

Faculty of Arts and Letters



ROM2231 History of XVIth and XVIIth century French Literature

[30h] 2.5 credits

This two-yearly course is taught in 2006-2007, 2008-2009,...

This course is taught in the 1st semester

Teacher(s): Ginette Michaux
Language: French
Level: Second cycle

Aims

To understand the philosophical, religious, scientific, political and esthetical debates that fills the speeches and language used of the XVII century and goes through its entire literary production. The presentation of these debates is based on the analyses of ideas and mentalities made by historians and of the history of religions and institutions. In that context, we will analyse some major works, that marked, or even transformed the mentality of the subsequent centuries, and that have inspired numerous writers and triggered a lot of critical approaches.

Main themes

Continuity and break points between the esthetical spirit and developments of the second part of the XVI and of those of the XVII century and especially the emergence of the European baroque and definitely the arts of space. The classical esthetic : the bases, the theories, the linguistic and esthetic ideal, the sociopolitical consequences.

The history of the important esthetic movements are accompanied by

1) numerous comments on literary works that characterises that period

For instance *Les Pensées de Pascal* (including the history of the publishing, the *Don Juan* or the *Misanthrope de Molière*, basing ourselves on contemporary criticism, which gave on these works analyses using the tools of human science and hence renewing the interpretation.

2) the presentation of the major or specific genres of the century (affected, mannered and pedantic novels, pastorals, Court Ballet, maxims and memoirs).

Content and teaching methods

We will mainly study the century of Louis XIV with the second part of the XVI century. The spirit of the XVII century cannot be fully understood without knowing what happened in the XVI C. The course ends with Saint-Simon, whose work gives an interesting image of the XVII C., even if the writer died in the XVIII C.

This will allow us to have a critical view on quite a number of stereotypes of the so-called Grand siècle (Great century), and as far as esthetics is concerned, to show that the European baroque, triumphing outside France, is not absent in France either, but meets or fights against the classical esthetic, depending on the places and works. These characteristics still marks today's French mentality and the position of France in Europe.

The course also comments the philosophical and political debates of that age but also major genres and literary works by using contemporary tools of human science, which as a matter of fact renews the interpretation of these genres and works.

Other information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)

Prerequisites : If need be, revision of the course History of the French literature of the first years.

The students should like thorough reflection on the important movements of thoughts and art.

Oral exam, 3 reflection questions on a literary history matter, a philosophical or religious movement and on a work.

Programmes in which this activity is taught

LITT9CE Certificat universitaire en littérature

Other credits in programs

ARKE21	Première licence en histoire de l'art et archéologie	(2.5 credits)
ROM21	Première licence en langues et littératures romanes	(2.5 credits)
ROM22	Deuxième licence en langues et littératures romanes	(2.5 credits)