

L152b
Modern French Literature in Translation

Spring 2015

Instructor: Trevor Cribben Merrill
Office: Dabney 113
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Class meetings: TBD

Course Description: This course offers an introduction to masterpieces of 19th and 20th century French literature. We will focus on two universally admired classic novels (by Stendhal and Proust) and try to understand what makes them great and how the authors drew on life experiences and reflections on love, history, and art in creating their works. We will also read excerpts from Nathalie Sarraute's *Planetarium* as well as a recently published novel by contemporary French author Yasmina Reza, *Happy Are The Happy*. These two novels explore the inner lives of characters caught up in mundane—and often bitterly comic—struggles. In reading them we will ask what role the novel plays in a world dominated by visual media: how has the genre changed over the decades beneath pressure exerted at once by its own history and by deep technological and sociological transformations?

Over the course of the term we will also listen to pieces of music (by Rossini, Saint-Saens, and Debussy, among others) and look at works of visual art (by Turner, Carpaccio, Botticelli, and Fra Angelico, among others) associated with the books we are reading.

Novels:

Stendhal; *The Red and the Black (Revised edition)*, Penguin Classics, 2002, trans. Roger Gard. ISBN: 978-0140447644.

Proust, Marcel; *In Search of Lost Time, vol. 1, Swann's Way (Modern Library edition)*, Modern Library, 1998. ISBN: 978-0375751547.

Sarraute, Nathalie; *The Planetarium*, Dalkey Archive Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-1564784100.

Reza, Yasmina. *Happy Are The Happy*. Other Press, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-1590516928

Selected Supplementary Critical Texts

"In the Hotel de la Mole," excerpt from *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, by Erich Auerbach, Princeton University Press, 2003 (50th anniversary edition).

"The Red and the Black," excerpt from *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, by René Girard, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Proust and Signs (excerpts), by Gilles Deleuze, trans. Richard Howard, University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

“The Mirror Neuron Mechanism and Literary Studies: An Interview with Vittorio Gallese,”
California Italian Studies, Vol. 2 (1), 2010.

http://www.unipr.it/arpa/mirror/pubs/pdf/Gallese/2011/cis_interview_2011.pdf

Assignments and Grading:

Weekly reading assignments and responses, a mid-term exam (take-home), and a final paper of 8-10 pages.

Attendance is a basic course requirement.

Attendance/participation/reading responses: 40 %

Mid-term exam: 20%

Final paper: 40%