

Experimental Learning Onsite in Paris and E-Portfolio Presentations

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Pedagogical Framework for Paris Onsite Visit and Assessment Structure

This course was designed to

- Provide week-long visit to Paris as part of thirteen-week course AMST 231 / FREN 231 Americans in Paris
- Accommodate fourteen students chosen through interviews, representing a variety of interests and interdisciplinary expertise (see also Pedagogical Goals, below)
- Incorporate a variety of assignments to allow students a holistic and interdisciplinary view of Paris (pre-trip paper, journals kept during visit, digital media interactions with the environment), culminating in proposals and e-portfolios orally presented at the Newhouse Humanities Center and leading to final projects/papers
- Include an assessment of this onsite learning, based on the students' oral presentations, provided by outside faculty, Scott Gunther (French Department) and Petra Rivera-Rideau in (American Studies): observations and written reports on effectiveness of portfolios and onsite learning

Pedagogical Goals of Paris Onsite Visit

The week-long Paris visit was designed to

- Familiarize students with urban location that is setting for expatriate experiences of a wide variety of Americans in Paris
- Cover substantial historical period from eighteenth century to present, augmented by site visit (with Mellon funding specific to onsite visit to Normandy beaches and World War II sites)
- Prompt students to interact with Paris environment through interdisciplinary means (on site visit, photographs, films, journals for reflection, resulting in e-portfolios for Newhouse Humanities Center presentations)
- Engage students in multicultural, transnational study

Pedagogical Goals for Presentation of E-Portfolios

The e-portfolios (including journal kept by students) was designed to

- Showcase skills, experiences, and learning while promoting reflection
- Provide students with a bridge between academic and experiential learning
- Promote intercultural knowledge (with attention to intercultural experience gained during onsite visit)
- Enhance global learning by student reflection on French-U.S. differences in past and present

Assessment of Normandy-Specific WW2 Component

In relevant class on “The Liberation of France and the American G.I.” (April 19, 2019), involving Louis Guilloux *OK, Joe* and Mary-Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, we assessed students experiential learning at Point du Hoc and Omaha Beach. Thanks to the site visit in Normandy, students

- Demonstrated enhanced knowledge of the *bocage* (hedgerow landscape) of Normandy, with its influences on this history

- Understood the remoteness of Normandy and its effect on provincial French attitudes and the subsequent treatment of African-American soldiers
- Grasped the physical reality of warfare from the remaining shell-holes, bunkers, and cemetery tracts
- Referred both to learning they had done at historical sites on the Norman coast and at the Caen museum

Assessment of Newhouse Humanities Center Presentations, May 3, 2019

Scott Gunther's assessment:

"The students I observed were plainly transformed by their time in France and their presentations reflected this. One student was interested in the experience of Haitian immigrants in Paris and valued the opportunity to visit the neighborhoods where many of them live (and sample food from Haitian restaurants!). Another student discovered and fell in love with the Cinemathèque, which brought her research in new and unexpected directions. A student who thought that she would originally do her final project on dance in Paris ended up changing her project entirely to focus instead on the effects of Haussmannian city planning, all because of the experience of walking around the city. One student visited the American Hospital of Paris and had the unique opportunity to engage in a conversation with an American doctor who works there about how women and men are treated differently in the medical field in France. Josephine Baker's experience in Paris became much less of an abstraction for one student who visited many of the places where Baker spent her time, which caused the student to reflect on how physical environments can have an influence on a person's character. A student who was interested in the experience of African-American women's experiences in Paris found herself having new epiphanies each day of her trip, starting with discoveries from a "Black Paris" tour early on, then with a walking tour of the Chateau Rouge neighborhood that is largely populated with African immigrants, and finally with a visit to the Musée d'Orsay that had a special show on the Black model, which led her to choose for the topic of her final a

paper an analysis of representations of African-American Black jazz performers in Paris. There is no doubt that the experience in France had a profound effect on each of these students and that the spring break component turned what would have been a fascinating class into an unforgettable one.”

Petra Rivera-Rideau’s assessment:

One student “visited places that Julia Child had visited in Paris, including restaurants, food markets, and E. Dehillerin where Julia Child bought her cookware. She mentioned that she really appreciated being able to visit the places she learned through her research and that this brought her research topic to life.

Another student “explored the work of artist Romaine Brooks. They mentioned that most of Brooks’s work is in the U.S., which is curious given how critical her time in Paris was. They visited many places where Romaine had hung out in the Left Bank. They also mentioned that they recognized sites in Normandy like coastlines that were in Romaine’s work. They ultimately ‘immersed myself in the landscape to get a feel for Romaine’s France.’ It struck me as an important experience for the student, and an innovative way to approach history that is not always in our standard archives.

A third student’s “project was about the proliferation of McDonald’s in Paris. She came up with the idea after noticing how crowded McDonald’s was around the hotel; in this way, the trip to Paris was critical for exposing Amy to a subject she did not know was happening on the ground. Her presentation was very exciting and interesting, and she used McDonald’s to talk about much bigger social and political questions about things like trade deals, French national identity, and agriculture.

A fourth student “compared how Bohemianism influenced Cassatt and Degas. She was very influenced by the tour about impressionists that the students took while in Paris, which let her see Degas’ work close up.”

Another student “researched salons to think about bigger questions related to interiority, queerness, and culture among women in France. She visited the space that housed Gertrude Stein’s salon while in Paris, but then after researching

Natalie Barney has decided to focus her work on Barney. She felt that the Wellesley alumnae dinner in Paris reminded her of a salon because it brought together educated women in a private home to discuss issues of importance.”

A sixth student’s “research is about film noir. She compared how film noir in postwar France reflected the anxieties about changing gender roles in the postwar era. She mentioned visiting the Cinemathèque as especially inspiring for her research.”

A final student “explored authenticity and Mexican cuisine in France. Her research was experiential. She visited two restaurants in Paris that had different approaches to food and marketing. She also talked with employees to get a better sense of how the restaurants approached Mexican cuisine. Her visits form the crux of her research project.”