

Michel Rocchi
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French 480
Fall 2003

Wyatt 241
Ext. 3969

Office hours: MW 10:00 – 11:00 & 3:00 – 4:00, and by appointment.

Seminar in French Literature
Contemporary Short Story

This course covers modern French literature, particularly, the short story of the turn of the twenty-first century. Much has happened in modern French fiction: The perspective on the canonical figures of the twentieth century has been altered; the philosophical novel is no longer in the forefront and the *new novelists* have been challenged by newer techniques. However, the French prose of the last few years continue some of the past concerns. They still reflect a heavy debt to surrealist and postmodernist techniques, and while they depart from moralist tendencies, existential influences can be detected in many contemporary works.

It can be argued that France experienced three distinct periods of intellectual activity during this period. Until the early 1960s, discussion was dominated by a developing synthesis of Marxism and existentialism. In the mid-1960s, structuralism came to the fore. Both of these intellectual currents were characterized by a strong totalizing impulse, a tendency toward systematization, and by the profoundly held assumption that reason was adequate to the comprehension of reality. In the 1970s came the third period of poststructuralism, which reversed the earlier trends quite drastically. Poststructuralists sharply curtailed the scope and claims of reason, and attacked the Western philosophical tradition for its logocentrism, the assertion of the immediacy of reality to thought, and the assumption of the ability of reason to represent reality.

The major current of interest is manifested by short story writers, feminist writers, and cineasts who internalized the literary revolts of the new novelists and the intellectual arguments of the postmodernists.

We will explore contemporary writers who represent the major esthetic imagination in modern French literature. I hope that the concentration on individual short fictions will afford a broadening of our understanding of French literature, a liveliness of interest, an insight into French sensibility, and above all, some pleasure in reading and reflecting.

Course Evaluation:

[20% of the final grade for each of the following]:

* Participation (regular attendance, thoughtful listening and interacting, questioning comments, rethinking one's own position, arguing with relevant evidence, and careful preparation of the assigned readings.

* In-class exams [Mid-term: Oct. 15] and several short in-class unannounced tests.

* Two papers [Nov. 3 & Dec. 18]

Books for Purchase: (in order of assignment)

Anna Gavalda	<i>Je voudrais que quelqu'un m'attende quelque part</i>
Claude Pujade-Renaud	<i>Un si joli petit livre</i>
J. M. G. Le Clézio	<i>Mondo</i>
Philippe Djian	<i>Crocodiles</i>

Course Packet:

Texts by: Michel Déon, Marguerite Yourcenar, Frédéric Beigbeder, Virginie Despentes, Annie Saumont, Régine Deforges.

Tentative Course Plan

[This is for general planning only as I will not force a text into time constraints if more time is needed to delve deeper into textual analysis.]

September

Wed. Sep 3	Introduction
Fri. Sep 5 – Wed. 17	Gavalda
Fri. 19 – Mon 29	Pujade-Renaud

October

Wed. Oct 1 – Wed. 22	LeClézio
Wed. Oct. 15	<u>Mid-term</u> (in-class)
Fri. Oct. 24 – Fri. 31	Déon

November

Mon. Nov. 3

Mon. 3 – Fri. 14

Mon. 17 & 19

Fri. 21

Mon. 24

Wed. 26 & 28

First paper due

Djian

Yourcenar

Beigbeder

Desportes

Take a couple of days off: Thanksgiving!

December

Mon. Dec. 1 & 3

Fri. 5

Mon. 8 & 10

Thu. Dec. 18

Saumont

Deforges

Course conclusion

Last day for final paper: by 2:00 p.m.