Course Description: This course offers an introduction to masterpieces of 17th and 18th century French literature. We will focus on major comedies and tragedies by Molière (Tartuffe and The Misanthrope) and Racine (Phaedra) and on novels by Madame de Lafayette (The Princesse de Clèves) and Choderlos de Laclos (Dangerous Liaisons). We’ll be reflecting on the function of comic theater as a satirical tool for policing behavior in seventeenth-century France, on the emergence of the novel as a new, flexible means of psychological exploration and character development, and on the way these works portray the tensions between the social “rules of the game” and the desires and freedom of the modern individual. Throughout we will also be thinking about how relevant these works remain to our twenty-first century lives. All readings are in English but students may read the texts in French if they would like.

Texts:


Assignments and Grading:

Weekly reading assignments and short written 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%