

# MLC340 French Literature

3rd and 4th quarters, Junior

Instructor	MATSUDA KAZUYUKI
Style of class	Lecture
Number of Credits	2
Day and Period	To be advised

## Course Description

In the first half of the course, we will focus on the literature of the *Belle Epoque* and the two world wars, an era when the concept of the “absolute,” which had undergirded Western society for a long time, was rapidly lost and replaced by relativistic views that steadily permeated society. We will focus our attention on Apollinaire and Cocteau, whose works symbolize the breaking down of barriers between the arts that characterized that era, and consider their works in depth and from many aspects. This course will not be limited to literature but will also include considerations of artworks and musical compositions from the same era as we look at the common characteristics of the revolutionary movements that were played out in many form of art at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The second half of the course will focus on the so-called “resistance literature” that arose under the Nazi German Occupation of France during World War II, as well as taking a look at the arguments about literature and politics and their unique features.

Not all authors, artists, and intellectuals adopted a clear posture of resistance to the Nazi Occupation. Most of them struggled to find their own position in the narrow space between resistance and collaboration with the Germans, but this class will focus on Cocteau in this period in particular, so that looking at his struggles will allow us to delve deeper into the connection between literature, art, and politics or ideology.

## Course Objectives

- (1) We will consider the noticeable “Copernican revolution” that upturned Western values in many areas of literature and art in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by reading, viewing, and listening to poems, novels, paintings, and music from that era
- (2) Along with gaining an understanding of the era of the Nazi Occupation through literary and cinematic works, we will consider the ideal relationship between literature or art and politics or ideology, which has been considered a problem in every era.

## Expected Outcomes

- (1) The reversal of values from absolutism to relativism is linked to the present-day philosophy of structuralism, and gaining an understanding of this reversal will help students acquire the kind of multifaceted view that is necessary in contemporary society.
- (2) Learning about the actions of the French authors and intellectuals who lived through the Nazi Occupation will foster an awareness of the relationship between literature and art, on the one hand, and politics on the other, which has been argued about in the past and present and in the East and West.

## Prerequisites

Introduction to French Literature (general education course)

## Class Materials

- No specific textbook will be used.
- Reference materials (and reference books) will be presented in class as needed. I will simply list two books that will be mentioned during the second half of the course:
  - (a) Watanabe Kazuyuki, *Nachi senryouka no Furansu: Chinmoku, teikou, kyouryoku* (France under Nazi Occupation: Silence, Resistance, Collaboration), Kodanssha, 1994.
  - (b) Cocteau, Jean, translated by Akiyama Kazuo, *Senryouka nikki, I-III* (Diaries of the Occupation, I-III), Chikuma Shobou 1993.

## Course Methods

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The course will essentially be conducted as a lecture, but depending on the content we are dealing with, the instructor may occasionally conduct the class in the form of a two-way exchange of opinions with the students

Printed handouts will be distributed as each topic comes up, and they will be referred to throughout the course.

We will make extensive use of PowerPoint slides, videos, DVDs, CDs, and other audiovisual media during the class sessions. Since we will be learning about a number of art works in the first half of the course, there will be many opportunities to use PowerPoint slides. In both the first and second half, there will be times when the content of the course requires replacing the lecture hours with film viewing.

## Evaluation/Assessment

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Students will be graded on an overall basis, including base points for attitude and participation, a term report (or written exam), and reaction papers and other assignments.

## Grading

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40% Base points

30% Reaction papers, which students are required to submit at each class session

30% Term report or written exam

## Course Schedule

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### Week 1: Orientation

This Session will start with an overview of the course and an explanation of grading policies. It will continue with a description of the intellectual and cultural history of France to the beginning of the twentieth century, the period covered in this course, using key words such as “Hellenism” and “Hebraism.”

### Week 2: *Le poète assassiné*: The Life and Works of Apollinaire

The works of Apollinaire, who began his activities in Paris at the beginning of twentieth century, seemed to embody the spirit of the age. During this class Session, we will not only discuss his works but consider the innovative and avant-garde nature of *Ubu roi*, a problematic work by Alfred Jarry, who was heavily influenced by Apollinaire.

### Week 3: Picasso and Cubism: From the Absolute to the Relative:

Picasso, the greatest painter of the twentieth century, was Apollinaire’s best friend. In this Session, we will focus on Cubism, the historical artistic revolution that he started, and we will discuss the significance of the shift from absolutism to relativism that can be clearly discerned there.

### Week 4: The Miraculous Year of 1913 and the Ballet Russe

We will focus on the year 1913, when major works in a variety of artistic fields debuted. We will investigate Marcel Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the Vieux Colombié Theater, and the Ballet Russe, as well as the roles that they played in the history of the novel, theater, and ballet.

### Week 5: The Music of Stravinsky and Satie: *Le sacre du printemps* and *Musique d’ameublement*

We will listen to the music of two composers whose unique composition styles brought a fresh sound to French music, which had been under the influence of Richard Wagner. A comparison of their music with the traditional language of Western classical music will clarify its innovative nature.

### Week 6: Marcel Duchamp and “Ready-Made” Techniques

More than a few professionals believe that it was not Picasso but Marcel Duchamp who was the greatest artist of the twentieth century. With his strikingly radical concepts, his so-called “ready-made” works seem to ask the question, “What is art?” It is these works that we will focus on, considering their significance in the history of art and culture.

### Week 7: Dadaism and Surrealism—*Entr’acte* and *Un Chien Andalou*

We will look at two movements that took the early twentieth century by storm, Dadaism and Surrealism. We will view two cinematic examples of these movements and compare their similarities and differences. We will also consider how these movements played out in fields other than film and look at their historical significance.

## **Week 8: From Expressive Content to Expressive Form—Oulipo's Experiments and the Theater of the Absurd**

As if in response to Duchamp's art and Satie's music, the writers' interests turned from expressing content to expressing form, and in this Session, we will discuss the most extreme form of this development, Oulipo and the Theater of the Absurd.

## **Week 9: Disputes about Literature and Politics and World War II**

How should literature and art engage with their times, the current political system and social ideology of their era? The French writers and artists who lived through the Nazi Occupation of France could not fail to confront this problem. After reviewing the background of World War II, we will discuss the arguments about literature and politics that have occurred repeatedly throughout history.

## **Week 10: France Under Nazi Occupation—Silence, Resistance, or Collaboration**

During the Occupation, writers, artists, and intellectuals struggled to find a position in the narrow space between resistance and collaboration. During this Session, we will trace the paths they took and discuss that inescapable blot on human history, the Holocaust.

## **Week 11: *Le silence de la mer* by Vercors—How Resistance Literature Developed**

We will take a comprehensive look at resistance literature, the unique literature that arose during the Occupation, including the poems of Eluard and Aragon and the novels of Vercors. We will especially focus on the creative process for Vercors' *Le Silence de la mer*, considered the finest example of Resistance literature, and analyze it in detail.

## **Week 12: Jean-Pierre Melville's Film *Le Silence de la mer*—The Novel and the Film**

We will compare and discuss two versions of *La silence de la mer*, Vercors' novel and Melville's film. In addition to identifying the unique features of Resistance literature, we will consider the problems that arise when filming a novel.

## **Week 13: Two Versions of *La Belle et le bête*—Vercors and Cocteau**

Vercors incorporated an episode called "La Belle et le bête" into *Le silence de la mer*, and we will discuss it and the film *La Belle et le bête*, which Jean Cocteau made right after the end of the Occupation. This comparison will bring the contrast between the thoughts of the two writers on literature and politics into sharp contrast.

## **Week 14: Cocteau during the Occupation Period**

During the Occupation, Jean Cocteau was seen as an enemy by the collaborators, but he also received severe criticism from the Resistance. We will discuss the way in which his hard and fast ethical view about the separation of literature and politics was a factor in this criticism.

## **Week 15: The Literature of Reality and the Literature of Unreality**

We will delve further into the problem of reality and unreality in literature, which was a serious dilemma for Cocteau during the Occupation, and we will intersperse this discussion with further consideration of the arguments about literature and politics that we began in Session 9.

## **Preparation and Follow-up**

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(1) Before class (preparation): As noted above, printed handouts will be used instead of a textbook, but at the end of each session, you will be notified of the assigned reading for the next class. Students should read the assigned selections with the aid of a dictionary and look up the unknown words and previously unknown information as much as possible and make sure that they understand most of it before coming to class.

(2) After class (follow-up): Using the notes you took in class, summarize the instructor's lecture and Power Point presentations in your own words. This will not only reinforce retention of the information but is also effective for developing thinking skills, so it is an essential task for you.