

## FREN/COML6750 Spring 2025: France/Amérique

**Description:** This graduate seminar will study French representations of modern America from the Revolutionary Age through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with an eye to what stereotypes of the transatlantic Other say about France's own cultural, political, and literary shifts. From Alexis de Tocqueville's 1830's observations on religious freedom and penal institutions in the new democracy to Jean Baudrillard's 1986 musings on America as the site of the "hyper-real," French writers have displayed an ambivalent fascination with their "brother nation" across the sea. The 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular set a template of stereotypes that contrasted the dynamism of capitalist growth and technological invention in American cities with their underside of materialist corruption and cultural lack of sophistication. In addition to reading Voltaire, de Tocqueville and Baudrillard, we will explore the nuanced range of literary representations of the United States through post-revolutionary ruralism (Chateaubriand, *René/Voyages en Amérique*), 19<sup>th</sup>-century vaudeville theater (De Leuven, *Les Sept Péchés Capitaux*; Sardou, *L'Oncle Sam*), satirical writing (Assolant, *Un Quaker à Paris*), comic journalism (Allais, "Supériorité de la Vie américaine sur la nôtre"), the scientific fantastic (Villiers, *Contes cruels*), science fiction (Verne, *Le Testament d'un excentrique/Voyage autour du monde en 80 jours*), 20<sup>th</sup>-century experimentalism (Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*), poetry (Cendrars, *Les Pâques à New York*), and travel writing (Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*; de Beauvoir, *Amérique au jour le jour*). Secondary works will include chapters from *Extrême-Occident* (Mathy), *Posthumous America* (Hoffmann), *Fascination and Misgivings* (Portes), *The American Enemy* (Roger), *L'Amérique au tournant* (Dubosson et Geinoz), and *Frères Ennemis* (Cloonan).

- Readings in French/discussions in English.

**Assignments and Assessments:** In addition to weekly preparation, presence, and participation, students will be required to do a short pair presentation, an individual 10-minute oral *explication de texte* of a selected literary passage, and an 18- to 20-page seminar paper (in English or French).

### Required Books:

Chateaubriand, *Atala-René*, ed. Flammarion (Folio classique)  
Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, ed. Flammarion (poche)  
Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Contes cruels* (Folio)  
Jules Verne, *Le Tour du monde en 80 jours* (Livre de Poche)  
Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, Gallimard (Folio)  
Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future* (Points)  
Simone de Beauvoir, *L'Amérique au jour le jour* (Folio)  
Jean Baudrillard, *Amérique* (Livre de Poche)

The books listed above will be available for purchase through the Penn Bookstore (<https://upenn.bncollege.com/shop/upenn/home>). All other materials will be provided in class.