WS 204  La Parisienne, Sex Symbol of Paris*

WMC 2220 - Tuesdays 2:30 - 5:20 pm

Instructor: Mary Lynn Stewart  Office: 5105AQ
e-mail: mstewart@sfu.ca  Office hours: Tuesdays 10:30- noon

* Nb Slightly changed from initial versions

This course traces the emergence of the femme fatale and fleur de mal (prostitute or 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 1 1/2 hours

Reading Package available at the Bookstore

Assignments: Attendance and Participation in discussions: 20%
Two short (2 and 4 pages) papers, due June 8 and 29 20%
Proposal for a term paper, due July 13 15%
Term paper (10-12 pages) due August 25%
Final Exam 20%

Topics for papers: Representation of the Parisienne in a French Decadent or Symbolist Author, or in Colette and American Expatriate Writers in Paris, or in one Impressionist artist, in Art Nouveau poster artists like Mucha and Art Deco illustrators like Erté, or in advertising and marketing for French perfumes, fashion, or “objets de Paris,” or for Paris and France, at the International Exhibitions of 1900, 1925, 1931 or 1937. Consult the Select Bibliography to be distributed in class.
Lectures, In Class and Other Assignments Schedule*

* See Assignment page for more details. **Due dates are in bold type.**

Week 1, May 18  Introduction to course: key concepts:
  - Sex, gender, space
  - Celebrity culture, spectacle
  - Modernity, consumption, branding
  - Visual and Reading Cultures

Week 2, May 25  Lectures: Paris as Spectacle
  - The Parisienne as Symbol

Assignment: Read and be prepared to discuss the two excerpts from Hazel Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian modernity: culture and consumption in the nineteenth century* in the reading package, and Examine and bring an illustrated book on Paris (a travel guide, art book, photo book, etc.) or a copy or computer image of an illustration or two in such a book, select illustrations that represents Paris as a spectacle, and be prepared to say why the illustration(s) evoke Paris

  **N.B. Your choice may be the basis for your first short paper, or else consult the assignment sheet for suggestions.**

Week 3, June 1, No class, opportunity to work on first short (2 page) paper.

Week 4, June 8  Lectures: Literary Origins: Courtesans and Consumers in Zola

Assignment: Read and be prepared to comment upon excerpts from *Nana* and Elizabeth Manon, “Invisible Flaneuse” in the reading package

**June 8 First short paper due.**

Week 5, June 15  Lecture: Erotic Literature in France
  - Evil Flowers/ Women in the Decadents

Assignment: Read and be prepared to discuss the following excerpts in the reading package: Baudelaire, “The Ideal,” “To A Woman Passing By,” and “Lesbos” from *Flowers of Evil.*

Week 6, June 22  Lecture: Femmes fatales in Popular Literature and Theatre

Assignment: read and be prepared to discuss the two short stories by Guy de Maupassant in the reading package.
Week 7  June 29  Lecture:  Art I:  Impressionists:  Manet’s Olympia and Bar Girl
Renoir’s Parisiennes

Assignment:  Read and be prepared to discuss Tamar Garb, “James Tissot’s ‘Parisienne’ and the Making of the Modern Woman,” (from Bodies of Modernity, Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siecle France) in the reading package

June 29 Second short (4 page) paper due.

Week 8  July 6  Lecture:  Sex Workers and Dancers
Art II: Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec

Assignment:  Read and be prepared to discuss excerpts from “Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre: depicting decadence in fin de siècle Paris” and “Toulouse-Lautrec and the Culture of Celebrity” in the reading package.

Week 9  July 13  Lecture:  Popular?Advertising Art:
Sinuous Women in Art Nouveau Posters
The Parisienne at the 1900 World Fair

Assignment:  Read and be prepared to discuss Elizabeth K. Menon, ‘Les Fleurs du mal,” in the reading package

Week 10  July 20  Lecture:  The Beauty-and-Fashion Industrial Complex in Paris

Assignment:  Read and be prepared to discuss Agnes Rocamora, “La Parisienne” in the reading package.

July 20th  Term paper proposal and bibliography due.

Week 11  July 27  Lectures: Actresses, Dancers, Feminists, and New Women

Assignment:  Read and be prepared to discuss L. R. Berlenstein, “Breeches and Breaches: Cross-Dress Theater and the Culture of Gender Ambiguity in Modern France, in the reading package.

Week 12  August 3  Lecture:  Colette The Pure and the Impure

Assignment:  Read and be prepared to discuss excerpts from Colette, The Pure and the Impure, and Patricia Tilden, “‘The Triumph of the Flesh’: Women, Physical Culture and the Nude in French Music Hall, 1904-1914.”

Week 13  August 10  Lecture:  Other Parisians: Paris Lesbos and Paris Noir

August 10:  Final paper due.