WS 204-3 – Sex and the City: La Parisienne, Sex Symbol of Paris

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Seminar: Tuesdays, 14:30 – 17:20, WMC 2220  
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Course Description:

This course traces the emergence of the *femme fatale* and *fleur de mal* (prostitute/lesbian) tropes about Parisiennes in decadent and symbolist literature of the second half of the nineteenth century and in the actress/dancer/demi-mondaine images of Parisiennes in Impressionism and Art Nouveau; and the emergence of a competing but curiously similar symbol of the elegant Parisienne/modern women in advertising for Parisian products like fashion and cosmetics, especially in Art Deco marketing. We will also examine the deployment of these versions of the Parisienne in publicizing Paris itself as a seductive and liberated world city of artists and writers, notably during the four international exhibitions held in Paris between 1900 and 1937. The last section considers how women writers and artists like Colette and Romaine Brooks appropriated these tropes and images in their creative work, and how the seductive and liberated vision of Paris drew women writers and artists like Gertrude Stein and Anais Nin to Paris.

Format:

Lectures of one and a half to two hours; small group discussion and oral/visual presentations: 1 to 11/2 hours

Course Texts and Courseware:

Custom courseware package, available at the bookstore.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:

- Attendance and participation in tutorials: 20%
- A short paper with illustrations: 20%
- Proposal for a term paper: 10%
- Term paper (10-12 pages): 25%
- Final Exam: 25%