

FRENCH 198

LITTÉRATURE QUÉBÉCOISE

This course is intended for advanced students in French. A prerequisite of FREN 114 is indispensable; FREN 124, *Culture et Littérature Québécoises*, is recommended but not required. The goal of the course is to introduce students to the major literary movements in Québec. The structure of the course is tightly linked to the historical and political issues that characterize a culture under attack, from both the outside and the inside. Texts, class discussion, written work, and exams will be effected entirely in French.

As an advanced course in French, students will read several integral prose fiction texts, many poems, and several essays. In addition, popular songs and film will comprise the basis of the course. There are many reference works at Axinn Library, which will be indicated on the syllabus and should be exploited by students for their research. A good amount of writing will ensure that students not only progress in written expression in French, but also in demonstrating their progress in comprehending the links between politico-cultural movements in Québec and their literary expression.

Given the relatively short history of Québec (compared to that of France) as well as the importance of literary expression after the *Révolution tranquille* (the quiet revolution), which is to say after 1960, the majority of texts in this course come from the modern and postmodern periods and movements. Nonetheless, in order to appreciate the movement from Catholic to Duplessis Québec, a clear understanding of the beginnings of Québécois history and society must precede an examination of the more innovative forms of *post-revolutionary* literature. Thus, excerpts of histories and memoirs will accompany the reading of representative *rural novels* that depict the society of French-speaking Québec in the late 18th and 19th centuries. A detailed study of the cultural and literary institutions that are born after the *Acte d'Union* of 1840, which essentially condemns French *the language, the culture, and the people* will allow students to discover the political and social import of a Québécois identity expressed in literature.

Students will read and discuss literary texts in tandem with the knowledge they acquire concerning Québécois history and socio-political movements. *Explication de textes* will be one of the major tools of classroom discussion and written exercises. Each student will be assigned a pertinent passage in a text to present to the class. In this exercise, the student's role will be to guide students and to facilitate a class discussion of the passage and its relation to the whole text. At the same time, students will garner experience in public speaking in French. Students will have a mid-term exam and a final exam, where they will be able to demonstrate their mastery of both historico-literary movements and literary analysis. Short, periodic writing assignments will offer students the chance to demonstrate their reading and analytical skills in writing. There will also be a final paper, where students will choose a text where they will exploit a topic of literary, linguistic, political, and/or social impact. This paper will be approximately 10 pages in length, and will incorporate a literary expression and a critical and analytical proficiency.

The course grade will be constituted thus:

attendance & preparedness	10%
guided readings	15%
paper	25%

mid-term exam	15%
final exam	20%
written assignments	15%

READINGS

Excerpts from:

Dichinson, John Alexander. *A Short History of Quebec*

Rioux, Marcel. *French-Canadian Society*

Vallieres, Pierre. *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*.

Jacques Cartier, *Voyages en Nouvelle-France*.

Philippe Aubert de Gaspé père, *Les Anciens Canadiens*.

Légendes québécoises

Germaine Guèvremont, *Le Survenant*.

Émile Nelligan, *Poésies complètes* (selection).

Gabrielle Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion*.

Anne Hébert, *Le Torrent*, or *Le Tombeau des rois*.

Texts from: Gaston Miron; Gatien Lapointe; Jacques Brault; Yves Préfontaine

Jean-Paul Desbiens, *Les Insolences du Frère Untel*

La Chanson populaire: Claude Léveillé; Billes Vigneault; Clémence Desrochers; Pauline Julien;

Beau Dommage.

Michel Tremblay (title of play to be chosen)

Monique Proulx, *Le Sexe des étoiles* or Nicole Brossard, *La lettre aoléienne*.

In sum, 5 novels, 1 play, some poetry and songs and popular legends, plus a minimum of political, historical, and sociological excerpts.

Typical Assignments

1. How are the Québec legends you have read evidence of attempts to divert from the Catholic strictures of mainstream literature?
 2. How does the rural novel (Guèvremont; Hémon) present the struggle of the French settlers in view of their heritage as fur-trappers?
 3. In what ways does the urban novel (Tremblay; Hébert) reflect a change in the hopes and desires of Québécois people?
 4. What political and social strife is manifested in Nelligan's poetry?
 5. How does the Quiet Revolution affect the 1960s generation of writers?
 6. Explain, using one text, the language situation in Québec paying close attention to the time period represented in the text.
 7. How do the women's issues that are presented in the texts of Proulx and Brossard coincide with the larger issue of sovereignty?
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SAMPLE COURE OUTLINE

Week 1

Introduction to Québécois history. Discussion of French and English presence in North America in 17th century and the nature of first French colonies in Nouvelle-France. Discussion of Québécois *Adialecte* and *Accent*; examples of written representation of same, Tremblay, excerpt from *L'ange cornu aux ailes de tôle*. Readings on history.

Week 2

1759-1763, *La Conquête* and *Le Traité de Paris* and the myth of abandonment, treason, and the resultant withdrawal of the French community. Québécois legends. Guèvremont.

Week 3

Guèvremont

Week 4

La Rébellion des Patriotes 1837-38; *L'Acte d'Union* 1840. François-Xavier Garneau, *Histoire du Canada*. Émile Nelligan.

Week 5

Movement toward urban literature. Anne Hébert.

Week 6

Hébert.

Week 7

Mid-term

Week 8

1960 and *La Révolution tranquille*; Gaston Miron; Gatien Lapointe; Jacques Brault; Yves Préfontaine

Week 9

La Question de la langue: Jean-Paul Desbiens, *Les Insolences du Frère Untel* (extraits); Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (extraits).

Week 10

La Chanson populaire: Claude Léveillée; Billes Vigneault; Clémence Desrochers; Pauline Julien; Beau Dommage.

Week 11

Michel Tremblay.

Week 12

Michel Tremblay.

Week 13

Monique Proulx, *Le Sexe des étoiles* or Nicole Brossard, *La lettre aoléienne*.

Week 14

Monique Proulx, *Le Sexe des étoiles* or Nicole Brossard, *La lettre aoléienne*.