

Professor Alison James
Office: WB 224
Office hours: Tu/Th 11:00–12:00 and by appointment
asj@uchicago.edu

Course Assistant (LxC program):
Chiara Nifosi
Office hours, M 2:00-3:00 and by appointment, location TBD
nifosi@uchicago.edu

FREN 23810/ FNDL 23810 / SIGN 26047
Spring 2019

Memory and Identity in French Literature: Proust to the Present
Tu/Th 9:30-10:50 a.m.
Stuart Hall 104

This course takes as its point of departure Marcel Proust's conceptualization of memory as the foundation both for the self and for literature. For Proust, literature, identity, and memory are inseparable. Literary style conveys the singularity of an individual vision while rescuing experience from the contingencies of time. Later writers will follow Proust's lead in defining literature as an art of memory; but they develop this art in different ways, whether by inventing new forms of life-writing or attempting to revive, via fiction, a lived connection to history. How does memory serve as the foundation of individual or collective identities? How does fiction imagine and give form to memory and selfhood, and how does literature serve as a medium for cultural memory? How do literary works register the intermittence of memory, its failings and distortions, its fragility as well as its attachment to bodies and places? We will tackle these questions through close analysis of a range of texts. In addition to Proust, we will read works by Colette, Marguerite Yourcenar, Marguerite Duras, Patrick Modiano, and Annie Ernaux.

Open to students across the College, the course offers an introduction to major works of twentieth-century French literature. We will also engage in a broader, open-ended debate on representations of memory, and on the role of literature in constructing individual and collective identities. Students will develop critical and analytic skills, and produce written work that draws on multiple texts to formulate a cohesive, well-supported argument. Through assignments, online discussion, and in-class discussion, students will develop interpretations based on close reading of the texts. After taking this course, you will also be able to connect these works to their historical and cultural contexts, and to situate them within literary history.

LxC Discussion Sessions

This course is participating in the [“Languages Across the Curriculum” program \(LxC\)](#). It is taught in English, with readings available in French or in English translation. Each week, beginning in Week 2 of the quarter, Chiara Nifosi will lead a 1-hour discussion session in French. Participation in these sessions is elective and is open to all students with knowledge of French equivalent to FREN 202 or above. Focused on close readings of our course texts, the session offers additional engagement with the language and aims to deepen your understanding of the course content. Students who attend the language sessions will have this component of the class recorded on their academic transcript. If you would like to participate in the LxC session please let us know in Week 1, and sign up for the “LxC” group in Canvas. The discussion session will be scheduled according to your availability. Students taking the course for French credit should participate in the LxC sessions.

Required Texts

The following texts are required and may be purchased either in French or in English translation at the University Bookstore or online (see below for language requirements for French credit). They are also on reserve in the Regenstein Library. Please use the recommended edition if possible. In class we will refer primarily to the English translation, but with reference to the original for those who are reading in French. Any additional readings will be made available on the course Canvas site.

- Marcel Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann (À la Recherche du temps perdu* 1, 1913), Gallimard, Folio, 1988, ISBN, 978-2070379248 / *Swann's Way (In Search of Lost Time*, vol. 1), trans. Lydia Davis, Penguin Classics Paperback, 2004, ISBN 978-0142437964
- Colette, *La Maison de Claudine* (1922), Le Livre de poche, 1960, ISBN 978-2253004288 / *My Mother's House*, trans. Enid McLeod, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002, ISBN 978-0374528331
- Marguerite Yourcenar, *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (1951), Gallimard, Folio, 1974, ISBN 978-2070369218 / *Memoirs of Hadrian*, trans. Grace Frick, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, ISBN 978-0374529260
- Patrick Modiano, *Rue des boutiques obscures* (1978), Gallimard, Folio, 1982, ISBN 978-2070373581 / *Missing Person*, trans. Daniel Weissbort, David R. Godine, 2004. ISBN 978-1567922813
- Marguerite Duras, *L'Amant* (1984), Éditions de Minuit, 1984, ISBN 978-2707306951 / *The Lover*, trans. Barbara Bray, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2010, ISBN 978-0007205004

- Annie Ernaux, *Les Années* (2008), Gallimard, Folio, 2010, ISBN 978-2070402472 / *The Years*, trans. Alison L. Strayer, Seven Stories Press/Penguin Random House, 2017, ISBN 978-1609807870

Course Requirements

1. French credit (Course + LxC sessions)

Students wishing to count the class toward the French major or minor should participate in the LxC sessions. All readings for the course, as well as the midterm and final writing assignments should be completed in French. Canvas discussion board posts should be completed in English.

2. Course + LxC sessions (but no French credit)

Readings for the regular course meetings may be done in French or in English. Short readings in French will be assigned for the LxC sessions and distributed via Canvas. Written assignments will be completed in English. Your transcript will indicate that you participated in the LxC sessions.

3. Course only

All readings and writing assignments in English.

Canvas Discussion Board

The class will be divided into two groups, posting on alternate weeks. Every other week, you should post a comment of approximately 250 words on the class discussion board, either by 9:00 p.m. on Monday or by 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday (so that I have time to read them before class). I will post a few prompts to indicate some possible directions, but your comment may focus on any aspect of the week's readings (a theme, a passage that struck you, questions that arose while you were reading). Please feel free to respond (respectfully!) to others' posts. Additional comments/responses are welcome. The discussion board will provide an extension of our classroom space while allowing you to interact with a smaller group of your peers. It will also help me orient our class discussions toward topics and passages that interest you.

Writing assignments

You will complete three assignments in the course of the quarter: a midterm paper of 4–5 pages (1,200–1,400 words), a final paper of 8 pages (2,500 words), and a creative writing exercise of 3–4 pages (1,000 words) modeled on one of our class texts. Topics and guidelines will be provided at least two weeks before each paper is due. Students taking the course for French credit should write the midterm and the final papers in French; the creative writing assignment may be completed in either French or English.

I am happy to discuss outlines or drafts of papers during office hours. Please schedule an appointment in advance and send me your draft several hours before our meeting. Chiara will also hold office hours to help those of you who are writing in French.

Grade breakdown

Attendance and participation: 10%

Canvas posts: 15%

Midterm paper: 20%

Creative writing exercise: 15%

Final paper: 40%

Electronic devices

The use of laptops in class is discouraged. Where possible, note taking should be done with pen and paper, and readings brought to class in print form. Please, no texting, email, or other digital distractions in class.

Academic integrity

You must acknowledge other people's ideas whether you are quoting them directly or paraphrasing them. If you have questions about how or when to cite sources, please consult me or Chiara. See the relevant section of the Student Manual for the University's policies on academic honesty.

Academic accommodations

If you require any accommodations for this course or have any concerns about your ability to participate fully, please discuss with me as soon as possible, and provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter if applicable. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University's programs or services, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible at 773-702-6000/TTY 773-795-1186 or disabilities@uchicago.edu, or visit the website at disabilities.uchicago.edu. Student Disability Services is located at 5501 S. Ellis Avenue.

Course Calendar

Part I. Memory, Sensation, Selfhood

Week 1: Memory and the body

Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann* / *Swann's Way* (1913), Combray I

- Tuesday April 2: Combray I, opening
- Thursday April 4: Combray I (English p. 11–48, “After dinner, alas” to “from my cup of tea”; French p. 58–104, “Après le dîner” to “de ma tasse de thé.”)
Discussion on Proust and popular culture: please bring in examples.

Week 2: Foundations and transformations of the self

Proust, Combray II

- Tuesday April 9: Combray II (English p. 49–117, “Combray, from a distance” to “like a little child”; French p. 105–188, “Combray de loin” to “comme un petit enfant.”)
- Thursday April 11: Combray II (English p. 118–191, “If Saturday” to “the raised finger of the dawn”; French p. 188–277, “Si la journée du samedi” to “le doigt levé du jour.”)

Week 3: Self and Other

Proust, selections from *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* / *Within a Budding Grove* and *Albertine disparue* / *The Fugitive*

- Tuesday April 16: Excerpts from *Within a Budding Grove* / *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (available on Canvas)
- Thursday April 18: Excerpts from *Within a Budding Grove* / *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, and from *The Fugitive* / *Albertine disparue* (available on Canvas).

Week 4: Childhood myths and memories

Colette, *My Mother's House* / *La Maison de Claudine* (1922)

- Tuesday April 23: “Where are the Children?”/“Où sont les enfants” to “The Little Bouilloux Girl”/“La petite Bouilloux.”
- Thursday April 25: “Toutouque”/“La Toutouque” to “The Hollow Nut”/“La Noisette creuse”

Part II. History and Collective Memory

Week 5: The voice of the past

Marguerite Yourcenar, *Mémoires d'Hadrien* / *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1951)

- Tuesday April 30: Yourcenar, “Animula vagula blandula” and “Varius multiplex multiformis”
- Thursday May 2: “Tellus stabilita”

Midterm paper due by **Friday May 3** at midnight (upload to Canvas).

Week 6: Reanimation and erasure

- Tuesday May 7: Yourcenar, “Sæculum aureum” and “Disciplina Augusta”
- Thursday May 9: “Patientia” and “Reflections on the Composition of *Memoirs of Hadrian*”/ “Carnets de notes de *Mémoires d’Hadrien*”

Week 7: History and amnesia

Patrick Modiano, *Rue des boutiques obscures* / *Missing Person* (1978)

- Tuesday May 14: Modiano, chapters 1–15
- Thursday May 16: Modiano, chapters 15–47

Week 8: The porous self

Duras, *L’Amant* / *The Lover* (1984)

- Tuesday May 21: Duras, English, beginning to p. 64 (“so no need to be afraid”; French beginning to p. 79 (“pas la peine d’avoir peur.”)
- Thursday May 23: Duras, English p. 64–end ; French p. 79 (“Marie-Claude Carpenter”)–end.

Creative writing assignment due by **Friday May 24** at midnight (upload to Canvas)

Week 9: Transpersonal memory

Annie Ernaux, *Les Années* / *The Years* (2008)

- Tuesday May 28: Ernaux, English beginning to p. 80 (“yarns no one bothered to tell today”); French, beginning to p. 89 (“personne ne se souciait plus de reprendre aujourd’hui”)
- Thursday May 30: English p. 80–147 (“In this black-and white photo” to “their children’s success”); French p. 89–162 (“Sur cette photo” to “le meilleur produit de réussite.”)

Week 10: Conclusion

- Tuesday June 4: Ernaux, English, p. 147 to end (“It is a thirty-minute videotape” to end; French, p. 162 (“C’est une cassette vidéo”) to end.

Graduating students: Final paper due by **Thursday June 6** at midnight (upload to Canvas).

All other students: paper due by **Thursday June 13** at midnight (upload to Canvas).