FRENCH 341: Introduction to the History of French Literature I

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REQUIRED TEXT: R.-J. Berg, Littérature Française: Textes et Contextes (Tome I)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will cover the major movements and authors of French literature from the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century. We will examine the historical foundation and situation of each work before analyzing it. This is primarily a discussion class rather than a lecture course. I will furnish the historical and biographical background but everyone is expected to actively participate in class discussions. Several of the works in the required reading also pose ethical issues or dilemmas that will serve as a basis for class discussion and debate. This course places an equal emphasis on further developing both your writing and oral expression skills in French. It is assumed that students in the class have a strong background in French composition and conversation but know little about French literature. The goal of this course is not only to gain a knowledge of the major movements in French literature and philosophy from La Chanson de Roland to Rousseau, but also to learn how to approach a seemingly difficult (or strange, or impossible) text and dissect and analyze it in such a manner that you will gain a solid understanding of it.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course satisfies Core Objective 12 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

CO12: Ethics: Students will demonstrate understanding of ethical principles in general or in application of specialized knowledge, results of research, creative expression, or design processes. Students will demonstrate an ability to recognize, articulate, and apply ethical principles in various academic, professional, social, or personal contexts.

Topics related to this Core Objective to be covered in the course are as follows:

- Which choices/courses of action are permitted in order to achieve success and happiness? Are lying, cheating, pacts with unsavory characters sometimes acceptable to reach one’s goals? Why are some questionable choices in fact socially acceptable? [Le Miracle de Théophile; La Farce de Maître Pathelin; Le Médecin malgré lui]
• What is the role of education? Should students be taught to question authority? How do you teach students to think critically and form their own opinions? How can education produce good citizens? [Gargantua, Essais]
• Should one have the right and freedom to mock one’s government and the dominant religion of one’s country? What is the benefit/risk of doing so? [Montesquieu]
• Are human beings naturally and originally good? Does society necessarily corrupt or can it create an environment in which the individual can reach his/her potential? Is society always defined as a place of deception, self-advancement and self-interest? [La Rochefoucauld, Voltaire, Rousseau]

In addition, French 341 helps students to develop and practice skills described in Core Objectives 1 and 3:

**CO1: Effective Composition and Communication:** Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.

**CO3: Critical Analysis and Use of Information:** Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Students will be able to:

• Identify key literary figures and movements in each of the four centuries covered in this course
• Identify the ethical issues and principles (including their historical and social contexts) found in the texts listed above under “Topics related to this Core Objective”
• Critically analyze, both in written and oral form, the texts discussed in this course
• Articulate what makes a particular course of action ethically defensible or indefensible when examining a character’s actions and/or decisions
• Present and develop ideas (in French) in a clear and cohesive manner both orally and in writing

**CLASS ORGANIZATION:**

Students will come to class having completed their reading assignments. You are required to keep a **reading journal** in which you will answer the following questions **for each author read**:
• Write two “important” things you think you learned about the main character (or one of the main characters). [By important I mean something other than “he is a farmer.” But you could say “he is a farmer who is disillusioned by both his profession and his marriage because…..”]
• What question would you like to ask this character? Why?
• What was the most surprising (either positively or negatively) aspect/section of the work? Explain.
• Write a quotation from this work that gives you “food for thought” because it poses an ethical question or dilemma. List/explain the kinds of reflections this quote inspires.

You are required to come to class with your journal questions prepared because they will play a role in class discussions. You will sometimes be asked to form small groups in order to compare your journal entries and possibly present to the class the findings of the group. **Please keep your journal in a loose-leaf notebook so that pages may be easily taken out and replaced as you hand it in.** Journals will be collected on each exam day and returned with comments and a letter grade. The more thorough and detailed your answers are in the journal, the better your grade will be.

You will be assigned 3 short papers. For each paper assignment you will be given several topics from which to choose. One of your three papers must be on a topic related to an ethical issue or question. You may come to see me with your draft or outline to discuss your paper. I am always available for this. When your paper is returned to you it will have corrections and a letter grade. If there are multiple errors and/or corrections you don’t understand, please come to see me to discuss ways in which to avoid these errors in the future. You will be graded on both content (how well have you addressed the paper topic), on grammatical accuracy (this includes spelling and vocabulary choice) and on the cohesiveness of your argument.

There will be 4 in-class exams (one after each time period studied). These exams will consist of short essays and identification questions. There will be no midterm or cumulative final exam.

You are allowed 2 absences. Each subsequent absence will lower your attendance grade by one step. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out from another student what was covered, what the homework is, and what will be expected of you on your return.

For each class meeting I will note a participation grade in my book. Students who arrive to class unprepared for the day’s activities and discussion will receive a participation grade of “F” for that day.

Cell phones and laptops must be turned OFF at the beginning of class; the usage of either one will result in immediate dismissal from the class and a participation grade of “F” for that day.
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

"Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses" constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University General Catalog. All work for this course must be your own. Getting something or someone (either human or computer) to translate, write or rewrite assignments for you is unacceptable. If you copy, quote, translate, summarize or paraphrase any ideas or information from an outside source (this includes the internet)—that is, if you use anything that did not come out of your own head, you need to cite it properly. If you do not know how to do this, please ask me. If you have any questions about this policy, please ask.

GRADING POLICY:

3 short papers..................................30%
4 exams.........................................40%
Reading journal...............................15%
Attendance and class participation.......15%

You are responsible for the information on this syllabus throughout the semester.

If you have a disability for which you will need to request accommodations, please contact me or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 100) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Aug. 25: Introduction; Le Moyen Age
Aug. 27 : La Littérature épique: La Chanson de Roland
Sept. 1: LABOR DAY—NO CLASS
Sept. 3 : La Littérature courtoise: Lanval (Marie de France)
Sept. 8: Le Théâtre religieux: Le Miracle de Théophile (Rutebeuf)
Sept. 10: Le Théâtre profane: La Farce de Maître Pathelin
Sept. 15: La Poésie lyrique: Christine de Pisan (poèmes variés) ; first paper assigned
Sept. 17: EXAMEN: Le Moyen Age; journals due

Sept. 22: Le XVIème Siècle; Gargantua; Rabelais
Sept. 24: Gargantua (cont.)

Sept. 29: L’école lyonnaise: Louise Labé (poèmes variés)
Oct. 1: La Pléiade: Ronsard (poèmes variés); first paper due

Oct. 6: La Pléiade: Du Bellay (poèmes variés)
Oct. 8: Essais; Montaigne

Oct. 13: Essais (cont.)
Oct. 15: EXAMEN: Le XVIème Siècle; journals due

Oct. 20: Le XVIIème Siècle: La Préciosité; Molière: Le Médecin malgré lui; second paper assigned
Oct. 22: Le Médecin malgré lui (cont.)

Oct. 27: Le Médecin malgré lui (cont.)
Oct. 29: La Rochefoucauld: Maximes

Nov. 3: La Fontaine: Les Fables
Nov. 5: Racine: Phèdre

Nov. 10: Phèdre (cont.); second paper due
Nov. 12: Phèdre: (cont.)

Nov. 17: EXAMEN: Le XVIIème Siècle; journals due
Nov. 19: Le XVIIIème Siècle: Montesquieu: Lettres persanes; third paper assigned

Nov. 24: Lettres persanes (cont.)
Nov. 26: Voltaire: « Le Mondain » et « Homme »

Dec. 1: Voltaire (cont.)
Dec. 3: Rousseau: Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire

Dec. 8: Rousseau: « Tout ce que je sens être bien est bien »; third paper due

Dec. 10: PREP DAY—NO CLASSES

Dec. 11 FINAL EXAM DAY—2:45 – 4:45
Le XVIIIème Siècle; journals due