

**Dreams of the New in Post-war France (FR 481/525 Seminar, Spring 2020)  
Capen 109, Wednesdays 4 – 6:40 PM**

Description

A number of French writers, thinkers, and artists after World War II proposed radical notions of *the new*. They decided that the only way to revive language, space, and time, after these key elements of symbolic life had collapsed under the traumatic events of the Holocaust, was to begin creative work at “degree zero”: by starting without the guidelines and standards left behind by cultural traditions in a world that had fallen apart. In other words, these authors, through experimental fiction, theory, cinema, and theater in French confront the destruction of the collective and of its very stage to ask what it means to think and write, to make an artwork, or to build and inhabit a city after it has been shattered by human acts of violence.

To think “the new” also entails asking what it means to remember, dream, and repeat. In colloquial speech we talk about “our dreams” as our great wishes and projects for the future. For its part, Freudian dream theory—where dreams refer to the productions we carry out in our sleep—claims that a dream is the fulfillment of a wish. But what happens when the future “our dreams” envision has been shattered? What kinds of wishes are left? And how do we understand nightmares here? Freud himself asked this question by thinking of (WWI) war veterans’ insistent nightmares, and discovered an important function of repetition in the unconscious, which is especially relevant when the work of remembering faces the obstacle of trauma. This unique sense of unconscious repetition was key for both psychoanalysis and the French authors who developed New Wave cinema, the New Novel, “writing degree zero,” as well as other new conceptions of community and of the subject of unconscious desire (Irigaray, Cixous, Deleuze, MacCannell, Dufourmantelle, Comay, McNulty, de la Torre).

This seminar will involve discussions in different formats (roundtable, small groups) around texts, films, plays, viewings, invited lectures. Reading in French is encouraged but not obligatory (required for students in French programs). Discussion will take place in English. Evaluation will be based on consistent attendance and participation supported by preparation, and on mid-term and final papers See the Grades and Calendar sections of this syllabus for paper length, submission deadlines, and assignment dates.

Required Materials (shorter texts provided in PDF)

Texts: Freud, Sigmund. *The “Wolfman” and Other Cases*.

Beckett, Samuel. *En attendant Godot/Waiting for Godot*

Duras, Marguerite. *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein (The Ravishing of Lol Stein)*

Films (see the calendar for information on where they can be streamed online; consider also using the UB and Erie county libraries):

Chris Marker *La Jetée*

Jean-Luc Godard, *Le petit soldat*

Resnais/Robbe-Grillet, *L’année dernière à Marienbad*

Jacques Demy, *Les demoiselles de Rochefort*

Varda, *Cléo de 5 à 7*

Grades and Course Structure (Intensive Mode for graduate students)

15 % Attendance and participation. Full credit is based on consistent attendance to the entire class sessions, and on active participation in discussions and in-class activities, demonstrating

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thoughtful, attentive reading and viewing preparation for the session. Please bring the texts assigned for each session and refrain from looking at your phone during the session. Although I may not mention it in the moment, please note that being on your phone or screen to communicate with others amounts to an absence. Since the seminar only meets once a week, the limit of unexcused absences without affecting this part of your grade is 1. After 1 absence your participation grade will drop by one grade for each absence.

15% Commentary/question based on each theoretical reading assignment. Turn these in through UBlerns by 10 AM on Wednesdays.

15% Film discussion questions: answer one of the instructor's questions and produce a question of your own for each film, to share in class. Submit through UBlerns by 10 AM on Wednesdays.

20% Midterm Paper. *Due April 1<sup>st</sup> (electronic submission by 4 PM in Word document. 12 pt. font, Times New Roman or similar, double spaced, 1 inch margins). Undergraduates: 5-6 pages; graduates: 7-8 pages.*

Papers will discuss a topic or problem covered in class through a reading of a text or film studied in class. Papers should perform close readings of texts and images (if applicable) and make arguments based on close readings of primary texts, using secondary sources as support. You are encouraged to discuss your paper ideas with me before spring break, during office hours. Make an appointment with me if necessary. A workshop to develop a paper topic will be offered in class on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

10 % Attendance to at least 3 guest lectures announced on this syllabus.

5% Presentation of paper projects. May 6<sup>th</sup> in class. These will be 5 minute presentations where you describe your paper projects to other seminar participants, followed by 2 minutes of responses from participants, to be received as feedback for your final revision. Presentations should show where the midterm paper was and what you are adding/changing/improving for the final version. You may use slides to present main textual passages, images, and bullet points with main ideas for your paper.

20% Final Paper. *Due Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, by 6 PM, following midterm formatting guidelines.* This is an extension of your midterm paper, citing 3 to 5 secondary sources that you read and found helpful for your argument. Take care to cite correctly using MLA or Chicago citation style. Include a Works Cited or Bibliography, according to your chosen citation style. Undergraduates: 9-10 pages; graduates: 15 pages

## **Calendar**

### 1. Jan 29

Intro to course, Dream theory, Freud *Introductory Lectures V, VI, VII*  
Buñuel and Dalí, *Le chien andalou*, 1929 (in-class screening) YouTube  
Cocteau, *Le sang d'un poète*, 1930 (in-class screening) Vimeo

Suggested further reading : Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* Chapter 2.

2. Feb 5

Resnais, *Nuit et brouillard (Night and Fog)*, 1955 (in-class screening) Vimeo, Amazon

Reading: Freud, “Remembering, Repeating, Working Through”

Reading prep for Resnais film – any or all of the following:

Pollock and Silverman – “Intro: Concentrationary Cinema”

Didi-Huberman “Opening the Camps, Closing the Eyes”

Higgins, “Intro: The Politics of Style” *New Novel and New Wave Postwar Politics*

3. Feb 12

Dream theory, Introductory Lectures IX, X, XI

Chris Marker *La Jetée* – (film, watch before class) Lockwood, Criterion Channel, Amazon

Sarraute, « L’ère du soupçon » (« The Age of Suspicion »)

Suggested further reading : Sarraute, « Conversation et sous-conversation » ; « Ce que voient les oiseaux » (« Conversation and Sub-conversation » ; « What Birds See »)

4. Feb 19

Sarraute, *Tropismes* – selection

Barthes, *Le degré zéro de l’écriture* – selection (1, first 3 essays)

Beckett, *En attendant Godot* (watch a staging before class, bring written play, acquire!)

Suggested further reading: Jean Michel Rabaté, *Think, Pig!*

5. Feb 26

Freud, *An Infantile Neurosis (The “Wolfman”)* Sections I - VI

6. Mar 4

Freud, *An Infantile Neurosis (The «Wolfman»)* Sections VII - end

Further suggested reading: Freud, “Analysis Terminable, Interminable”

Comay, « Proust’s Remains » (*October* 144, Spring 2013 pp 3-24. Access: JSTOR)

7. Mar 11

Resnais/Robbe-Grillet, *L’année dernière à Marienbad* (watch before class) iTunes, Google Play

Robbe-Grillet *Pour un nouveau roman* – selection

Workshop to determine paper topic

8. Mar 18 -SPRING BREAK

Duras, *Le rapt de Lol V. Stein* (novel – acquire!)

9. Mar 25

Duras, *Le rapt de Lol V. Stein*

Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* – selection

Further suggested reading: Freud, Chapter 7, *The Interpretation of Dreams; Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

**Prof. Fernanda Negrete**

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*Guest Speaker: Shanna de la Torre – Comparative Literature Graduate Conference: Friday, March 27. Time TBA.*

10. Apr 1

Lacan, *FFC* – selection

MacCannell, “The City, Year Zero”

**Midterm Paper Due at 4PM**

11. Apr 8

Varda, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (watch before class) Criterion Channel, Lockwood Library

Cixous, « Le rire de la méduse » (« The Laugh of the Medusa »)

Irigaray Chapters TBD from *Speculum of the other woman*

Suggested further reading: Geneviève Sellier, “The Independent Filmmakers of the Left Bank: A ‘Feminist’ Alternative?”

12. Apr 15 – Tracy McNulty Guest Lecture, Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture, at Capen 107. Thursday, April 16 at 2PM – Guest Seminar.

13. Apr 22

Godard, *Le petit soldat* (film, watch before class) YouTube, Criterion Channel, Lockwood

Deleuze, « La pensée et le cinéma »

Didi-Huberman, *Passés cités par JLG* – selection

14. Apr 29

Jacques Demy, *Les demoiselles de Rochefort* (watch before class) iTunes, Google Play, Amazon

Deleuze, « Du souvenir aux rêves » (« From recollection to dreams »), in *L’image temps*

15. May 6 – Conclusions, in-class presentations (on paper developments)

**Final Paper Due Wednesday, May 13 at 6 PM.**