

Intellectuals in French Political Culture

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Office Hrs.: Tuesday & Thursday: 10:00-11:00; 1:45-2:15
And by Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The great crises that shook European civilization in the twentieth century--the world wars, the economic collapse of the 1930s, the rise of fascist and communist regimes, and the Cold War--brought artists and writers into the public forum, creating what has been more recently labeled the "public intellectual." This development has, in its turn, stimulated a lively debate on the proper role of the intellectual in the life of Western society. The emergence of the public intellectual and the controversy that accompanied it has been particularly acute in France, where intellectuals have played a greater political role than in any other Western society.

This course will focus on several stages in this debate. It will begin with an examination of the roots of the modern intellectual in the Enlightenment and the Industrial and Romantic revolutions of the early nineteenth century. Attention will then shift to the Dreyfus Affair at the end of the century when the term *intellectuel* first entered the public vocabulary. Here we will look at contrasting "models" of the intellectual as they were first articulated during and just after the Affair. Next, we will look at the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution, both of which had a profound impact on intellectuals. Though most French intellectuals tended to distance themselves from political and social concerns in the 1920s, by the early 1930s there was a major sea change of attitude in response to the Great Depression and the rise of fascism, particularly to the rise of Hitler's Third Reich. As intellectuals mobilized under the banner of the Popular Front, Paris became the Mecca of the *engagé* intellectual.

The high point of "engagement" was reached with the rise of existentialism in the wake of the defeat of France in 1940 and the German Occupation. Here we will examine the role of existentialist intellectuals like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir in the politics of the Cold War. This was a time when French intellectuals achieved celebrity status not only in France but throughout the West. The last section of the course deals with the most recent period and includes consideration of the student revolt of 1968, the rise of postmodernist gurus like Michel Foucault, and finally the decline of the "classic intellectual" beginning in the 1980s.

Finally, as will become apparent, the history of intellectuals opens not only a revealing window on French political culture but, no less importantly, on the ongoing debates surrounding the construction, destruction, and reconstruction of French national identity

from the Enlightenment to the present.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

To be purchased (indicated below by *):

- Aron, Raymond. *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (Norton, Transaction Publishers)
Aronson, Ronald. *Camus and Sartre* (University of Chicago)
Camus, Albert. *The Plague* (Vintage)
Kaplan, Alice. *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach*
(University of Chicago)
Koestler, Arthur. *Darkness at Noon* (Bantam and others) 131-46; 155-58; 203-17
Lottman, Herbert. *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular
Front to the Cold War* (Houghton Mifflin, University of Chicago)

On Electronic Reserve (indicated below as ER):

- de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*, xiii-xxix; 716-32
Benda, Julien. *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, 29-59
Christofferson, Michael Scott. *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 229-66
Darnton, Robert. "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature," in
Jack Censer, *The French Revolution and Intellectual History*, 47-74
Drake, David. *French Intellectuals and Politics*, 8-43
Ibid. *Intellectuals and Politics in Post-War France*, 128-66
David Fisher, "The Rolland-Barbusse Debate," in Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the
Politics of Intellectual Engagement*, 79-111
Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*, 3-16; 195-228
Ibid. "Truth and Power" in *Power/Knowledge*, 109-133
Furet, François. *The Passing of an Illusion*, 62-92
Ibid. "The Revolution is Over," in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 36-72
Garrard, Graeme. *Rousseau's Counter-Enlightenment*, 1-27 and 55-68
Gay, Peter. *Voltaire's Politics*, 273-308
Gide, André. In Richard Crossman, ed., *The God that Failed*, 165-95
Graña, César. *Modernity and its Discontents*, 3-28, 87-126
Hanna, Martha. *The Mobilization of Intellect*, 78-105
Khilnani, Sunil. *Arguing Revolution*, 155-78
Marx, Karl *The Portable Marx*, 131-46; 155-58; 203-17
Merlau-Ponty, Maurice. *Humanism and Terror*, xiii-xlvii; 1-24,
Nolte, Ernst. *The Three Faces of Fascism*, 54-87
Popkin, Jeremy *History of Modern France*, 35-59
Sartre, Jean-Paul, *The Devil and the Good Lord*
Ibid. "Existentialism"
Ibid. "Introducing *Les Temps modernes*," in *What is Literature?* 249-67

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance Policy. The class depends on your regular attendance *and* participation.

In a class that meets once a week, to miss one class is to miss the week. In the case of an *unavoidable* absence, please notify me in advance of class by email. Classes will not be cancelled because of inclement weather unless UNCG officially cancels them (if unsure, check the UNCG Home Page). However, if you are driving in from a distance, use your best judgment—which I will respect.

2. Writing Assignments. You will be required to do two historiographical essays in the course of the semester. As suggested by the adjective “historiographical,” the essays must be analytical rather than merely descriptive; they must also highlight problems of interpretation, methodology, and perspective.

The first will be shorter (about 8-10 pages typed, double-spaced) and can focus on any theme taken from the weekly topics. The theme might be as wide as the week’s topic or, preferably, you might choose to narrow it (e. g., for the August 24 reading you probably would be better off selecting either Voltaire or Rousseau rather than trying to write on both; Popkin, since it is a textbook treatment of the French Revolution, would not be suitable). To add some grist to your mill, in addition to the assigned readings for that week, you should use the equivalent of one additional book and two articles. You may hand in the first assignment at any time *as long as it is before the fall break* (i.e., before Oct. 6). In this first paper you will have the opportunity for revision (i.e., a draft will be handed in; I will comment on it; only your final draft will be graded).

The second essay will be more substantive (about 10-12 pages). You may choose a theme from the topics from any week (as long as it is not the same topic you picked for the first essay). Again, you may, if you wish, pick a theme as broad as the week’s topic; however, in most cases it would be advisable to choose a theme more focused than the week’s topic. In any case, in addition to the week’s assigned reading, you should use the equivalent of at least two additional books and three additional articles for this essay. There will only be one draft of this second paper and it will be due on Reading Day (December 5).

To help you get started with your search for material beyond the assigned reading, I have included a short list of “additional readings” that are available in English after each week’s “assigned reading.” Don’t look at these additional reading suggestions as exhaustive; once you decide on a theme, you’ll need to do some bibliographical research on your own. Be forewarned: you might have to tailor your essay to what is available in English (unless, of course, you read French).

One final note. Once you have located a potential theme for your essay, *please run it by me before getting too deeply engaged*. I might be able to steer you away from topics that would be unmanageable or, alternately, help you bring your topic into sharper focus. Also, I might be able to help you with bibliography.

3. Discussion. It is absolutely essential that you should have completed all of the readings on the day that a particular topic is to be discussed in class. Your discussion grade—which will be a significant part of your final grade—will be determined by the *frequency* and *quality* of your contribution to class discussion.

4. Grades. The following elements will determine your final grade:
—first historiographical essay: 30%

- second historiographical essay: 40%
- discussion grade–30%

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS (all dates are subject to adjustment)

I: THE ORIGINS OF THE INTELLECTUAL

Aug. 17: Introduction

Aug. 24: The Enlightenment and the French Revolution

Required Reading:

- Peter Gay, *Voltaire's Politics*, 273-308, ER
- Graeme Garrard, *Rousseau's Counter-Enlightenment*, 1-27 and 55-68, ER
- Jeremy Popkin, *History of Modern France*, 35-59, ER

Additional Reading:

- Jack Censer, *The French Revolution and Intellectual History*
- Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*
- Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*
- Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*
- Gary Kates, *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*
- Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*
- James Van Horn Melton, "Opacity and Transparency: French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe*

31: From the French to the Romantic and Marxist Revolutions

Required Reading:

- Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature," in Jack Censer, *The French Revolution and Intellectual History*, 47-74, ER
- César Graña, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, 1-36; 87-126, ER
- Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*, 131-46; 155-58; 203-17. ER

Additional Reading:

- Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*
- Alan Kahan, *Aristocratic Liberalism*
- Frank Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris*

Sept. 7: The Birth of the "Classic" Intellectual: The Dreyfus Affair

Required Reading:

- David Drake, *French Intellectuals and Politics*, 8-43, ER
- Victor Brombert, "Toward a Portrait of the French Intellectual," in *The Intellectual Hero*, 20-40, ER
- Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 54-87, ER

Additional Reading:

Venita Datta, *Birth of a National Icon: The Literary Avant-Garde and the Origins of the Intellectual in France*
 Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics*
 Norman Kleebatt, ed., *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth, and Justice*
 Michael Burns, *France and the Dreyfus Affair: A Documentary History*
 Jean-Denis Bredin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus*
 Michel Winock, *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and Fascism in France*
 H. L. Wesseling, "Reluctant Crusaders: French Intellectuals and the Dreyfus Affair," *Stanford French Review* (Winter 1977)
 Eugen Weber, *The Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France*
 Stephen Wilson, "The Action Française in French Intellectual Life," *The Historical Journal* 12, no. 2 (1969)
 Robert Soucy, *Fascism in France: the Case of Maurice Barrès*
 Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France*
 Deborah Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style*

II. WAR, REVOLUTION, DEPRESSION AND THE RISE OF THE "COMMITTED" INTELLECTUAL

Sept. 14: The First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the 1920s **Required Reading:**

Martha Hanna, *Mobilization of Intellect*, 78-105, ER

François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 62-92, ER

David Fisher, "The Rolland-Barbusse Debate," in Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement*, 79-111, ER

Julien Benda, *Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, 29-59, ER

Additional Reading:

Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*

Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*

Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*

Frank Field, *British and French Writers of the First World War*

Ibid., *Three French Writers and the Great War*

Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present*

Ray Nichols, *Treason, Tradition, and the Intellectual: Julien Benda and Political Discourse*

Martyn Cornick, *The Nouvelle Revue Française under Jean Paulhan, 1925-1940*

H. Lewis, *Dada Turns Red: The Politics of Surrealism*

21: The Great Depression and the 1930s

Required Reading:

*Herbert Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 1-138

André Gide, in Richard Crossman, ed., *The God that Failed*, 165-95, ER

Additional Reading:

David Caute, *Communism and French Intellectuals*
Ibid., *The Fellow-Travellers*
David Schalk, *The Spectrum of Political Engagement*
Paul Mazgaj, "Engagement and the French Nationalist Right: The Case of the Jeune Droite," *European History Quarterly* 32 no. 2
Mary Jean Green, *Fiction in the Historical Present: French Writers and the Thirties*
Alan Sheridan, *André Gide: A Life in the Present*
Tom Conner, ed., *André Gide's Politics*
Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s*
Jean Lacouture, *André Malraux*

Sept. 28: Intellectual as Communist: The Case of Arthur Koestler

Required Reading:

*Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, complete

Additional Reading:

S. Koch, *Stalin, Willi Muenzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals*
Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*
Stéphane Courtois, ed., *The Black Book of Communism*
François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*
Richard Crossman, ed., *The God that Failed*
Iain Hamilton, *Koestler: A Biography*

Oct. 5: Intellectual as Fascist: The Case of Robert Brasillach

Required Reading:

*Alice Kaplan, *The Collaborator*, complete

Additional Reading:

William Tucker, *The Fascist Ego: A Political Biography of Robert Brasillach*
Paul Mazgaj, "Ce Mal du Siècle: The 'Romantic' Fascism of Robert Brasillach," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques* 23, no. 1
David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture*
Brian Jenkins, *France in the Era of Fascism: Essays on the French Authoritarian Right*

III. The Cold War and the Age of Sartre

12: From Occupation to Postwar: Existentialism at High Tide

Required Reading:

*Herbert Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 141-228
Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism," ER,
Ibid., "Introducing *Les Temps modernes*," in *What is Literature?*

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, xiii-xxix; 716-32, ER

Additional Reading:

Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: A Life*

Ronald Hayman, *Sartre: A Biography*

Deirdre Bair, *Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography*

Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*

Ronald Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World*

Anna Boschetti, *The Intellectual Enterprise: Sartre and Les Temps Modernes*

Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956*

Oct. 19: Existential Humanism: Albert Camus

Required Reading:

*Albert Camus, *The Plague*, complete

Additional Reading:

Olivier Todd, *Camus: A Life*

Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus*

Germaine Brée, *Camus*

Patrick McCarthy, *Camus*

Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility* (chapter on Camus)

26: The Cultural Cold War I: Between America and the Soviet Union

Required Reading:

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, xiii-xlvi;1-24, ER

Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Devil and the Good Lord*, On Closed Reserve

Additional Reading:

See relevant chapters of in Cohen-Solal, Hayman, Poster, Aronson, and Judt listed under additional reading for Oct. 12

Kerry Whiteside, *Merleau-Ponty and*

Foundation of an Existentialist Politics

Jean-Philippe Mathy, *Extrême-Occident: French Intellectuals and America*

Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: The History of French Anti-Americanism*

Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba*

Nov. 2: The Showdown: Camus vs. Sartre

Required Reading:

*Ronald Aronson, *Camus and Sartre*, complete

Additional Reading:

See relevant chapters in Cohen-Solal, Hayman, Poster, Aronson, and Judt listed under additional reading for Oct. 12 and relevant chapters in Todd, Lottman, Brée, and McCarthy under additional readings for Oct. 19

Germaine Brée, *Camus and Sartre*

Michel-Antoine Burnier, *Choice of Action: The French Existentialists on the Political Front Line*

9: The Cultural Cold War II: Aron, Liberalism, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom

Required Reading:

*Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, 1-93;135-324

Additional Reading:

Robert Colquhoun, *Raymond Aron*, two volumes

Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility* (chapter on Aron)

Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*

Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle of the Mind of Postwar Europe*

Charles Maier, *The Cold War in Europe*

John Lewis Gaddis, *What We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War*

IV. The Decline of the Classic Intellectual

Nov. 16: The “Events of May ‘68,” Foucault, and the New Intellectual *Required Reading:*

David Drake, *Intellectuals and Politics in Postwar France*, 128-66, ER

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1-16;195-228, ER

Ibid, “Truth and Power” in Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge*, 109-33, ER

Additional Reading:

Michael Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968*

David Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey Through 1968*

Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States*

Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism, and History*

J. G. Merquior, *Foucault*

James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*

Allan Megill, “Foucault, Structuralism, and the Ends of History,” *Journal of Modern History* 51 (September 1979)

23: Thanksgiving Break

30: Is the Revolution Over? The End of the Classic Intellectual? The Case of François Furet

Required Reading:

François Furet, “The Revolution is Over,” in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 36-72, ER

Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 229-66, ER

Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, 155-78, ER

Additional Reading:

Steven Kaplan, *Farewell, Revolution: The Historians' Feud, 1789/1989*
Michael Scott Christofferson, "An Antitotalitarian History of the
French Revolution: François Furet's *Penser la Révolution française*
in the Intellectual Politics of the Late 1970s," *French Historical
Studies* 22, no. 4 (Fall 1999)

