

# Hist 309: The History of Paris from Antiquity to the Present

Time: T/TR from 11:00-12:20

Location: TB 76

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Office hours: By appointment only

## Introduction

Paris: the City of Lights, the City of Love, the Capital of all the World. This interdisciplinary course will survey the history of Paris from Roman and Gaulish antiquity to the present day. Through film, music, architecture, art, philosophy, and literature, we will chart the slow growth of the city (and its inhabitants), as it developed from a provincial town to the cultural hub of Western Europe. The readings for the course range from post-modern theories of urban existence to first-hand accounts of Parisian life. Along the way, we will read first-hand accounts of life in Paris from the 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The lectures and readings will center on a series of overlapping questions: How did Paris take shape (culturally and physically) over the course of two millennia? What traces remain of *vieux* Paris? How should we conceptualize and theorize the city? How did/do groups and individuals negotiate and appropriate urban spaces? And finally, how have Parisians, provincials, and foreigners 'experienced' Paris?

## Books

Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City*  
Orest Ranum, *Paris in the Age of Absolutism*  
Sébastien Mercier/Jeremy Popkin, *Panorama of Paris*  
Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World*  
Corinne Maier, *Bonjour Laziness: Why Hard Work Doesn't Pay*  
David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Hausmann*  
[available as a course pack in book store]  
Course pack [available in book store]

Also, there will be some digitized maps on Moodle.

\*Note that most of the readings for this course can be purchased; at least one will be located online; duplicates of most of the books listed above will be placed on reserve.

## Organization

The structure of the class is fairly straightforward. The course is primarily lecture-based, but there will be a discussion component on Thursdays. Due to the size of the course, however, class participation will not factor into the grade. Nonetheless, I expect that all students will a) do all the readings, b) bring them to class on Thursdays, and c) ask questions whenever necessary. The assignments for the course are as follows: there will be three 5-page critical analyses of primary sources, and one final research paper of 12-15 pages. I will give specific guidelines for the first three papers. The final paper, on the other hand, allows for a good deal of flexibility. I will provide possible paper topics, but students will be allowed to write on any aspect of Parisian history (as long as primary sources are used).

### Assignments:

Three 5-page papers: 60% (20% each)

One 15-page paper: 40%

Class participation: Encouraged but not graded

## Essays

All of the essays that you will write in this class (3 short essays, and 1 long) should a) use primary sources, and b) employ a theoretical framework (whether that framework comes from Knox & Pinch, or other sources). Never assume that texts are objective, transparent windows onto the past. When scrutinizing sources, always ask yourself the following questions: 1) What discourse(s) does a text participate in? 2) What tropes and images does a writer employ? 3) What might a text tell us about a particular context? In terms of logistics, the essays should be 1.5 spaced, with regular margins, 12-point font, and Chicago style citation. The first three essays will be 5 pages; the final essay will be around 15 pages. I will provide areas of focus for your essays, but the argument is up to you. That is, I do NOT want summaries or mere descriptions of the text. What I *do* want are historical or literary arguments about the texts as they relate to the history of Paris and theories of urban space.

### Week 1: Lutetia, the Parisii (Gauls), and Caesar

January 5: From Lutetia to Paris: The Origins of the City of Paris

January 7: Theorizing the City. **Turn in assignment on *arrondissements***

**Readings:** Knox & Pinch, *Urban Social Geography*, pp.41-57 [course pack];

Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City*, pp.xi-31 [purchase]

### Week 2: Early Middle Ages

January 12: From Clovis to Capet: The Capital in its Infancy, The Viking Invasion

January 14: Paris around 1200: Notre-Dame, Philip Augustus Wall, Louvre, Sorbonne

**Readings:** *Paris: An Electronic Tour of the Old City*, ed. R.W. Berger, pp.13-35 [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.32-61

### **Week 3: The Middle Ages**

January 19: The Hundred Years' War, the Plague, Charles V's Wall

January 21: Cycles and Patterns of Urban Religious Life in the Medieval Paris

**Readings:** Peter Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, pp.1-30 [course pack]; *Le Ménagier de Paris*, Dinners I-XV (7 pages) [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.62-95

### **Week 4: The Renaissance and the Wars of Religion**

January 26: The Renaissance, the Wars of Religion, and the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. **First Paper Due.**

January 28: The Seine in the Longue Durée

**Readings:** Rabelais, *Gargantua*, Ch.1 XVI-XVII (3 pages) [course pack], François Villon, selected poems (19 pages) [course pack]; Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, Book 1, Ch.X (7 pages) [course pack]; Pierre de l'Estoile, *The Paris of Henry of Navarre*, pp.149-153, 180-184, 187-194 [course pack]; *Paris: An Electronic Tour*, pp.82-90, 109-110, 114-123; Jones, *Paris*, pp.96-131

### **Week 5: The Grand Siècle**

February 2: From the Fronde to the Scientific Revolution

February 4: Louis XIV, the Police, and the Absolutizing of the City; listen to music from baroque period.

**Readings:** Bossuet, *Politics Drawn From the Very Words of Scripture*, pp.57-61, 81-85 [course pack], Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, Vol. V, pp. 254, 259-63, 271-274, 276-278 [course pack]; *Paris: An Electronic Tour*, pp.203-225; Orest Ranum *Paris in the Age of Absolutism*, chs.1, 5, 10 [purchase – the rest of the book is highly recommended reading]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.132-172

### **Week 6: Paris in the Enlightenment: The City of Light**

February 9: The Enlightenment in Paris: Academies, Libraries, Reading, Clubs, Salons, and Public Intellectual Space

February 11: The Social Landscape in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: Migration to the City of Light (Towns Within the City); Travel Guides and the Travel Industry; Stratification by Class and Neighborhood; Faubourgs; New Additions to the City (Sainte-Genviève, École Militaire, cafés, lanterns, etc)

**Readings:** Sébastien Mercier, *Panorama of Paris*, pp.23-35, 36-43, 47-49, 56-59, 79-80, 92-99, 111-113, 132-134, 142-148, 159-165, 172-178, 180-181, 196-198, 202-209, 215-221, 227-229 [purchase]; Restif de la Bretonne, *The Nocturnal Spectator*, pp. 7-8, 17-18, 27-28, 47-49, 99, 135-138, 205-206, 289-292 [course pack]; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (selection of 9 pages) [course pack]; Jacques-Louis Ménétra, *Journal of My Life*, pp.19-27, 113-114, 120, 130-131, 141, 176-183 [course pack]; Arthur Young, *Travels in France during 1787, 1788, and 1789*, pp.9, 69-71, 77-79 [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, 173-214

**Optional:** To see a guide book of Paris from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Google the following title:

Germain Brice, *Description de la ville de Paris et de tout ce qu'elle contient*, 1752

### **Week 7: Reading Week**

February 16 & 18: NO CLASS

### **Week 8: The French Revolution**

February 23: Death in Paris: Cemeteries (Montparnasse, St. Médard, Père Lachaise, Cimetière des Innocents, the Catacombs) and the Campaign to Sanitize Burial Grounds. **Second Paper Due.**

February 25: The Revolution and the Transformations of Public Space: Political Clubs, the Place Royale, Insurrections, the Guillotine in the Place de la Révolution and the Spectacle of Death, the Sections of Paris, the Panthéon, Festivals, Paintings and Drawings of Building Schemes from 1789-1799; Listen to **Music** from the French Revolution

**Readings:** Ménétra, *Journal of My Life*, 217-238 [course pack], Arthur Young, *Travels in France*, pp.102-120, 125-126, 130-131, 218-222 [course pack]; Restif de la Bretonne, *The Nocturnal Spectator*, pp. 239-245, 297-310; Restif de la Bretonne, *My Revolution: Promenades in Paris, 1789-1794*, pp.313-349 [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.215-262

### **Week 9: The Empire, the Restoration, the July Monarchy, the Revolution of 1848**

March 2: From Napoleon's Empire to the Bourbon Restoration

March 4: 1830 and 1848, Socialism, Moderate Republicanism, and Royalism

**Readings:** Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, pp.142-199 [course pack]; James E. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*, pp.228-236 [course pack]; Mark Traugott, *The French Worker: Autobiographies from the Early Industrial Era* (selections from Martin Nadaud's personal account of 1830), pp.198-209; Roger Price, *Documents on the French Revolution of 1848*, pp. 48-52, 65-67, 74-77, 81-84, 87-93, 116-118, 140-145 [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.263-298;

### **Week 10: Napoleon III, Haussmann, and the Paris Commune**

March 9: Baron Hausmann Redesigns Paris

March 11: The Paris Commune (briefly) Reclaims the Streets

**Readings:** David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*, pp.13-40, 185-210, 341-368 [purchase]; Stewart Edwards, *The Communards of Paris, 1871* (selection of primary documents), pp.44-49, 53-65, 74-75, 108-110, 161-169 [course pack]; Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, pp.451-454, 1082-1087, 1121-1123, 1256-1260 [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.299-343

### **Week 11: The Belle Époque**

March 16: Art and Architecture: Eiffel Tower, Sacré-Coeur, Impressionism and the Art World, the Rise of the Museum, Bourgeois Promenades. **Third Paper Due.**

March 18: Paris as Cultural Capital: Universal Exhibitions of 1889 & 1900; the Paris Métropolitain (Subway)

**Readings:** Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World*, pp.1-17, 149-176, 230-260, 346-373, 398-433 [purchase]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.344-384

### **Week 12: WWI, WWII, and the Vichy Regime**

March 23: Paris between the Wars. Watch portions of *Les quatre cent coups* (1959)

March 25: The Nightmare of Vichy

**Readings:** George Orwell, *Down and Out in London and Paris*, chs.1-23 (online at <http://www.netcharles.com/orwell/books/downandout.htm>; the text is about 85 pages); Sarah Kofman, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, pp.3-34 [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.385-425

### **Week 13: The Thirty Glorious Years and May '68**

March 30: Economic Growth, New Immigrants, Urban Sprawl & the Banlieue, New Architectural Styles and Building Projects

April 1: May '68: A French Revolution?

**Readings:** Feenberg & Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets* (selection of primary documents from May 1968), pp.vi, 77-91 [course pack]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.426-463

**Optional:** Watch the film, *La Haine*

**Optional:** Raymond Queneau, *Zazie in the metro*

### **Week 14: Paris in Recent Years**

April 6: Mitterand and Chirac, or What's Left of the Old Regime?

April 8: Sarkozy, Urban Riots, Head Scarfs, and Cultural/Social/Religious Divisions;

**Readings:** Corinne Maier, *Hello Laziness!*, pp.3-122 [purchase]; Jones, *Paris*, pp.464-474; Irina Mihalache, "Imagining the Diasporic Link: The Franco-Algerian Media Dialogues on the 2005 'Emeutes' in France," accessible online at <http://culturalshifts.com/archives/306> [online]

**Final Paper Due on April 12<sup>th</sup>. The paper can be submitted to my mailbox in the history department OR to my email inbox by 4:30 pm.**

#### **Ideas for first essay:**

- 1) Analyze the ways in which Medieval writers associated Paris with religion or commerce.
- 2) Use Knox & Pinch to analyze Medieval Paris: What were the symbols in the city? What did Paris possess that could be considered monumental architecture—and what values were enshrined in those buildings? Discuss the idea of the carceral city, purified space, and the semiotics of urban geography (how neighborhoods or streets were associated with certain values). Use primary and secondary sources to make your argument.
- 3) Analyze Abelard's autobiography. How did he understand and interpret his own experiences? What tropes does he use to tell his story? What might this text tell us about the culture of Paris in this period?

#### **Ideas for second essay:**

- 1) Discuss absolutism and how Paris might have become ‘absolutized’ in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, connect theorists such as Bodin and Bossuet to the transformations of physical space.
- 2) Discuss the impact on (or literary and artistic images of) Paris during the Wars of Religion.
- 3) Analyze the writings of the philosophes and other visitors to the city in the 18<sup>th</sup> century? There is no shortage of things to write about: Mercier’s conceptions of public space, Bretonne’s depiction of street-level political life (and deviancy), Arthur Young’s ‘foreign’ perspective, and so on. You might compare Ménétra’s working-class vision of Paris with that of Mercier or Rousseau. In general, pay attention to how these writers depict the culture of the city. How do they tell their stories? What do they focus on (and ignore)? What can these writings tell us about the culture of Paris in the 18C?

**Ideas for third paper:**

- 1) How did Mercier, Bretonne, Ménétra, etc. ‘experience’ the French Revolution? How do these writers depict Paris during the great upheavals of 1789-1799?
- 2) Analyze Martin Nadaud’s account of the Revolution of 1830.
- 3) Analyze the political documents from 1848. What can we learn from them about the political situation before, during, and immediately after the Revolution of 1848?
- 4) How did the Communards of 1871 draw on images, traditions, political legacies, and tactics from the past? What was ‘new’ about this ‘event’?
- 5) Using Higonnet, analyze the universal exhibitions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Ideas for the fourth paper (which can treat any period or theme from the class):**

- 1) Paris has inspired a great many metaphors, associations, and stigmas over the past several centuries. Analyze one or more of these images/representations: the city as chaotic and tumultuous, the city as a religious bastion, the city as full of binaries of sacred and profane spaces.
- 2) Analyze the Vichy period and the role of Paris in the Holocaust.
- 3) Analyze the documents from the near-Revolution of 1968.
- 4) Use Knox & Pinch to make an argument about the ‘purified’ space of the city vis-à-vis the ‘impure’ and ‘chaotic’ banlieue.
- 5) Discuss the way in which Paris has acted as a site of refuge or a promised land: migrants moving to the city in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the ex-pat anglophone literary world of the early 20C (Hemingway, Orwell, Henry Miller, Gertrude Stein, etc.), the artistic community of the same period (Picasso, Modigliani, etc.).
- 6) Discuss and analyze a monument, public space, or building as a lieu de mémoire (see Pierre Nora’s essay “Between Memory and History: Les lieux de mémoire,” *Representations*, n.26 (Spring, 1989): 7-24 as well as his edited volume on lieux de mémoire). It would be particularly interesting to see how a “site” (Mur des Fédérés, the Place de la Concorde, etc.) has changed its meaning and significance over time. Your essay could focus on the transformation and meaning of public space or public memorials since the French Revolution.
- 7) Discuss any of Paris’ current problems and challenges (ecological, political, social, the ‘integration’ of minorities, etc.) from an historical perspective.