in a Democratic France
2. (April 2) Huysmans’ “Decadent” Novel À Rebours (Against the Grain/Against Nature)

Required Reading

WEEK X

Lecture Topics
1. (April 7) Marcel Proust
2. (April 9) Gauguin and Van Gogh

Required Reading
WEEK XI

Lecture Topics
1. (April 14) The Arts in the 1880’s and 1890’s: Sarah Bernhardt, Toulouse-Lautrec, the Nabis.
2. (April 16) The Dreyfus Affair in Politics, Society and the Arts

Required Reading

WEEK XII

Lecture Topics
1. (April 21) The Dreyfus Affair in Politics, Society and the Arts II
2. (April 23) French Opera at the End of the Century: Massenet and Debussy

Required Reading

WEEK XIII

Lecture Topics
1. (April 28) French Music at the Turn of the Century: “Impressionism in Music”?
2. (April 30) The Impact of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes (1909-1914)

Required Reading

WEEK XIV

Lecture Topics
1. (May 7) Fauvism and Cubism
2. (May 9) Remembrances of Things Past: World War I and the End of the Belle Époque

Required Reading:

FINAL EXAM ON THURSDAY, MAY 14 FROM 11 TO 12.50 IN OUR CLASSROOM CANTOR 101