French Sub-Faculty Lecture List ‘Blurbs’ for MICHAELMAS TERM 2019

Please click the titles below for a brief description of the content of each of these lectures.

For lecture times please check the main online lecture list at: https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/access/content/group/modlang/general/lectures/index.html

Always ensure to check the latest online lecture list on WebLearn for any changes to lectures during term time. Changes are shown in red.

- Perspectives on the French Language (IV, V)
- French Phonetics and Phonology
- Saints’ Lives (VI)
- Translating Old French Texts (IX (+XII))
- Writing Commentaries on Old French Texts (IX (+XII))
- Old French Reading Group
- Villon (VI, IX)
- Key Concepts in Medieval French Literature (VI, IX, XII)
- La parole est aux femmes : personnages féminins sur la scène médiévale
- Printing Literature in Renaissance France: Author’s Partnership with Printers
- Racine (VII, X)
- Voltaire (VII, VIII, X)
- Diderot (VII, VIII, X)
- Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Literature
- Flaubert (VIII, XI)
- Romanticism: Writing and Revolution (VIII, XII)
- Key Concepts in Nineteenth-Century French Culture
- French Poetry from Lamartine to Apollinaire / Prof. McGuinness
- Stéphane Mallarmé (XI, VIII)
- Proust (VIII, XII)
- Beckett (VIII, XI)
- Barthes : Towards Post-Structuralism (XI)
- Assia Djebar (XI, VIII, XII)
- Poetry/Poetics/Poethics (VIII & XII, XI)
- Literature and Visual Arts
- French Women’s Writing (XII, VIII)
- Transnational French
Perspectives on the French Language (IV, V) / Dr Temple
This course is relevant to Papers IV and V. It outlines the development of different perspectives on the French language tracing the tension between French as a heterogeneous or homogeneous object from its origins to the present. We shall examine the external history of French, the various perspectives of descriptive and prescriptive grammarians since the sixteenth century and the contrasting approaches of twentieth- and twenty-first-century linguistics.

French Phonetics and Phonology / Dr Thomas
These lectures are aimed at undergraduates preparing French paper V, but they may also be of interest to those doing paper IV and to graduate students preparing options involving French. They assume no prior knowledge of Linguistics. Conventional ways of analysing the sounds of French will be presented, considering both segments and prosody, and the distinction between phonetics and phonology will be explored. There will be a significant practical element. Each week will involve one hour-long formal lecture, then an hour’s training in listening to and transcribing spoken French.

Saints’ Lives (VI) / Dr Grange
Biographies of saints rank among the earliest literary monuments in French, and hagiographical texts continued to flourish in the later medieval period. This series provides an introduction to this major medieval genre and to some of the ways modern scholars have approached it. As we explore tales of cartoon-like martyrs, wraith-like ascetics and hellish monsters, we'll pay particular attention to the relationship between holy and unholy bodies, communities and texts.

Translating Old French Texts (IX (+XII)) / Dr Grange
This lecture course is aimed at students taking paper IX and/or some paper XII. We will translate together passages of the texts set for paper IX as well as a few passages of
unseen texts. The first two lectures deal with Old French (i.e. *La Chanson de Roland*, Béroul's *Tristan* and others) and the third one with Middle French (i.e. Villon and others). Before attending the lecture course, it is advisable to watch the series of video podcasts by Dr Marnette covering a range of grammatical questions and other issues relating to the study of Old French (available on WebLearn).

**Writing Commentaries on Old French Texts (IX (+XII)) / Dr Grange**
This lecture course is aimed at students taking paper IX and/or papers XII dealing with Medieval French. The lectures outline strategies for writing literary commentaries about medieval French texts and offer specific examples of commentaries based on previous exam questions.

**Old French Reading Group / Dr Burrows**
The purpose of these meetings is to help graduate students (all levels) to improve their skills in reading early French through practical, ‘hands-on’ translation sessions involving a range of materials (requests for specific texts may be accommodated, subject to negotiation). Prior experience of early French is not a prerequisite, but those attending are expected to engage in prescribed preparatory work, including translation of source texts and consultation of grammar guides and dictionaries. Interested parties are asked to apprise Prof. Burrows (daron.burrows@spc.ox.ac.uk) of their intention to attend before term begins, in order to facilitate practical arrangements.

**Villon (VI, IX) / Dr Burrows**
“‘Then Horse Ancestor said ‘This mind is Buddha.’ He also said ‘No mind is Buddha.’ Then finally talking about Great Plum his boy, ‘The plum is ripe.’”
“Well that's pretty interesting,” said Alvah, “but Ou sont les neiges d'antan?”
Kerouac’s citation in The Dharma Bums of the haunting refrain of Villon’s Ballade des dames du temps jadis, one of the most famous of the poems incorporated into his Testament, is significant. Not only does it highlight the extent to which François Villon – as much through a romanticised imagining of his unconventional and iconoclastic life as through his poetry – continues to fascinate modern audiences, but also the very context of the citation points to the enduringly evocative, elusive, and enigmatic quality of his work. This series of lectures will seek to shed light on one of the most challenging and stimulating writers of the late Middle Ages by considering his poetry in the context of the clerical culture and the social margins of fifteenth-century Paris.

**Key Concepts in Medieval French Literature (VI, IX, XII) / Dr Burrows**
Reading Medieval French literature entails dealing with a number of questions not typically encountered in the study of texts from other periods. What is meant by oral composition, oral performance, and aural reception, and how may these concepts affect our appreciation of written texts? Who precisely were clerics, and how can an understanding of their education and culture enhance our understanding of the literature
of the period? What is the significance of phenomena such as *mouvance* and *remaniement* in the process of textual transmission? How useful is the idea of genre in the treatment of texts written at this time? This series of lectures will attempt to address these and other key questions that students inevitably face when tackling Medieval French literature.

La parole est aux femmes: personnages féminins sur la scène médiévale / Prof Parussa
L’objectif de ce cours est d’analyser comment les auteurs de textes dramatiques du Moyen Age réussissent à créer des personnages féminins qui s’expriment en public, malgré les critiques acerbes des clercs contre la prise de parole de la part des femmes. Un examen de quelques textes : Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion, L’Estoire de Griseldis et des mystères du 15e siècle (dont des extraits seront fournis en cours) nous permettra d’analyser les caractéristiques de la voix féminine à la fin du Moyen Age et les problèmes qu’elle semble parfois poser aux auteurs des textes. La question de la présence des actrices sur la scène médiévale sera aussi abordée.

Printing Literature in Renaissance France: Author’s Partnership with Printers / Prof Jimenes
Week 5: From manuscript to print: the spread of printing in France
Week 6: Clément Marot and his printers: ennobling vernacular literature
Week 7: The youth of "La Pléiade": Ronsard, Du Bellay and Michel de Vascosan
Week 8: Montaigne’s Parisian printer: Abel Langelier and the French book Market

Racine (VII, X) / Dr Hawcroft
For those preparing either Paper VII or Paper X. Lectures 1 and 2 focus on Poetics (tragedy, character, plot construction); lectures 3 and 4 on Rhetoric (verbal action, figures of speech, versification, performance).

Voltaire (VII, VIII, X) / Prof Nye
There will be 4 lectures on the following topics and in the following order: Voltaire and satire; Voltaire’s credo; the art of storytelling; literary style.

Diderot (VII, VIII, X) / Prof Nye
There will be 4 lectures on the following works and in the following order: Jacques le fataliste, Le Rêve de d’Alembert, La Religieuse and Le Neveu de Rameau.
**Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Literature / Dr Lunn-Rockcliffe**

This course will explore the changing conceptions of the writer in nineteenth-century France. It will chart the key political and cultural changes of the period and situate key authors in relation to this wider context, considering in particular the tensions between those who argued that art had a social purpose and those who celebrated the artist as a disinterested craftsman. Beginning with the aftermath of the Revolution and writings by Chateaubriand and Staël, it will conclude with Decadence and the fin-de-siècle. Topics covered will include the confessional novel, sentimental fiction, fantastic stories, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, and Symbolism. While these terms were often at the heart of aesthetic debates, which will themselves be examined, the aim throughout will be to think critically about labels, genres, movements and the canon itself.

**Flaubert (VIII, XI) / Dr Yee**

These four lectures aim to help students approach Flaubert’s most well known texts in the context of his work more generally, concentrating on *Madame Bovary*, *L’Éducation sentimentale* of 1869, and the *Trois contes*. There will also be some discussion of Flaubert’s style which will be of use for close reading or commentary work as well as essays.

**Romanticism: Writing and Revolution (VIII, XII) / Various**

Week 1: Origins, Conceptions, and definitions (Prof Seth)
Week 2: History and Politics (Katherine Lunn-Rockcliffe)
Week 3: Récits de soi (Caroline Warman)
Week 4: Drama (Ted Nye)
Week 5: Gothic and Dreams (Fanny Lacôte)
Week 6: Romantic Geographies (Jennifer Yee)
Week 7: George Sand (Caroline Warman)
Week 8: Poetry and Nature (Katherine Lunn-Rockcliffe)

**Key Concepts in Nineteenth-Century French Culture / Dr Jones**

This lecture series is an introduction to five cultural concepts central to the nineteenth century: the bourgeoisie, the mal du siècle, panoramic literature, 'art for art's sake', and degeneration. It traverses authors, literary genres, and occasionally time periods to provide students with an oversight of a diverse range of conceptual approaches to the century. It is relevant to students taking Paper VIII as well as certain authors on Paper XI (most notably Stendhal and Flaubert).

**French Poetry from Lamartine to Apollinaire / Prof. McGuinness**

This lecture course traces the development of poetry and theories of poetry from the early 19th C to the early 20th. Key concepts we will look at are: self and other; voice; public and private
language; pure and contaminated language; the ordinary and exceptional; prose poetry and questions of form; irony and sincerity; poetic authority.

**Stéphane Mallarmé (XI, VIII) / Prof. Lübecker**
These four lectures will take us through key texts in Stéphane Mallarmé’s work, place this work in its historical and intellectual context, consider why Mallarmé became one of the most influential French authors in the 20th century, and reflect on how Mallarmé’s writings speak to the contemporary situation. The lectures begin in week 2 and focus on the following topics: Week 2: The Crisis (Ontology); Week 3: The Marvellous Crisis (Poetics); Week 4: Mallarmé as a Cultural Historian; Week 5: Mallarmé in the 20th and 21st century. (Please consult WebLearn for more detailed information about the lectures).

**Proust (VIII, XII) / Dr Kemp**
These four lectures on Marcel Proust are aimed particularly at those studying the author for a Paper XII Special Subject or for the Modern Period Paper, although those studying Combray for Prelims are also welcome to attend. We will be looking in the first lecture at Proust’s representation of the mind including memory and perception, in the second at Proust and the arts, including music, painting and literature, in the third at Proust and love, including the representation of jealousy and homosexuality, and in the final lecture at Proust, reading and writing, including the style and structure of the novel and the interpretations readers have made of it.

**Beckett (VIII, XI) / Dr Kemp**
These four lectures on Samuel Beckett are aimed particularly at those studying him as a prescribed author for Paper XI, although those studying Beckett for the modern period paper should also find them of interest. The first lecture will offer an introduction to the major preoccupations of Beckett’s work as dramatist and prose-writer. In the second lecture we will look at the use of language in Beckett, and at language and meaning as themes within his writing. In the third lecture we will explore Beckett’s conception of the self, and of related concepts such as identity, mind and soul. The final lecture will be on close-reading Beckett, and will involve detailed analysis and model commentary on extracts from *Molloy, Fin de partie* and *Imagination morte imaginez*.

**Barthes : Towards Post-Structuralism (XI) / Dr Bourne-Taylor**
The prescribed texts are covered in detail with references to other texts being incorporated into the lectures.

**Assia Djebar (XI, VIII, XII) / Dr Morisi & Prof. Hiddleston**
Assia Djebar is one of the most important Francophone writers, and was the first Algerian woman to be made a member of the Académie française in 2005. Despite the acclaim she has received in Europe and the US, however, her work offers a challenging
critique of French colonialism and its aftermath, and contains a profound reflection on the ways in which literature is able to probe and question existing versions of colonial history. Djebar’s relationship with Algeria remains complex: she goes on to depict the ravages of the ‘civil war’ of the 1990s in her later work and she explores her simultaneous commitment to and alienation from her native land.

In this course, you will study four of her most sophisticated works, which include recollections of the colonial invasion of Algeria, of the War of Independence, and of the violence of the 1990s, in particular from the point of view of the women caught up in it.

Lecture One: *Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement*
Lecture Two: *Le Blanc de l’Algérie*
Lecture Three: *L’Amour, la fantasia*
Lecture Four: *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*

**Poetry/Poetics/Poethics (VIII & XII, XI) / Dr Bourne-Taylor**
A panorama of modern & contemporary poetry/poetics/poethics from Baudelaire to Michel Deguy. The first two lectures are fairly general, harking back to Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, and covering the 20thC; the third one is devoted to Bonnefoy, the fourth one to Deguy.

**Literature and Visual Arts / Prof Yee**
Week 1 Introduction (Helen Swift)
Week 2. Medieval (Helen Swift)
Week 3. The Salon (Catriona Seth)
Week 4. Renaissance (WW)
Week 5. Classicism and Baroque (WW)
Week 6. Eighteenth-Century Art and Literature (t.b.c.)
Week 7. Romanticism and Modernity (KLR)
Week 8. From Realism to Symbolism (Jennifer Yee)

**French Women’s Writing (XII, VIII) / Profs Warman, Swift, Seth, Garrod, Kemp, Lacôte, Whidden**
1. An Introduction to French Women’s Writing/ Simon Kemp
2. Christine de Pizan: ‘First Lady of the Middle Ages’? / Helen Swift
3. 'Je lis La Princesse de Clèves' / Catriona Seth
4. 'Poetic Postures: Renaissance Women Writers and Generic Subversions' / Raphaële Garrod
5. Women and Revolution / Fanny Lacôte
6. Women's Poetry in the Nineteen Century / Seth Whidden
7. Autobiography and French Women's Writing / Simon Kemp
8. Contemporary women novelists / Simon Kemp
1. **Prof. Jennifer Yee: Race in the nineteenth century: the word, the concept, and their role in literature**

This lecture looks at the different senses of the term ‘race’ and how it was used in the nineteenth century, as well as giving an overview of scientific racialist theories from the late 18th century onwards. We’ll also see how literary representations of racial difference change over the 19th century. Earlier works (such as Mme de Duras’s Ourika or Hugo’s Bug-Jargal) tend to use race as a form of tragic inevitability that is part of a Romantic preoccupation with alienated individualism. A tragic conception of racial mixing and nostalgia for a lost state of purity is apparent in the works of Gobineau (his short stories as well as the infamous Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines). Conceptions of racial difference become more determinist in the last decades of the century and this is reflected in literature as well as in popular culture.

2. **Prof. Jane Hiddleston: Colonialism and Decolonisation in Twentieth-Century French Thought**

This lecture focuses on the ways in which two major twentieth-century French thinkers, Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, responded to decolonisation, in particular that of Algeria. Camus was a ‘pied noir’, born in Algeria but of French descent, who was opposed to decolonisation because he believed a harmonious co-habitation between French and Arabs was possible. Sartre, however, was virulently critical of the colonial system in Algeria and called for independence, by means of violence if necessary. The lecture will explain and compare these two approaches as well as showing how Camus’s and Sartre’s thinking on colonialism dramatizes the tensions of the period while also highlighting their broader ethical and political priorities.

3. **Prof. Jane Hiddleston: Negritude and its Paradoxes**

This lecture follows on from the last by exploring the negritude movement as a form of anticolonialism. The discussion will start with an analysis of Sartre’s famous essay ‘Orphée noir’, where he champions the anticolonial critique offered by the experimental language of negritude poetry. Yet Sartre’s vision of negritude has been criticised for implying that it is merely a passing stage. We will also compare Sartre’s reading with the work of the Senegalese writer and politician, Léopold Sédar Senghor, who calls for a more permanent and essential concept of black identity, though this is a view he too challenges in his later work. The lecture will then analyse Frantz Fanon’s highly complex and ambivalent response to negritude, as he both insists on its importance while lamenting its reproduction of reductive stereotypes.
4. Prof. Jane Hiddleston: Caribbean Poetics

This lecture explores how negritude gave way to the creation of a series of alternative cultural movements in the Caribbean. We will look at Edouard Glissant’s concept of ‘Antillanité’ and insistence not on Caribbean identity but on what he calls Relation. Glissant’s ‘Antillanité’ will then be compared with ‘Créolité’, a movement promoted by Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant celebrating creole languages and cultures as a symbol of diversity. Writers such as the Guadeloupian Maryse Condé and Haitian Dany Laferrière nevertheless object to the sense of creole unity that continues to underpin the movement, and understand Caribbean culture more broadly and more loosely as diasporic, global, and dynamic. The lecture will unravel the tensions between these movements as well as showing how they are figured in literary aesthetics.

20th/21st Century Autobiography (XII, VIII, MSt) / Prof. Killeen and Prof. Maclachlan

These lectures, intended for those studying the Paper XII on Autobiography or autobiographical writing in the context of Paper VIII, or graduates taking the MSt/MPhil special subject on Life Writing, will attempt to broach general issues in the theory and practice of autobiography by means of a series of individual case studies:

Week 1: The limits of a life – Leiris, ‘L’Age d’homme’ [IM]
Week 2: The puzzle of identity – Perec, ‘W, ou le souvenir d’enfance’ [IM]
Week 3: Fiction and testimony – Guibert, ‘A l’ami qui ne m’a pas sauvé la vie’ [IM]
Week 5: Autobiography encounters the nouveau roman – Sarraute, ‘Enfance’ [MCK]

Researching and Writing a DPhil: Problems, Methods / Prof. Kenny

Tea served from 4.45pm. All DPhil students are welcome to attend, at any stage of the year, whatever year they are in, and whether or not they attended in previous terms or years. We discuss a wide range of problems, techniques, and methods that tend to arise in the researching and the writing of the kinds of doctorates done within the Faculty (with the exception of linguistics, to which the workshop is less well geared). Apart from perhaps giving a very brief presentation during the year, students do no preparation: they just turn up.
**Key Questions in Critical Thought / Prof. Maclachlan, Prof. Swift, Prof. Hiddleston, Prof. Lübecker & Prof. Murnane**

**Texts (Weeks 1 and 2, Ian Maclachlan)**
The idea that in studying literature we’re involved with texts may seem like just about the most unilluminating ‘no-brainer’ imaginable. But in the latter part of the 20th century the resonances of a lexicon of textuality, writing and difference were bound up with a radical reconception of the literary work, its meaning, and its cultural role and value. This reconception may be summarised in terms of the movement from structuralism to post-structuralism and beyond, and these two lectures will offer an account of those intellectual developments, focusing on such figures as Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Rancière, and discussing notions of semiology, intertextuality, deconstruction, and *différa*nce. They will also explore the idea that Derrida’s famous proclamation ‘Il n’y a pas de hors-texte [There is no outside-text]’ in no way implies a schism between text and world, but rather heralds their ceaseless interweaving and, therefore, an essentially political dimension of the literary text, as we see, for example, in the later work of Barthes and in Rancière’s thinking of the politics of literature.

**Identities (Weeks 3 and 4, Helen Swift)**
A vast field of literary and cultural enquiry, whose parameters are ever-broadening: from how identity is constituted as a relationship between body and voice, to critical interrogation of the very utterance ‘I am’, to reflection on how selfhood is defined and defines itself as gendered, to consideration beyond traditional limits of identity as a human category. Starting with an argument between Barthes and Derrida in 1966, these two lectures will focus on 1) identity in relation to literary subjectivity (deictics of utterance; relations between body and voice), and 2) performativity as a fundamental tenet of late-twentieth and early twenty-first reflection on identity, as conceptualised by Judith Butler in her now-seminal work on ‘gender trouble’.

**Postcolonialism (Week 5, Jane Hiddleston)**
Colonialism can be understood to be one the defining historical experiences of the modern era, and postcolonialism is the continued tensions created by its legacy. This session will set out to define this complex and continually resonant concept of postcolonialism, to reflect on the ways in which its meaning has shifted over recent years, as well as offering an overview of its core thinkers. While over the last ten years or so some critics have invited us to consider whether the postcolonial period has now reached its end, on the contrary many insist that the inequalities we see afflicting the planet in the contemporary period are the result of colonial history, even as they also take a new form in this era of global capitalism. The lecture will offer an introductory reflection on the status of the postcolonial, then, before outlining the core contributions of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Often termed the ‘Holy Trinity’ of postcolonial
studies, these thinkers will also be held up for scrutiny and connected with the demands of critical thinking in the contemporary period.

**Posthumanism (Week 6, Barry Murnane)**
Jacques Derrida once asked whether somebody from 500 years ago would recognize modern people as humans at all. Derrida’s question addresses some of the key issues of our day: the challenge posed to inherited and established conceptions of what it means to be human by the impact of contemporary bio-technologies, bio-politics, and bio-media. Following on from Michel Foucault’s critical reconsideration of the post-Enlightenment humanist subject, Posthumanism is a critical discourse which has emerged in the last twenty-odd years or so bringing together multiple fields of enquiry to answer precisely this question – from historians and philosophers of science and history to cultural theorists, from philosophers of ethics and identities to literary scholars, from IT-specialists to media theorists, and from biomedical researchers to writers/makers of speculative fiction and film. While for some writers the posthuman condition is one to be embraced – either as a space of potential to crack binary gender politics in Haraway, for example, or as a means of transcending the limitations of our imperfect bodies in ‘Transhumanism’ – for others the experience of posthuman biomedical technologies and solutions is one associated with pain, biopolitical control, and potentially death. This lecture will introduce the key themes and thinkers of Posthumanism mainly through the lens of the Medical Humanities, playing some of the more optimistic, speculative scenarios of posthuman transcendence off against current medical instances of actual posthuman conditions in order to develop a narrative of ‘Critical Posthumanism’.

**The Nonhuman Turn (Weeks 7 and 8, Nikolaj Lübecker)**
During the last fifteen to twenty years, a plethora of new theoretical approaches has emerged in literary studies as well as in the humanities and social sciences more widely. Labels such as ‘affect theory’, ‘new materialism’, ‘object-oriented ontology’, ‘animal studies’, ‘ecocriticism’, ‘posthumanism’ (see week 5) and ‘cyborg theory’ have been coined. In 2015, Richard Grusin attempted to bring together this diverse set of theoretical formations under the umbrella term ‘the nonhuman turn’. While this term deserves questioning, Grusin’s effort to bring out what these writings all share is still helpful. He sees them as responses to some of the major societal challenges facing us today – above all, global warming and rapid developments in the bio-technological sciences. In other words, these theoretical texts aim to interrogate the place of the human in a world of climate crisis and radical technological developments. Following on from week 6 in particular, these two lectures will introduce selected aspects of the Nonhuman Turn by focusing on affect theory, ecotheory and a few texts considering the impact of recent technological inventions on the human. The lectures will also present some less contemporary texts (by Simondon, Guattari and Williams) that the nonhuman turn has brought back into the spotlight.