



## The Exeter College Summer Programme At Exeter College in the University of Oxford

### Identities in Crisis: Post-war French Writing and Film

#### Course description

This lecture course will look at how French writers and filmmakers responded to some of the major upheavals of mid to late twentieth-century France. Crises such as the German Occupation, the Algerian War of Independence, and the strikes and riots of May 1968 sent shockwaves through French society that sooner or later found their way into literature and film. We will explore questions such as, 'How do writers and filmmakers seek to remember events that many would rather forget?', 'What experiments in literary and cinematic form does this give rise to?', 'What is the relationship between individual and collective memory?', 'How might writing and film give expression to crises of personal and national identity?', and 'What is the relationship between art and politics?'. This course welcomes all students with a strong interest in French literature and cinema. Previous experience of literary analysis is not required but would be an advantage. Please note that there is **no language prerequisite** for this course as all texts will be studied in translation. So, *venez nombreux!* Come one, come all!

#### Course Objectives

The aims of the course are to develop students'

- knowledge of a broad sweep of French literature and film from the post-war era.
- understanding of the key historical, political, philosophical and psychological dynamics that shaped writing and cinema during this period.
- understanding of trauma theory and of the impact of traumatic events on writing and film.
- ability to conduct close readings of writing and film.

#### Teaching Methodology and Assessment

- 12 x 1.25hr Lectures (15hrs)
- 6 x 1.25hr Seminars (7.5hrs)
- 4 x 1.25hr Tutorials (5hrs)

Lectures will present historical and philosophical contexts, suggest possible approaches to the primary texts, explore connections between these texts, and give you the tools with which to conduct your own analyses. Students will be required to have completed the required reading and viewing before the relevant lecture. Films will be shown independently of the lecture, and all

films will be scheduled before the lecture in question. You are advised to do as much of the primary reading as possible before the beginning of the course.

Seminars and Tutorials will allow for further discussion of the primary texts and the points raised in lectures. You may be required to do some written preparation before these sessions. Students will also be expected to give a short oral presentation of one of the books or films for study. This presentation will not be graded but will count towards the participation mark.

Please note that all texts will be studied in English translation and films will be shown with English subtitles. It is important that you read the recommended translations so that in seminars we are all (literally) on the same page. Supplementary materials will be provided but the key literary texts (starred below) will need to be purchased.

**Assessment:** A final essay of no more than 3,000 words (50%), a final three-hour written examination (40%), and participation in seminar discussion (10%).

## Lecture Course Outline

### Lecture 1: Introduction / Existentialism I

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos* \*

### Lecture 2: Existentialism II

Simone de Beauvoir, A selection of chapters from *Le Deuxième Sexe* (The Second Sex)\*

### Lecture 3: Remembering the Occupation I

*Hiroshima mon amour* (Hiroshima my Love), dir. by Alain Resnais

### Lecture 4: Remembering the Occupation II

Georges Perec, *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (W or the Memory of Childhood)\*

### Lecture 5: Remembering the Occupation III

*Le Chagrin et la pitié* (The Sorrow and the Pity), dir. by Marcel Ophüls

### Lecture 6: Remembering the Occupation IV

Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder* (The Search Warrant)\*

### Lecture 7: Algeria I

*La Bataille d'Alger* (The Battle of Algiers), dir. by Gillo Pontecorvo

Frantz Fanon, 'L'Algérie se dévoile' (Algeria Unveiled)

### Lecture 8: Algeria II

*Caché* (Hidden), dir. by Michel Haneke

### Lecture 9: Images of the century I

Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire* (Camera Lucida)\*

### Lecture 10: Images of the century II

Agnès Varda, *Les Plages d'Agnès* (The Beaches of Agnès)

### Lecture 11: A Twentieth-century Life: Annie Ernaux

Annie Ernaux, *Les Années* (The Years)\*

## **Lecture 12: Conclusions**

### **Recommended translations**

These texts will need to be purchased. It is important to buy the correct translations so that page references given in lectures and seminars are consistent with your copies.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos and Other Plays* (London: Penguin, 2000), trans. by Black and Gilbert.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage, 1997), trans. by H.M. Parshley.

Georges Perec, *W or the Memory of Childhood* (London: Vintage, 2011), trans. by David Bellos.

Patrick Modiano, *The Search Warrant* (Harvill Press, 2009).

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1993).

Annie Ernaux, *The Years* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2018), trans. by Alison Strayer.