

UC Center Program Courses - Fall 2013

PCC 131. **Under French Eyes: America as Model and Counter-Model in France**

Prof. Stéphane Dufoix

**Office Hours**

By appointment

**Lecture**

Monday 10:45am-2:15pm

\*Note course time includes a ½ hour break

**UNDER FRENCH EYES  
AMERICA AS MODEL AND COUNTER-MODEL IN FRANCE  
(XVIII-XXI centuries)**

It has become fashionable to speak about France and the United States as being “best enemies” or “twin enemies,” thus insisting on a strange relationship in which admiration and political friendship is combined with cultural misunderstandings and the production of numerous prejudices.

Indeed, from the late eighteenth century onwards, the United States has been scrutinized by French politicians, artists, intellectuals, and journalists, among others. For more than two centuries, it has been France’s best enemy, either praised as the inspiration for French art and culture, politics, society and economy, or stigmatized as the epitome of everything that is un-French and should never be imported or implemented on French soil: capitalism, the reign of money, dangerous and soulless towns, violence, and the tyranny of ethnic, racial or cultural communities. The aim of this course is to map this complicated and paradoxical stance through the lens of history and sociology, and by examining French cultural products such as travel journals, essays, songs, essays, novels and films that place the United States under French eyes. **5.0 credits**. Suggested subject areas for this course: *History/Political Science/Sociology*

**Goals**

The overriding aim of this course is to increase students’ sensitivity to both a French vision and understanding of American history, society and culture, and to making them aware of how this peculiar relationship of more than two hundred years has played a fundamental role not only in the shaping of French politics but also in its civilizing path. The course is also meant to serve as a forum in which students interrogate their own vision of France and of French history, society and culture, precisely at the moment they are spending time immersed in this society, as well as their vision of the United States while they are abroad.

In order to meet the course objectives, the assigned readings and topics in the syllabus vary from year to year based on current events and in order to reassess the current evolution of the French-American relationship. The course focuses on a variety of topics, such as:

- Vacillating French visions of America
- Two Nations born from Revolution
- Industrialization and Consumer Culture
- The American Economic Model
- The Co-existence of Anti-Americanism and Americanophilia
- A Model for Minorities, Counter-Model for the French Republic
- Sarkozy the American

Readings are selected to expose students to the various ways the relationship to another country and civilization can be exposed. These include:

- First-hand documents, such as speeches, narratives, editorials...
- Essays by specialists in history, sociology, political science, anthropology...
- Seminal texts of reference (e.g., Alexis de Tocqueville's "Democracy in America")

### **Learning Outcomes**

The course also seeks to develop students' written and oral rhetorical skills as well as their analytical skills through the following activities and assignments:

- Class discussion of readings and lectures to situate historical, social, political, and economic contexts
- Writing assignments in essay-format, which are evaluated in terms of students' ability to develop a thesis and support it with well-chosen evidence, as well as coherent organization and attention to style
- Mid-term and final exams assess students' capacity to answer a precise question on a more general topic by using material presented during half of or the whole course. Synthetic skills are particularly valorized in the final exam.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

\* Bernard-Henri Lévy, *American Vertigo: Travelling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville*, New York, Random House, 2007

\* Articles and book chapters reproduced in the Course Reader ([**CR**] hereafter) or available online

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Attendance at lectures and site visits is mandatory.** It is essential that students attend all classes and participate actively. As per the UC Paris Attendance Policy, excessive absences and tardies will result in a lowered final grade. Please refer to UC Paris Academic Handbook for the policy on absences and tardies.

Students are required to complete the weekly readings before the weekly session and to attend all guest lectures and sites visits scheduled during the semester.

### **GRADE BREAKDOWN**

- Weekly Readings and Class Participation (20% of the final grade)
- Writing Assignments: Two short papers (5-7 pages each) on two different topics to be chosen in consultation with the instructor (30% of the final grade)
- Mid-term exam (20% of the final grade)
- Final exam (30% of the final grade)

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS COURSE WILL HAVE AN EXCEPTIONAL COURSE MEETING ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>.**

### **WEEK 1. Introduction : The ebb and flow of the French visions of America**

- Bernard-Henry Lévy, *American Vertigo. Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville*, New York, Random House, 2006, Introduction
- Marie-France Toinet, “French Piques and Piques Françaises”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 497, May, 1988 : 133-141. [CR]

### ***I Fascination and Contempt during the Long Nineteenth Century***

*This section will focus on the period between the American War of Independence and the early twentieth century. Despite the French military participation to the American emancipation, the so called “American Revolution” was often seen as an incomplete one in comparison to the French Revolution. For more than a century, the vision of the United States, by those who traveled there or who had an eye on them from the French territory, was either enthusiastic or highly critical.*

### **WEEK 2. Two Nations Born out of Revolution**

Reading:

- B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Chapter I
- Edna Hindie Lemay, “Lafitau, Dêmeunier and the Rejection of the American Model at the French National Assembly, 1789-1791”, in Michèle Morris, ed., *Images of America in Revolutionary France*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 1990, p. 171-184. [Online]
- Elise Marienstras and Naomi Wulf, « French Translations and Reception of the Declaration of Independence », *The Journal of American History*, vol. 85, n°4, 1999 : 1299-1324. [CR]

### **WEEK 3. Travellers and Theorists of the XIXth century**

Reading:

- B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Chapter II
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. I, introduction [CR]
- Jeremy Jennings, « French Visions of America : From Tocqueville to the Civil War », in Aurelian Craiutu and Jeff Isaacs (eds), *America Through European Eyes* (Penn State University Press: 2009), pp 161-84. [Online]
- Jeremy Jennings and Aurelian Craiutu, ‘The Third Democracy: Tocqueville’s Views of America after 1840’, *American Political Science Review*, 98, 2004, 391-405. [Online]

## **WEEK 4. The Evil of Industrial Civilization**

### **[ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE]**

#### Reading:

- B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Chapter III
- Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy. The History of French Anti-Americanism*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2006, chapter 6 **[Online]**
- André Siegfried, *America Comes of Age. A French Analysis*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927, chapters XXIV and XXVII **[CR]**
- Paul A. Gagnon, "French Views of the Second American Revolution", *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Autumn, 1962) : 430-449 **[Online]**

### ***II. Specters of the Americanization of France (1950s-1970s)***

*Just after World War II, the United States have become the main superpower, only to be challenged by the USSR. Yet, its main influence on the course of France is not the military but the cultural one through consumption goods but also through movies, comics and songs, and the economic one through the rise of liberal economy. This fear of "American invasion" is all the more important as De Gaulle is looking for a third way between the two superpowers and Communism is still powerful among intellectuals.*

## **WEEK 5. American Culture Invades France**

#### Reading :

- B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Chapter IV
- Richard Kuisel, "Coca-Cola and the Cold War: The French Face Americanization, 1948-1953 », *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1991) : 96-116. **[CR]**
- Richard Jobs, "Tarzan Under Attack : Youth, Comics, and Cultural Reconstruction in Postwar France", *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Fall 2003) : 687-725 **[Online]**

## **WEEK 6. The American Economy : A Threat or a Chance ?**

#### Reading:

- B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Chapter V
- Luc Boltanski, "Visions of American Management in post-War France", *Theory and Society*, 12, 1983 : 375-403. **[Online]**
- Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French. The Dilemma of Americanization*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, chapter 7, p. 154-184 **[CR]**

## **WEEK 7. MID-TERM**

#### Reading :

- B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Chapter VI

## **FALL BREAK**

## **WEEK 8. Intellectuals and *Hommes de culture* : the Coexistence and Anti-americanism and Americanophilia**

Reading:

- B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Chapter VII
- Chris Tinker, "Serge Gainsbourg and Le Défi Américain", *Modern & Contemporary France*, Volume 10, Issue 2, 2002 : 187-196 [CR]
- Pierre Nora, "America and the French intellectuals and America", *Daedalus*, vol. 107, n°1, Winter 1978 : 325-337. [CR]

### ***III. The Last Thirty Years : "French Exception" and American Model***

*From the 1980s onwards, the French image of the United States has kept on evolving. It became slightly more positive during the 1980s. But the most important change occurred in the 1990s when the rise of the ideology of the "French exception" against what was perceived as being American cultural imperialism met the renewed interest in republicanism. Neo-republican forces started viewing the American society as the absolute opposite of what the French society should be, whereas defenders of French minorities will advocate multiculturalism to try and change French society. 9/11 and the election of Barack Obama also have to be understood against this backdrop.*

## **WEEK 9. The Ambiguous Position of French Socialism at the Power**

**\*\*\*Exceptional course meeting, Friday November 15<sup>th</sup> (to make up November 11<sup>th</sup> holiday)\*\*\***

**[ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE]**

Reading:

- Rick Fantasia, "Fast Food in France", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Apr., 1995) : 201-243 [Online]
- Darrin McMahon, "Echoes of a Recent Past: Contemporary French Anti-Americanism in Historical and Cultural Perspective" [CR]
- Jean-Philippe Mathy, *Extreme Occident : French Intellectuals and America*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, chapter 6. [Online]

## **WEEK 10. A Model for Minorities, A Counter-Model for the Republic**

Reading:

- William Poulin-Deltour, "French Gay Activism and the American Referent in Contemporary France", *The French Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Oct., 2004) : 118-125 [CR]
- Eric Fassin, "The Purloined Gender: American Feminism in a French Mirror", *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Winter, 1999) : 113-138 [CR]

## **WEEK 11. After 9/11**

Reading

- Richard Kuisel, « What do the French Think of Us? The Deteriorating image of the United States, 2000-2004 », *French Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 22 n°3, Fall 2004 : 91-119.[CR]

- Stanley Hoffman, “France, the United States & Iraq”, *The Nation*, February 16, 2004 [CR]
- Lionel Jospin, « The Relationship between France and the United States : Reflections for an American Audience », *French Politics, Culture & Society*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 2004 : 118-126 [CR]
- Hubert Védrine, “On Anti-Americanism”, *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. X, n°2, Winter/Spring 2004 : 117-121 [CR]
- Denis Lacorne, “Anti-Americanism and Americanophobia : A French Perspective”, CERI, March 2005 [Online]

## **WEEK 12. Sarkozy the American : a New Era ?**

### Reading

- Sophie Meunier, "Globalization, Americanization and Sarkozy's France ", *European Political Science*, Vol. 9, 2010 : 213-222. [Online]
- Michael Kimmelman, “For Blacks in France, Obama’s Rise Is Reason to Rejoice, and to Hope”, *New York Times*, 17 June 2008 [CR]
- Henry Samuel, “French 'Barack Obama' still a dream says country's lone black minister”, *The Telegraph*, 17 nov. 2008 [CR]
- Frédéric Charillon, “France and the US: from reluctant alliance to ambiguous rapprochement”, *European Political Science*, 9, June 2010 : 189-198 [Online]

## **WEEK 13. Review and Final Exam**

B.H. Lévy, *American Vertigo*, Conclusion

Sophie Meunier, “The DSK Scandal: French Anti-Americanism Ain't What it Used to Be”, *The Huffington Post*, 23 May 2011 [CR]