

Faculty of Arts and Letters



ROM2231 History of French literature from XVI till XVII century

[30h] 2.5 credits

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

This course is taught in the 2nd semester

Teacher(s): Agnes Guiderdoni
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 focus on the 17th century, in relation with the second half of the 16th century in order to understand in depth the century of Louis XVI. We will end in the mid-18th century, when several publications markedly show a major aesthetical change in arts and literature. We will explore two major questions : 1/ What is literature during that period ? and 2/ the 17th century as a turning point for French literature: what is at stake for cultural history in periodisation?

Taking into account the recent research on the period - theoretical (the " modernities " of the 17th century, relations between the arts, rhetoric and poetics, " the birth of the writer ", etc.) as much as practical (research on the performing arts) - , we will use the many artistic and literary disputes (" querelles ") that mark out the period to shed light on the different and complex aspects of literary life in the " Grand Siècle ". This approach will be sustained by reading and studying the important texts relevant to each aspects.

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.

Written examination: 3 reflection questions on a literary history matter, a philosophical or religious movement and on a work.

Course material: There will be compulsory readings, both works of the period, and historical and theoretical studies (Bénichou, Fumaroli, Starobinski, Rousset#). A bibliography will be provided.

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)