

Introduction to François Cusset's Plenary Luncheon Presentation

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François Cusset delivered the following plenary lecture on critical education to the annual meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies at Colorado College on 17 April 2015. Several members of the audience asked for copies of the lecture, which led to the idea of publishing a slightly revised version of the talk here on *H-France*.

We invited Professor Cusset to deliver a lecture on education for two reasons. First, the focus of the SFHS meeting—in keeping with the liberal arts college setting—was on teaching and education. Second, we knew that Professor Cusset's intellectual interests and itinerary provided him with the means to engage in provocative reflections on the ways French and American educational theories and practices have both limited and opened up opportunities for creativity in teaching and learning. His knowledge of both systems of education arose fluidly out of his professional itinerary. After completing his education at the École Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud, he spent almost a decade in New York, working for four of those years in the 1990s as director of the Bureau du Livre Français de New York, the French government agency that promotes the translation of French works into English and their publication in the United States. From that position he came to be an expert on the translation and creative mistranslation of ideas and works across the Atlantic. One product of that experience was his 2003 book, *French Theory: Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Cie et les mutations de la vie intellectuelle aux États-Unis*.<sup>1</sup>

Today, François Cusset holds a professorship in intellectual history at the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, with foci on American studies, cultural transferences between France and the United State, and minority studies. In addition to *French Theory*, he has published works on queer theory, May 1968, and the place of intellectual and scientific studies in contemporary culture.

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<sup>1</sup> François Cusset, *French Theory: Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Cie et les mutations de la vie intellectuelle aux États-Unis* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2003). Translated as *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deluze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).