Culture: Cities, Makers of Modernity

Quest University Canada
2016-2017
November Block
Monday-Friday, 1 pm-4 pm
Tutor: André Lambelet
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Class Office Hours: Friday, 10-11:45 and by appointment

A Note

Please read the syllabus all the way through.

The syllabus and reading schedule are subject to change. Proper notice will be given to any changes in the schedule.

If you spot flagrant errors or inconsistencies in the syllabus, please let me know, and I'll try to fix them (or explain them away).

Course Description

In the eighteenth and increasingly in the nineteenth century, a curious thing happened: an age-old balance between large agrarian populations and small urban centers began to shift dramatically in favor of urban centers. Cities grew rapidly; this growth transformed the cultures of the cities—places like Paris, London, and Vienna—but it also helped create modernity. In this course, using the methods of cultural and social history, we examine the complex cultures of these modern cities. We look at the hopes that cities engendered in their populations – and examine the deep fears that the growth of cities provoked. What new pleasures did they provide? What new dangers did they create? And, throughout the course, we seek to understand how the city helped make modernity.

In the first part of the course, we examine the growth of modern European cities, using Andrew Lees and Lynn Hollen Lees' *Cities and the Making of Modern of Europe, 1750-1914*. Our aim here is to understand the large patterns of change: demographic, industrial, political, and cultural.

We then narrow our focus to Paris, using Patrice Higgonet's *Paris: Capital of the World* as our guide. While this is a rich, complex, and rewarding book, it is also challenging, demands careful reading and requires deep reflection. To understand the arguments in this book, we will need to engage with other texts and cultural artifacts, and will need to grapple with the history of Paris. (In-class lectures and additional readings will help provide some of the historical framework.)

General Course Goals: Culture

1. To introduce students to the analysis of culture using the tools and techniques of the humanities
2. To give students a richer sense of the importance of exploring cultures.
3. To help students understand cultured as "situated" knowledge and practice; in other words, to understand how the study of culture is *particular* and *specific*, even if the *techniques* and *methods* used to understand culture lend themselves to the study of *diverse* and *varied* cultures.
4. To help students develop the ability to understand how differences—of, for instance, race, class, ethnicity, gender, wealth or power—play into cultural phenomena and practices.
5. To work alongside the other humanities foundation courses ("Text" and "Scholarship") to show how situated cultural knowledge and practices shape texts and critical debates in humanities scholarship.

Learning Objectives: "Cities, Capitals of Modernity"

By the end of the course, students should:

1. Understand and be able to articulate major common themes in the growth of cities in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe;
2. Understand the relationship of material life and constraints to culture in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European cities;
3. Be able to identify cultural and historical elements *particular to* the development of Paris;
4. Have engaged with a variety of texts and media in relationship to urban culture in Paris;
5. Have produced close readings of a cultural practice or cultural artifact in the context of nineteenth-century Paris.

Books and materials

Balzac, Honoré de. *History of the Thirteen*. Penguin Books, 1975. (Some copies available at the university bookstore; it is also available as a Kindle ebook from Amazon.)

Higonnet, Patrice. *Paris: Capital of the World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2002. (**Not available at the bookstore.** The book is out of print; I have several copies, and we will work out how to share them effectively.)

Lees, Andrew, and Lynn Hollen Lees. 2007 *Cities and the making of modern Europe, 1750-1914*. New approaches to European history. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. (Available in the university bookstore.)

Assignments and Marks

Assignment	Due Date	Weight
Group work	Tuesday, November 1	5%
Discussion leadership 1	Per sign-up sheet	5%
Discussion leadership 2	Per sign-up sheet	5%
Discussion leadership 3	Per sign-up sheet	5%
Discussion leadership 4	Per sign-up sheet	5%
Essay 1		20%
Essay 1 Oral defense		10%
Essay 2		35%
Group Presentation	Per sign-up sheet	10%
Journal	Fridays and last Wednesday	Pass / Fail

Essays

There will be two essays for the course; further details on these assignments will be given by the end of week one.

Submission of Written Work

Papers must be properly formatted: 12-point type (Times New Roman or equivalent is best), reasonable margins (1" or 2.5 cm is common), double spacing (except for lengthy quotations, which should be single-spaced and indented on both margins), and full and correct citations.

As the section below on writing notes, papers for this course must be written in formal, standard English. You must:

- punctuate properly;
- use proper grammar;
- make appropriate word choices.

It should go without saying that work must be properly and thoroughly proofread.

Papers must be submitted on Moodle in either Word document (*.doc or *.docx) or RTF format.

Team Work

SUSTAINING LIFE IN THE CITY (FOR TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2016)

The purpose of this exercise is to get you to think about the conditions for life in the city, to think about what a city is and does, to do some (rudimentary) research, and to demonstrate that you can properly find and cite scholarly sources.

Working in teams of four (or so), you will investigate these questions:

1. What are the material requirements for human life? (Be specific.)
2. What, in addition to the most basic requirements for sustaining life, do you think is necessary for people in cities? (Be imaginative: note that "needs" may change with context.)
3. How do you think these needs could have been met in European cities in approximately 1800?
4. What obstacles do you think there might have been to meeting those requirements in European cities in 1800?
5. Do you think what is necessary to live in a city has changed?
6. What do you think were the most important differences in meeting these requirements between rural and urban dwellers in approximately 1800?
7. Provide a *scholarly source* for each item on your list.

Be as specific as time permits. So, for instance, if you say that "water" is a material requirement for life, find out *how much* is necessary. Provide reasons for your claims. ***Provide a scholarly source for each item on your list.*** (This does not include Wikipedia – though of course you may begin there.)

Write up your results in a two-page document, along with a bibliography.

Journal

You must keep – and submit – a scholarly journal. Your entry for each day must be completed *before* class. You must respond to each document or source. This is a pass/no pass assignment; it will not affect your class average, but failure to keep and turn in the journal may lead to an "F" in the course. Turn this in every Friday (and the last Wednesday) of class.

Group Presentation

Working with a small group, you will be responsible for the presentation of documents or other sources in class. Further instructions to follow.

Reading schedule

Week 1

Tuesday, November 1

Lees and Lees: "Introduction," "1. Urban worlds around 1750," "2. Industrial urbanization"

Wednesday, November 2

Lees and Lees: "3. Varieties of urban protest"; "4. Pursuits of urban improvement."

Thursday, November 3

Lees and Lees, "5. The challenge of the big cities"; "6. Toward the social city"

Friday, November 4

Lees and Lees, "7. Urban cultures"; "8. Imperial and colonial cities"; "Conclusion"

Week 2

Monday, November 7

Balzac, Honoré de. "Ferragus." Translated by Herbert J. Hunt. In *History of the Thirteen*, edited by Herbert J. Hunt, 29-153. Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1974.

Tuesday, November 8

Higonnet: A City of Myths; Capital of the Modern Self

Wednesday, November 9

Barthes, Roland. "Myth Today." Translated by Annette Lavers. In *Mythologies*, edited by Annette Lavers, 109-59. New York: Noonday Press, 1972.

Benjamin, Walter. "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century." Translated by Edmund Jephcott. In *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, edited by Peter Demetz, 146-62. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

Thursday, November 10

Higonnet: Capital of Revolution, Mysterious Capital of Crime

Friday, November 11

Holiday

Week 3

Monday, November 14

PAPER WORKSHOP - BRING DRAFT

Tuesday, November 15

Higonnet: Negative Myths of La Parisienne, Reading the Parisian Myths

Wednesday, November 16

Baudelaire - Painter of Modern Life; Flaneur article (TBA)

Thursday, November 17

Higonnet: Capital of Alienation, Paris in the World

Haussmann / Eiffel Tower (TBA) / Marville photographs

Friday, November 18

Higonnet: Capital of Pleasure

The Opera (TBA)

Week 4

Monday, November 21
Higonnet: From Myth to Phantasmagoria; Capital of Art

Tuesday, November 22
PAPER WORKSHOP - BRING DRAFT

Wednesday, November 23
CONCLUSION / EVALUATIONS / CELEBRATING PARIS

Selected Resources

In addition to the works assigned for this course, you will find that cities have attracted enormous scholarly attention. Below you will find a few resources to help orient your studies. Please note that this is just a tiny selection of the myriad resources you might consult for this course. You should spend some time digging through these (and other) sites to get a sense of the richness of the materials that are available online.

BOOKS ON RESERVE AT QUEST UNIVERSITY LIBRARY:

Search under "Course Reserves" tab on the library search page; also check the cart with reserve books in the library.

REFERENCE WORKS

Chilvers, Ian, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*. 3rd ed. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Oxford Reference Online (available online through the Quest University Library: http://library.questu.ca/encydopedias.html)

Wikipedia. Often a useful place to begin, but must be treated with caution. Material is often outdated, not properly sourced, shoddy, overgeneral or bizarrely specific, and occasionally deliberately misleading.

HISTORICAL SURVEYS

Hall, Peter Geoffrey. *Cities in Civilization: Culture, Innovation, and Urban Order*. London: Phoenix Giant, 1999.

Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1961. (Original publication: 1961)

JOURNALS

You will find a number of journals in Quest University Library's databases (http://library.questu.ca/a_z_databases.html

The following databases are of particular interest:

- JSTOR
- Project Muse
- Academic Search Complete

Please note that these are *databases* of journals (and other material). There are vast differences among the journals. Several journals are dedicated to urban history, including:

- *Journal of Urban History* http://juh.sagepub.com/
- *The Urban History Review* http://www.hist.umontreal.ca/u/urbanhistory/home.html
- *Urban History* (Cambridge University Press) http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=UHY

Unfortunately, Quest does not have direct access to these journals. We do, however, have access to historical journals that frequently address urban questions. These include:

- *American Historical Review* (JSTOR)
- *Journal of Modern History* (JSTOR)
- *Journal of Social History* (Academic Search Complete)
- *Past and Present* (Project Muse)

JOURNALS OF THE ERA:

In particular, Daumier's *Le Charivari* is available at gallica.bnf.fr; some also available at archive.org

Lots of journals and reviews are available at Gallica.

MAPS:

http://www.oldmapsonline.org/ A useful and easy-to-use gateway to many map sites.

MAJOR COLLECTIONS:

Gallica (Documents in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France): http://gallica.bnf.fr

Paris Libraries: http://bibliotheques-specialisees.paris.fr/in/faces/homeInBook.xhtml (contains lots of fascinating digitized material – mostly in French, however).

Musée Carnavalet (museum of the history of Paris): http://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/en/museum-carnavalet ; also http://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/en/collections/graphics-arts-office

The Internet Archive: www.archive.org This is a terrific source for digitized sources of historical materials.

IMAGES OF PARIS

Paris en images (Paris in pictures): http://www.parisenimages.fr/en

Photographs by Charles Marville (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC): http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/exhibitions/2013/marville.html

Photographs by Charles Marville (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York): http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/objects?exhibitionId={21968755-5DDD-4FEA-81C5-000D8AAAF6B3}&pg=1&rpp=30

http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=229

Photographs by Eugène Atget (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York): http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search?&noqs=true&ao=on&ft=Atget&who=Eugène+Atget&pg=1

TRANSPORT

RATP (Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens; Paris transport agency): http://www.ratp.fr/en/ratp/c_10531/a-long-history/

Brief history of the Paris metro http://www.france.fr/en/paris-and-its-surroundings/brief-history-paris-metro.html

DISCUSSION SITE / LISTSERV

https://networks.h-net.org/h-urban

ART

Web Gallery of Art: http://www.wga.hu/art/

Impressionism: Art and Modernity: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm

Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity: www.artic.edu/exhibitions/impressionism-fashion-and-modernity

Ives, Colta Feller, Margret Stuffmann, and Martin Sonnabend. *Daumier Drawings*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art : Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1992. (http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15324coll10/id/60027)

Course policies

Your tutor expects you to:

- Have read the syllabus and all handouts and therefore be aware of policies, homework, and due dates.
- Check the Moodle page for this course and your Quest email account frequently; changes to the syllabus and to homework assignments will be posted there.
- Attend every class.
- Arrive on time.
- Be prepared.
- Make use of the tutor's office hours.
- Obtain notes and handouts in the event of an absence.
- Have a completed rough draft in hand on writing workshop days.
- Turn in assignments at the beginning of class on the due date given in the syllabus.

Please:

- Be courteous.
- Turn off your cell phone before class.
- Help keep the classroom neat and tidy.

Please do *not*:

- Bring food into the classroom. (Beverages are ok; library rules apply for the academic building. If you are not familiar with those rules, it's time to go to the library and ask.)
- Use laptops, iPads, electronic tablets, netbooks, smart phones, stupid phones, Wii controllers, Gameboys, or other devices in class unless specifically authorized to do so by the tutors. (If you have a special need, please discuss this with the tutor.)

If you have a disability for which you seek accommodation, please let the tutor know. If you have a physical disability, please Student Affairs; if you have a learning disability, please consult the Directors of the Learning Commons.

Communicating with the tutor

Email is a good and useful tool. Please remember, though, that you should treat email to your tutor as a formal means of communication, one that demands courtesy and respect: you must use proper salutations, forms of address, punctuation, grammar, and syntax. Good writing begins with everyday practices.

I check my email regularly. Do not, however, expect immediate replies, especially to late-night or weekend emails.

Absences

There are—infrequently—valid reasons to miss class: illness, family emergencies, war, famine, pestilence, and so forth. If you have a really good reason for missing class, your case will be stronger if you notify your tutor *before* you miss class. You are in any event responsible for obtaining notes, handouts, and assignments. Missing class without a valid excuse may result in an "F."

Missing class without a rock-solid reason on a day when your team is presenting will result in a zero for you for that assignment. Worse, it may affect your team's mark, which will no doubt cause lingering resentment.

You must complete all assignments.

Failure to hand in *all* assignments may result in an "F" for the course.

Academic integrity

As the Quest University Calendar notes, "Quest is committed to the principle of academic integrity, itself grounded in the fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all academic work." We depend on the

honesty and responsibility of all of our members—scholars and teachers alike. I'm delighted to say that in my experience, my faith in the integrity of students and scholars is rarely disappointed.

Nevertheless, the principles that guide academic work bear repeating. In keeping with the Quest Honour Principle, you will do your own work, and you will conscientiously and meticulously credit sources. Citing sources is not optional in academic work—it is a fundamental principle. As you should know, plagiarism is, broadly speaking, passing off someone else work or ideas as your own, failing to properly identify and credit the source of material you submit, or using cited material improperly. Please be aware that failure to observe the rules of citation will result in charges of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.

Charges of plagiarism or of academic dishonesty are not taken lightly, and may have dire consequences: failure on the assignment, failure of the course, and worse. To avoid this sort of unpleasantness, please be sure to read "University Policies: Quest Honour Principle and Protocol" in the University Calendar. If you have questions about citation, crediting sources, or anything else relating to academic integrity, please ask before you turn in the work. (Information about plagiarism can also be obtained from the Learning Commons.)

If the principle of citation is the same across academic disciplines, the particular format of citation varies from discipline to discipline, and even within disciplines. The practice in this course will be to use the Chicago footnote/bibliography or MLA styles. (My preference is for the Chicago style.)

Doing well in this course

Reading

Reading is a vital part of your education. *It is not a passive activity*. You will be expected to understand and assimilate the assigned material. You will be asked to master the material in a comprehensive and sophisticated way.

Ask yourself the following questions when you read or study a work:

- Who wrote or created it? (If you don't know, look him or her up.)
- When was it written or produced? (Ditto.)
- What does the work say?
- How is the work structured?
- What is the form of the work?
- What kinds of imagery does the work use?
- What questions is it attempting to answer?
- What is the author's argument? What are the argument's strengths and weaknesses?
- What kinds of evidence does the author provide for her or his argument? What kinds of sources does the author use?
- To what kinds of arguments is the author responding?

Pay careful attention to the clues the author gives you:

- Read (and decipher) the title. What does it tell you about the piece you are reading?
- If the piece is a book, read the introduction and conclusion of the book; if the piece is an article or a chapter, read the first and last paragraphs. These should help you figure out what the piece's argument is. Ask yourself what the thesis of the piece is.
- Read the entire work (or all of the assigned portions). Try to decide which parts or passages are most important. If you own the work, make notes in the margins next to important or interesting parts. (Do not do this in library books!)
- Write down your responses to the work in a notebook. Think of note-taking as a way of organizing your thoughts. You need not write down everything; instead, jot down notes about interesting ideas, problems in the argument, or surprising aspects of the piece.
- Re-read the work. You will find that a second (and often, a third and fourth) reading greatly improve your understanding.
- Finally, summarize the author's argument in a few lines. If you can complete a sentence beginning "The author of this book/article argues…," you have read intelligently and productively.

If you do all this, you should be ready for *classroom discussion*.

Writing

The heart of literature, history and philosophy as intellectual disciplines is the written word. Successful students in these fields must be able not only to read carefully but write clearly. In other words, they must be able to understand and use words precisely. Sloppy expression—in writing and in discussion—is as big a problem in the humanities as getting formulae wrong is in chemistry; sloppy expression results in papers that fizzle out rather than illuminate.

You may consult your tutor if you have specific questions; we also urge all students to make use of the Learning Commons and Peer Tutors.

Writing well requires at least three things: *content*, *expression*, and *structure*.

Content: You need to have read carefully (and, it should go without saying, taken notes) before you begin to write. You must *think* about what you have read. You must *understand the question* you are asked to answer. And, of course, you must have something to say. All of this will give your paper *content*.

You must supply *evidence* in the form of (properly-cited) quotations. That evidence will, in the main, come from the assigned readings for this course. If you use evidence from elsewhere, you must be sure that the evidence is *reliable*.

(Please do not think that Wikipedia, sources drawn haphazardly from the web, or other sketchy sources will help persuade your reader of the merits of your work!)

Expression: *How* you say things is crucial. If your writing obscures your meaning, then it is impossible for your reader to evaluate the content of your paper. Style matters: it makes your content accessible and your ideas intelligible.

Papers for this course must be written in formal, standard English. You must:

- punctuate properly;
- use proper grammar;
- make appropriate word choices.

If you are not certain of a word's precise meaning, look it up in a good dictionary before handing in your paper. (If you don't yet own a good dictionary, get one.)

Structure: Good papers will have a crisp **introduction**. This introduction will let readers know the topic or subject of the paper *and* will let readers what *problem* that the paper aims to discuss. (This is the *thesis statement*.) The introduction should let readers what the limits of the discussion will be.

Good papers will have a solid **conclusion**. A conclusion is not just a summary of what has been discussed before: it emphasizes the importance of the thesis statement, provides the essay with a sense of completeness (it *concludes*) the thoughts of the essay), and leaves the reader with a final sense of what the paper is about. (The conclusion should answer the dreaded "so what?" question—it should give the reader a sense of why s/he read it.)

Good papers will be built around solidly-constructed **paragraphs**. Paragraphs are the building blocks of good writing: they are are built around one thought or idea.

Moving from paragraph to paragraph also requires good **transitions**. Transitions connect the ideas in an essay, and allow the reader to understand the flow of your ideas.

Overall: It takes time and effort to write well. Good writing, you will scarcely need to be reminded, is *re-writing*. Plan to write at least two drafts before you submit an essay. And ask for help: ask your peers to read your drafts critically and unsparingly; get advice from the Learning Commons; and raise questions in class.

Essay Questions

Choose one of the following topics, or – after discussion with your tutor, arrive at your own. The material you should draw on includes Higgonet's *Paris: Capital of the World* (up through Chapter 5); the Barthes and Benjamin readings; Balzac's "Ferragus"; and Lees and Lees' *Cities*. You may of course use additional material, but you should concentrate your efforts on understanding and grappling with the material you have read for the course. Your paper must be no less than five and should be no more than seven double-spaced pages (1200 to 1800 words). Please quote and paraphrase accurately, and write carefully. Refer to the "Doing Well" document on Moodle for some pointers on writing. My preference is for Chicago footnote-style citations; no matter which system you use, however, you must provide specific page references. Owl @ Purdue (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/) has excellent guidelines for citation.

Question One

In the works we have read, cities and modernity have been conjoined. In the introduction to *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe*, Andrew Lees and Lynn Hollen Lees write, "Cities were the places where modernity began and where it reached its zenith, and they richly deserve a central place in general as well as in local historiography."[1] In the first chapter of *Paris: Capital of the World,* Patrice Higonnet in turn declares that he does not wish to "just rehearse material that many fine historians have made familiar to us"; instead, he writes:

> The approach taken here is to give an account of its myths, a history not of factual events but of the way in which the city has been perceived, conceived, and dreamed—Paris as the capital of modernity, or mystery, or tradition; Paris as the capital of art and fashion; Paris as the capital of world revolution; Paris as the capital of pleasure, crime, sex, science.[2]

Yet if both books emphasize the nexus between cities and modernity, the way in which they understand and analyze modernity is radically different. In your essay, explore their competing notions of modernity, and explain the relationship between city and modernity in each argument.

You will want to note that the meaning of the terms shifts in the arguments, and that no dictionary definition will suffice. Part of your task, then, is to justify the definition of modernity from each text; another is to discuss the consequences of those definitions. This is a wide-ranging question. Some aspects of the question you may want to address:

What are the crucial elements of modernity in each argument?

What are the factors that help *make* modernity?

What kind of evidence do the authors deploy in their discussions of the city and modernity?

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[1] Andrew Lees and Lynn Hollen Lees, 2007 *Cities and the making of modern Europe, 1750-1914*, New approaches to European history (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

[2] Patrice L. R. Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 1.

How does modernity help make the city?

Question Two

Lees and Lees remark, "There is, in the writing of good history, no such thing as a 'happy ending,' and it is not our intention to suggest that by 1914 city dwellers… lived in communities that were close to perfect."[3] Yet they do seem to suggest that life was getting better for many people: longer lifespans, higher incomes, greater civil rights, more access to political participation. On the other hand, some of what you read in Balzac, Barthes, Benjamin, and Higonnet suggests a different trajectory, one which, in various ways, seems nostalgic of the past, critical of the present, or skeptical about the benefits of modernization. In your essay, explore this apparent tension, making sure to examine your sources carefully, and taking care to note ambiguities and uncertainties in the works you have read.

Sources

Higonnet, Patrice L. R. *Paris: Capital of the World.* Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.

Lees, Andrew, and Lynn Hollen Lees. 2007 *Cities and the making of modern Europe, 1750-1914*. New approaches to European history. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

[3] Lees and Lees, *Cities and the making of modern Europe, 1750-1914*, 7.

Final Essay Questions

Choose one of the following topics, or – after discussion with your tutor, arrive at your own. The material you should draw on includes, of course, Higonnet's *Paris: Capital of the* World, but also (and perhaps especially) Baudelaire, Loyrette, and the other evidence we have looked at: maps, art, and so forth. You may of course use additional material, but you should concentrate your efforts on understanding and grappling with the material you have read for the course. Your paper should be no less than five and no more than seven double-spaced pages (1200 to 1800 words). Please quote and paraphrase accurately, and write carefully. Refer to the "Doing Well" document on Moodle for some pointers on writing. My preference is for Chicago footnote-style citations; no matter which system you use, however, you must provide specific page references. Owl @ Purdue (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/) has excellent guidelines for citation.

Topic One

The tension between myth and phantasmagoria pervades Higonnet's book. Myths, he tells us, are (or can be, for the purposes of his book):

> life stories, each of which has a beginning, a trajectory, and a conclusion—that that all societies elaborate to explain to themselves, the rise and sometimes the fall of their collective enterprise.[1]

But phantasmagoria, he writes, though related to myth, is its inversion:

> Phantasmagoria, in contrast, inverts the purpose of cosmogonic myth. It deforms the past in a self-justifying way by drastically simplifying it to accord with a superficial and even selfish need.[2]

One of the prevailing themes of Higonnet's book, then, centers on the tension between the *authentic* ("myth") and the *inauthentic* ("phantasmagoria"). He returns to this time and time again, with reference to architecture, crime, literature, painting, science, public works, pleasure, and so on. Using at least two of the categories that Higonnet himself uses, assess the merits and the defects of this kind of approach.

Topic Two

Higonnet is clearly and self-consciously *not* writing a history of Paris merely as the history of a place and of its people: he is writing a history of a concept, an idea, a civilization; he claims, in the last line of the book, that Paris should reach out,

> beyond its closest borders first to the Paris region, which it has too often ignored, and then to Europe and the world, whose auratic, monumental, and aesthetic urban conscience it now is and—or so we can fervently hope—will remain for centuries to come.

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[1] Patrice L. R. Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 4-5.
[2] Ibid., 5.

Higonnet seems to have personified the city, made it a being in some sense larger than and even independent of the people who inhabit it. It is not just a political capital, but "a capital of the civilizing spirit."[3]

In what sense do you think this way of thinking about this city—or indeed any city—is effective, useful, or stimulating? What, in your view (but grounded in reasoned argument), are the limitations of such an approach? Take into account at least two different aspects of Parisian culture (pleasure, revolution, literature, crime, science, an so) in your discussion.

Topic Three

A tone of nostalgia pervades much of Higonnet's writing; he sees Paris after the Belle Epoque as a faded city. He notes, for instance, that

> Paris, capital of the French Empire, may have seemed important in 1931, but compared with Paris, capital of the nineteenth century, it really did not amount to much.[4]

Yet at the same time his book is very much forward-looking: he does seem to think that Paris can in the future be something important, something grand, something meaningful. How might you conceive of the relationship between history as Higonnet understands it, nostalgia, and the future? (Be sure to discuss at least two central aspects of Parisian culture.)

Topic Four

We have spent much of the course trying to understand a series of interrelated ideas: cities, modernity, industrialization, the advent of commercial culture, and so on. The locus of our conversation since week two has been Paris; there, we have delved into a handful of rich critical perspectives. Setting aside the (possibly hyperbolic) claim that Paris is the capital of the *world*, discuss the ways in which the works you have read this block help you understand cities more generally. Another way of putting this is that the critical perspectives raised in the discussion of Paris might also be used to understand other cities. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these perspectives? (Be careful if you choose this question; your task here is not to waffle on about things, but to *translate* the critiques and commentaries you have read into other contexts. That can be painstaking—albeit rewarding—work.)

Sources

Higonnet, Patrice L. R. *Paris: Capital of the World.* Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.

[3] Ibid., 436.

[4] {Higonnet @373}