

## **Academic Consortium Board**

### **Evaluation of the Paris Critical Studies Program**

**February 2007**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Academic Consortium Board (ACB) of CIEE is pleased to present the following report on the CIEE Study Center Critical Studies Program in Paris. The report of the site visit team was received by members of the ACB. After review, the ACB accepted the report, and presents it to the Academic Consortium. The "Plan for Program Evaluation" is available at <http://www.ciee.org>.

This report is a review of the CIEE program, which operates in collaboration with the University of Paris 3 and also has students participate in courses taken at other branches of the University of Paris. This report focuses on the program as a whole as offered at the Study Center and does not propose to assess the quality of courses offered at the University of Paris; but we do wish to emphasize the curricular and intellectual importance of that collaboration. The Program also has a relationship with the University of California Education Abroad Program, which provides the reciprocity agreement with Paris 3 that facilitates course registration of CIEE students there. This agreement is of long standing and greatly valued.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Paris Critical Studies program is one of the oldest and most highly-respected programs offered by CIEE. To participate, students must have high proficiency in French and a strong interest in theory and interpretation. The mission of the program is "to create an environment of intellectual engagement in critical thought in French across the fields of literature, philosophy, film studies, and art history."

The unique focus of this program requires a higher level of engagement from scholars practicing in this field than is often the case, and indeed demands a healthy relationship between departments in the US that encourage their students to specialize in this area of study and the management of the program. Thus the CIEE evaluation team that reviewed the program in 2001 recommended the establishment of a Faculty Advisory Committee, a suggestion that has yielded excellent results. This Committee visited the program in 2003 and met again to discuss current issues in November 2005, and two members of the committee served as members of this evaluation team. This is an important way of insuring that the curriculum in Paris be constantly recalibrated to keep pace with the expectations and new directions of the departments in US universities

that send participants. In this way, it is hoped that the best possible articulation can be created between study of French Critical Studies in the US and in Paris.

Enrollment in the program fluctuated in the 1990's but has rebounded and has grown rapidly in recent years. This has presented severe space issues, because the program shares facilities with the Contemporary French Studies Program which has also seen recent rapid growth. This problem has been managed by finding new premises, and the program was about to move at the time of the evaluation, into new facilities the team found to be excellent. Crowding has also had a negative effect on the use of French at the Center, especially since Contemporary French Studies students often have a much less advanced level of French. The lack of an immersion environment and commitment to the constant use of the language has been seen as problematic by many students in Critical Studies, and it is hoped that the new facilities, and a new commitment to maintaining the use of French in the Center, will address this very legitimate concern.

The quality of courses offered at the Center was judged to be very high, and the caliber and energy of the faculty exemplary. Student satisfaction with these courses is also high. The Faculty Advisory Committee recommended in 2003 the establishment of a core course, and this has been implemented and taught by the Resident Director, with considerable success in 2005-6 but with some problems in 2006-7, in part because the larger number of participants has made the seminar format needed for this course, which has complex goals both for content and pedagogy, difficult to maintain. There are various ways of addressing problems of this kind, and the Resident Director is considering various options which will allow this central course to fulfill its very important role in giving the students a way of anchoring their other coursework. The high level of engagement of the Resident Director with his subject, and his active engagement in the intellectual life of the city and the academic community, provide an exceptional resource for participants in this program.

Students also enroll directly in courses at the University of Paris 3 and other branches of the University of Paris, and this is to be highly encouraged and facilitated. The program is doing an excellent job of expanding available information about these opportunities and in working with the university faculty teaching courses that are of interest in the field of critical studies. The team endorses the efforts currently underway to create an agreement to allow students to have access to Paris 8 in addition to 3, 1 and 4 – because of a very strong and important program in Women's Studies.

One of the great strengths of the program is the writing workshop, which is regarded by students as truly exceptional, and the program has cause to be proud of this aspect of the program. Students are very well-prepared through it for the French university system, and indeed for all their course work. Students

also appreciate a phonetics program, an unusual and wonderful addition to the tools they have for improving their spoken French.

The team found no significant problems with any of the logistical aspects of program management. This program has a strong management team and good resources in the city, and students appreciate this. The move to the new premises also provides a much better neighborhood for the program than the current staid location, with inexpensive places for students to eat and gather. The team was happy to contemplate a bright future for the program, which benefits from very good leadership, and active faculty committee, and some of the most talented students we could hope to meet.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation site visit team was composed of

- Jane Edwards, Associate Dean for International Affairs, Yale University
- Daniel Brewer, Professor of French, University of Minnesota
- Efrain Kristal, Professor of Comparative Literature, University of California at Los Angeles, and Director, University of California Paris Study Center

The three members of the site visit team each reviewed the history and evaluation of the program produced by CIEE. This program is unusual in that it has a Faculty Advisory Committee, drawn from consortium institutions with a long-term interest in this highly specialized program, which has been in operation in Paris since 1973. The team reviewed this Committee's reports and the Director's responses. They studied the course catalog, and reviewed course syllabi for all program courses; they read end-of-session reports; they reviewed statistical information on the participants (numbers, gender, and ethnicity statistics, sending institutions, etc.). They reviewed staff and instructor curriculum vitae. They reviewed the pre-departure orientation handbook. They reviewed the student evaluation summaries and all the evaluations covering the Critical Studies Program over the past 3 years. They contacted the top 8 sending institutions from the Academic Consortium to learn of their concerns. They reviewed the CIEE strategic analysis of the program.

This team was unusual in that two members are drawn from the Faculty Advisory Committee and both have previously visited the program. Prof. Kristal is currently resident in Paris as Director the University of California Education Abroad Center, and has frequent contact with the program and oversight of University of California participants. Thus the evaluation was based on long-term and in-depth knowledge of the program in addition to what the team experienced in connection with the present evaluation.

In preparation for the site visit, the team chair wrote a memo inviting participation which was distributed on site by the Resident Director to all students. The Faculty were also invited to participate in formal and informal meetings with the team.

The schedule for the three-day visit accompanies this report. During the visit, team members visited classes and met with faculty and students individually and in groups; met with all staff members except one who was out on maternity leave, and with two of the newly-engaged interns from the Sorbonne; visited the University of Paris 3 and met with the exchange coordinator there; visited the Musée du Quai Branly with the Resident Director and his class; visited two students' housing with them and the Student Services Coordinator; met with the phonetics coach; and drafted and agreed on recommendations which are made part of this report.

### **ENROLLMENT STATISTICS BY SEMESTER**

Current enrollment:	40 (21 Academic Year, 19 Spring)
Average enrollment 2003-2007:	6 Fall, 19 Academic Year, 18 Spring
Highest Recent Enrollment:	44 (Spring 2004)
Lowest Recent Enrollment:	20 (Fall 2005)

### **EVALUATION**

In accordance with the Program Evaluation Plan for ACB Program Review, the evaluation report is divided into twelve sections below, corresponding with the terms of reference specified in the plan.

#### **I. Quality of the Academic Activities**

The Critical Studies Program, founded in 1973 in cooperation with the University of California at Berkeley, primarily as a film studies program, is a flagship program strongly focused on the field of French Critical Studies, constructed on the expectation of good French and strong course preparation among participants. The program, like most study abroad programs today, accepts students both for a single semester and for the full year. This dual calendar has raised issues for some sending institutions that wish their students to receive an in-depth full-year study experience in many ways comparable to graduate study. The challenge has been defined in recent years as the need to create a highly coherent set of offerings within the Center and a learning community among the students, while accommodating students with different levels of preparation and succeeding in meeting the different needs of full-year and single semester students. There has been considerable debate over the years about how best to maintain the exceptional quality of the program while adapting to the changing needs of American students, and accommodating the unavoidable range of language skills and preparatory coursework they bring to the program. To insure that the program continues to fulfill its mission as a unique program specializing in French Critical Studies, a Faculty Advisory Committee, created in 2002, brings together representatives from American university departments that have strong

programs in French Critical Studies and that use this program. This Faculty Advisory Committee visited the program in 2003, and was most recently convened in 2005 for a meeting with the Resident Director and discussion of the future of the program. Two members of this Committee were members of this evaluation team.

Students all take an intensive two or three week language and culture module when they arrive, and a single -semester core course on the “Theory and Method of Critical Studies” taught by the Resident Director. In addition they take four courses from the offerings of the Center, one of which for most students is a writing workshop and from courses offered at French institutions of higher education. All coursework is in French. Center courses all fall within the Critical Studies rubric, but students may take courses in a wide range of fields outside the Center.

The team was very impressed with the course offerings at the Center, in terms of range, pertinence, and intellectual quality. We attended an advanced writing workshop course, mentioned, which serves a valuable role in improving students’ linguistic skills and preparing them for taking University courses, in particular, by preparing them to write in a more effective academic style. We were well impressed with the ability of all Center instructors to combine the teaching of complex disciplinary topics with effective ways to enhance students’ technical and linguistic expertise. Without exception, the instructors are highly experienced teachers, highly qualified experts in their field, and genuinely committed to teaching American students. At a dinner which all attended there was lively discussion of current issues, combined with an excellent esprit de corps. The Evaluation team read course evaluations and discussed courses with students, finding a high level of satisfaction and evidence of considerable investment on the part of the students. Student enthusiasm for individual teachers was palpable, both in the classroom and during informal conversations. Students were very satisfied with the content of the courses as well.

**The Writing Workshop.** Mastery of French is a priority for students and a mission of the program, which has been very fortunate in attracting a language teacher who is universally regarded as extraordinary. The evaluation team attended a class, and can attest that these students are fortunate indeed: a class on stylistics was stimulating, fast-moving, friendly, and highly productive. This workshop also serves a very important function in introducing students to the specific expectations surrounding academic paper writing in France, providing in addition an environment in which students raise issues associated with their experience of daily life in Paris.

**University Courses:** Students are assisted in registering at Paris 3, and all are strongly pushed towards taking at least one course in the University system. Full-year students may take all university courses in their second semester, and some do. The quality of courses is somewhat variable, as must be expected, but

all students with whom the team spoke expressed strong satisfaction at participating in these courses, some of which they found excellent. The team members were highly impressed by the Director's ability to establish effective working relations with a wide range of French faculty members at various universities; in particular he was successful in having instructors agree to receive more student work so that course assignments were comparable to US courses. The team visited the University of Paris 3 to see the range of courses and modality of registration.

Overall academic satisfaction is very high. The recurring complaint has to do with the expectations of home institutions regarding the number of courses students must take, which is related to the problem familiar to study abroad professionals concerning the equivalency of European Credit Transfer System units and what constitutes a full but manageable load for students. We need not explore that issue here, but the team, which discussed this at great length, with students, staff, and among themselves, does feel that a required load of 5 courses in addition to the intensive ILP course is high, and we believe that by adjusting the ways in which assignments are made, work is allocated, and equivalencies established it may be possible to make changes which would benefit students without compromising the integrity of the system

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend that CIEE and the Resident Director explore ways of managing credit equivalency which allow students to receive a full semester's credit for four rather than five courses.

### **A. Teaching**

The evaluation team visited five courses offered at the Center, received course syllabi, reading materials, and student evaluations, and interviewed instructors and students. These courses were the Core course, the writing workshop, "Lecture et re-lecture du Cogito" (Philosophy), Peinture Française (History of Art) and "Texte et Image dans le modernisme" (Literature).

We were well impressed with the ability of all Center instructors to combine the teaching of complex disciplinary topics with effective ways to enhance students' technical and linguist expertise. Without exception, the instructors are highly experienced teachers, highly qualified experts in their field, and genuinely committed to teaching American students. The Evaluation team read course evaluations and discussed courses with students, and found a high level of satisfaction and evidence of considerable investment on the part of the students. Student enthusiasm for individual teachers was palpable, both in the classroom and during informal conversations. Students were very satisfied with the content of the courses as well.

**The Core Course:** Written evaluations and interview responses concerning the 2005-06 core course were generally positive. Students were quick to acknowledge the instructor's teaching expertise and commitment to them as

learners. However, student feedback concerning the course taught in Fall 2006-07 identified a number of negative factors (overcrowded classroom environment, insufficient time for presentation and in-depth discussion of material). We attribute this response in large measure to course size (approximately 30 students), to inadequate classroom space, and to a change in course format from lecture and smaller discussion in 2005-06 to a single 3-hour session, composed of lectures and student presentations, Fall 2006. We strongly believe that the director should have full pedagogical autonomy to develop the core course as he wishes. We also believe that this course is so central to the mission of the Center that these negative factors must be addressed. This course is designed to energize students and provide them with an intellectual springboard to other academic experiences in the area of critical studies, both during their studies in Paris and following their return to the US. Consequently, it will benefit the reputation of the program and of CIEE to invest the necessary resources to make this a showcase course. So for example, the problem might be solved by hiring a graduate student to teach sections if enrollments remain this high, thereby providing additional discussion and deepening the impact of the course.

**Disciplinary Focus:** The identity of the Center derives in overwhelming measure from its location in Paris. The Center has a well deserved reputation for its involvement in activities that exemplify the ongoing relevance of critical studies. It is imperative that this continue, both as reflected in the Center's curriculum and through connections outside the Center. The Center enjoys a historical connection to the discipline of film studies. Currently, this discipline is represented by courses taught in the Center and in the University of Paris system. The team discussed ways to build on this strength by communicating the value of the project to American film students with an interest in critical studies.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that careful consideration be given to the structure and size of the core course. It is essential that an environment be created and maintained that provides the instructor with sufficient time to present and develop the course's fundamental concepts, and students with sufficient opportunities for discussion and exchange in addition to the individual presentations.

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend the implementation of intellectual components that engage students deeply with current or ongoing developments in French critical thought. For example, students may be encouraged to take courses with contemporary French philosophers or social theorists in the Center or other academic institutions; the Center may organize formal lectures or informal events with important figures on the Parisian intellectual scene.

**Recommendation 4:** Following on the recommendation of the Faculty Advisory Committee, we recommend that the Center consider ways to enhance film

studies components of the program so as to make it more attractive to students interested in the connection between film studies and critical theory.

### **B. Assessment**

The assignments in courses, both in the Center and outside, seem appropriate in quantity and quality. Center syllabuses explain grading policies clearly, and the Director works closely with instructors to ensure that students complete and submit assignments allowing instructors to make an accurate assessment of students' work. Evaluations and discussion with students confirmed that the program staff do an excellent job of explaining expectations to the students. Most students take a combination of courses in the Center and at the University of Paris 3, and through Paris 3 some also take courses at Paris 1 and 4. All students are registered students at Paris 3, but are able to cross-register through a university agreement.

As with most programs that directly enroll students in French university courses, there is need for negotiation with French university faculty about workload expectations of American students who must meet the credit criteria of US institutions. There is often considerable tension surrounding this process for students, but in this program we found an unusually high level of comfort among the students, and a history of excellent relations with the faculty.

### **C. Appropriateness of Academic Offerings**

This is a program with a highly-focused offering of courses at the Center, supplemented by a wide range of courses, some in Critical Studies and others in very different fields. To assure that students select courses that will prove appropriate in the universities, the Director is developing records of student experience, and that will be very helpful to future participants, who sometimes find the "shopping" process somewhat overwhelming.

To be sure that exceptionally well-prepared students make the best possible use of their time in Paris and select the courses that can best challenge them, such records can be used in careful advising for students at the very beginning of their stay in Paris, when they are least likely to feel able to grapple with additional challenge. Students abroad often make decisions to take non-threatening courses because they must make these decisions when they are insecure and vulnerable, and then regret having missed more challenging options. In a program of this kind, it is particularly important that careful advising and sensitivity to the problem prevent this from happening.

## **II. Quality and Appropriateness of Services**

The Critical Studies Program (CSP) shares space and staff with the other program hosted by the CIEE Center in Paris, and considerable experience and expertise goes into the management of services for the Center. This is reflected

in students' high level of satisfaction with the quality of services provided, and the evaluation team found no reason to disagree.

One problem area did emerge repeatedly in conversation with students concerned the legal residence document for full-year students, the *carte de séjour*: other programs obtained this in 3-4 weeks, and some CIEE students still do not have theirs. It is crucial that students have legal status as soon as possible, if necessary, the Center should work with landlords to obtain the necessary papers. While the delay was aggravated by a strike, things could have gone better and must in the future. The Center's philosophy of cultivating student independence cannot be allowed to threaten their status as students in France.

**Recommendation 5:** While understanding that problems surrounding the acquisition of the *carte de séjour*, a necessary document for full-year students, were anomalous in fall 2006, we recommend that in future the Center acquire documentation for the *carte de séjour* and process applications, not leaving this to the students.

#### **A. Pre-departure services**

Student evaluation of pre-departure services for this program is generally very positive, and the assessment of the usefulness and accuracy of information received is evaluated in the top two categories by over 80% of respondents. Students with whom we discussed this question were generally pleased by the assistance they received from CIEE before departure. It is worth noting, however, that very detailed information about the academic aspects of this program were provided as part of the pre-departure handbook, including a lengthy reading list created by the Faculty Advisory Committee. Some students appeared to be unaware that they had received this material, and no student whom we spoke to had made use of the reading list. This suggests that this very important preparation for the program needs to be highlighted for students and communicated in different ways. The level of students' familiarity with essential readings in the field of critical studies is what determines the depth that Center courses can achieve and defines the progress of each participant. If students prepared by reading at least some of these materials, if they have not already had course work in this area, then the quality of classroom interaction would undoubtedly improve notably. It would also be beneficial for students to receive the syllabus for the core course ahead of time, and perhaps to be given a single specific assignment that all would complete before departure as a basis for the first class.

**Recommendation 6:** We recommend that the mission statement of the program be updated to reflect the program's unique focus on the intellectual contributions of post-68 French thought, which continues to engage in dialogue with contemporary critical currents in France and the US.

**Recommendation 7:** We recommend that a new strategy for communication between the Resident Director and incoming students be explored, introducing students to the specific character and expectations of this highly-focused program,

**Recommendation 8:** We recommend that pre-departure academic materials be streamlined and detailed instructions be provided for the use of the reading list and other supporting materials.

**Recommendation 9:** We recommend creating a critical studies program web site. This web site can be used for communicating with students and faculty and for providing information about all aspects of the program and links to other important Parisian sites. This web site can be used by students and faculty considering use of the program.

### **B. Orientation**

The orientation program is considered effective by students and evaluations of past semesters support this. There seems to be some confusion among students as to the extent that CS and CFS students should mix during the orientation period, The Center is about to move to larger premises, however, and the team judges that many of these issues will disappear when there is more space. The use of French from the very beginning of the orientation is important and possible given the level of these students' French. We judge that the staff of the Center are providing essential information on health and safety in effective ways, and that the orientation meets CIEE's established standards.

### **C. Academic Advising**

While students found the process of course selection challenging, many commented on how helpful the Resident Director's knowledge of the field of Critical Studies was to them in their work – an important aspect of this program for the most serious among the participants. Conversation and evaluations both confirmed that students feel well-advised and encouraged to seek challenges, which is central to the mission of this program.

**Recommendation 10:** We recommend that the program further systematize the maintenance of information about student experience with University courses as far as possible, and help students use this information to reduce the stress surrounding the course registration process

**Recommendation 11:** We recommend that advising for advanced students focus on finding an appropriate balance between Center and University courses.

### **D. Housing**

Changes in the French university calendar have presented challenges that have resulted in a change in the housing system this year. In the past, students were expected to find their own housing (with help) The early start to the semester in

fall of 2006 made this impossible, and so a system of placement was devised and implemented. For many reasons this caused some problems last fall, but the team is satisfied on the basis of students' experience this spring that the new system is now functioning well. The calendar has changed once again for next fall (reverting to a later start) Those students who wish to do so can once again find their own housing, while the majority will be assisted with the process.

There has been a good deal of discussion concerning this, since the challenging process of finding housing does make students more independent from the beginning, and many value the long-term benefit of this experience. However, there are other ways of developing a similar sense of independence. The Resident Director is working with his staff to recalibrate the processes surrounding orientation to manage both the vagaries of the currently volatile French university system and the escalating needs and expectations of our students.

### **E. Accommodation of Special Needs**

The staff of the Critical Studies Program are aware of CIEE's commitment to serving all students as far as possible, and are eager to accommodate students with special needs. A deaf student had an excellent experience during a recent semester, and with sufficient lead time a blind student could be accommodated, although course choice would have to be determined well in advance to manage the issue of texts – as is, of course, true anywhere. For students in wheel chairs Paris is not an easy city, but the new premises of the Center will, it is hoped, accommodate a wheel chair – though not every wheel chair, and for a student with mobility difficulties access to courses would to some extent be limited by University facilities. We suggest that students with special needs get in touch with CIEE early so that accommodations may be made.

### **F. Other**

**Language Community.** An important aspect of this program is the opportunity for students to be immersed in French and to develop a very high level of proficiency. However, students were, when asked, unaware that there was any kind of commitment in place regarding the use of French. The evaluation team was disappointed at the amount of English used in the Center, which impedes this immersion. The fact that the Center accommodates the CFS program, which serves some students who have little French, is the evident cause of this. It is aggravated by the fact that the premises are extremely crowded, so no effective linguistic borders can be established.

The new premises, to which the Center was moving immediately after the Team's visit, will make it far easier to manage this situation. The Directors have been discussing the notion of having the center be French-speaking with a corner where English is used (rather than the reverse).

**Recommendation 12:** We recommend that in the new Center premises a new policy of seriously holding students to the expectation that only French will be spoken should be introduced.

### **III. Quality and Appropriateness of the Students Who Participate**

Most of the students who choose the CSP are serious about their work (average GPA 3.5), and are eager to make the most of their time in France. Some have exceptionally high levels of French. Others have weaker French, but great enthusiasm. Most students have been advised about this program in two ways: by study abroad advisors who recommend it as an excellent program for students with advanced French; or in discussion with faculty in French Critical Studies at the home institution.

The realities of enrollment in study abroad programs are complicated, and constantly changing, but the highly-focused nature of this program does suggest that a special recruitment strategy should be developed. The evaluation team believes that it is worth approaching the Faculty Advisory Committee to devise effective ways to spread information about this program among interested colleagues at US institutions, so as to increase the percentage of participants who come to Paris well-informed about the critical studies curriculum and well-prepared to follow it. While the program can serve the needs of students with good French majoring in other disciplines and marginally interested in critical studies, this dilutes the intensity of the learning experience for the community of those who really wish to pursue critical studies. We believe that it is worth making every effort to ensure that participants are drawn to the mission of the program.

**Recommendation 13:** that with the resident Director and the Faculty Advisory Committee CIEE develop a strategy for engaging US faculty in French critical Studies in the process of recruitment and advising.

### **IV. Quality of Facilities**

#### **A. Office and Class space**

The Center's premises on Blvd. Haussman are certainly attractive, and the decision to move to that location was to some extent dictated by the need for a safe environment, which at the time of the Center's establishment in the 8<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, this bourgeois environment near the Champs-Élysées seemed to present. The current location presents two problems, however. Very safe during the day, the area is something of a magnet for theft at night and on weekends, a situation compounded by the fact that there are so few people on the street at these times. Second, the space is simply too small – everyone trips over each other, all conversations can be overheard, classes interfere with each other. The Center directors have therefore decided to make a move. They have made an excellent choice of new premises on the rue du Sentier in the 1<sup>st</sup>, close to the metro Grands Boulevards, in a lively neighborhood with lots of inexpensive

places for students to eat, and a great neighborhood life – in short, a place that is safer, cheaper, and much more likely to allow students to have a richer French urban experience. We visited the new Center and were very pleased indeed with what we saw – as were the students, who went with us, as part of a post-class gathering in which we also talked with them at length about their experience over refreshments. This space is laid out in a way which is likely to make greater separation of the two programs possible, and will give students much better facilities in which to confer with staff, study, and use the Library resources.

### **B. Library**

Over time the Center has developed a good collection of texts in the field of literature, literary history, and critical studies, both in English and in French. It is important that the quality of this collection be maintained, since books are expensive in France and access to libraries is not what it would be in the US. Students are of course now able to use the on-line resources to which their own institutions often provide access while they are abroad. We found the situation satisfactory, and we urge that the necessary resources continue to be allocated for this important resource.

The Center also has an impressive collection of French film and television archival material, mostly on videotape, gathered over the years from the University of California and from other sources. This is an extraordinary resource, and it would be sad indeed if these tapes deteriorate before they can be digitized. We believe that there might be ways of managing this daunting and rather costly task, and we hope that this may be facilitated. For example, a proposal might be written for a small grant to create an internship for a film studies student from a consortial institution to spend time in Paris accomplishing this interesting and very useful work.

**Recommendation 14:** We recommend that CIEE explore taking action to protect the video resources of the program.

### **C. Computer and e-mail facilities**

Since the majority of students now travel with their own laptops, and there are many wifi facilities available (including the Center), computing issues are much less significant in Western European programs than they were only two or three years ago. Students had no complaints, except about the quality of the internet access. This is a function of old wiring, common in Paris (in the team's hotel, for example), and something to which students can adjust.

## **V. The Program's Plans for Improving its Teaching and Services**

The Directors' joint decision to move will be the principal improving factor during the coming semesters. They are to be congratulated for undertaking this venture.

Through the Director's pursuit of his own intellectual interests and the interest and engagement of Center faculty, access is being developed to important lecture series and modular courses offered at the *Collège International de Philosophie* and elsewhere. Center engagement in the creation of public activities in Critical Studies is highly desirable, though labor-intensive and not necessarily easily managed. This is an aspiration of the Director and one the evaluation team found very positive, since it can enhance the learning experience of students through their participation in the community of scholarship in critical studies in Paris.

Other improvements are already underway or are contemplated. This semester the Program Coordinator has launched an internship program for graduate students training at the Sorbonne in the area of Teaching French as a Foreign Language. These interns will work with CIEE students in a variety of ways, while also learning pedagogy from the teachers who work with both CFS and CSP. This new arrangement has the added advantage of bringing French students into the Center, something we all wish to see increased. The Resident Director is also working with the Exchange Coordinator at the University of Paris 3 to increase interaction between CSP students and French students prior to their departure to study at the University of California through the exchange program – another way to increase interaction with French students, which is always desirable and hard to accomplish.

In addition, the Resident Director is well on the way to establishing an arrangement with the University of Paris 8, which has excellent and highly relevant course offerings, for example in gender studies. This will add an important option for students, who will also enjoy the atmosphere of that campus.

**Recommendation 15:** We recommend that the program establish formal relations when possible with French institutions, to ensure that students have access to a wide range of courses and environments and to enrich the curriculum in critical studies

**Recommendation 16:** We recommend that resources, if needed, be provided to the Center for external engagement in the field of critical studies.

## **VI. Relationship with the Host University**

The Center's relationship with the University of Paris 3 is functioning very well, in part due to the energy of the Resident Director in building relationships there among the faculty and with administrators. The relationship is mediated by the University of California's exchange program, and UC has given CIEE a great deal of latitude in managing their reciprocity agreement. This has resulted in an excellent working relationship between CIEE and Paris 3 that benefits all students, since it facilitates their entry into the University.

The Critical Studies program is perhaps best seen as a self-standing thematic program that can productively draw on the resources of a number of institutions in addition to Paris 3. We believe that the most productive direction for its further development is to build and maintain a wide-ranging network of scholars who share convergent interests, and to develop formal arrangements with other institutions in Paris in addition to nurturing the relationship with Paris 3. This work has already been begun by the Resident Director, and it offers exciting possibilities.

## **VII. Perceived Satisfaction of the Consortium Member Institutions**

The Team included two representatives of institutions that send numbers of students - the University of California and the University of Minnesota – and so we had good sources of information immediately to hand. In addition, we contacted 6 other institutions that had sent students in recent years, and we received useful feedback from the University of Washington, Princeton, and the University of Colorado. Satisfaction with the program is generally high. Housing did not go well in Fall 2006, as we discussed above, and that was a matter of concern. There is concern about the delay in receiving transcripts, but this program – as participants’ accounts of why they chose it attest – is widely respected as one of the best in Paris.

Another source of concern is whether the best-prepared students find the program adequately challenging. We have attempted to address this in various ways, and share our colleagues’ desire to see the program fulfill its mission in all ways and especially for these students. Finding the right balance for the core course will undoubtedly help, as will insistence on the French language policy and increased emphasis on the nature of this program for applicants.

## **VIII. Perceived Satisfaction of the Student Participants**

Student satisfaction with the program as a whole is very high, among both full-year and semester students. Over the past three years, from 80 to 98 % rate it in the top two categories and would recommend it to a friend – these are very high numbers. Students are particularly grateful for the exceptional staff, who are uniformly rated as highly as on any CIEE program – which is quite an accolade. Many students also told us that they liked the fact that the program fosters independence, that they loved Paris and their courses, and were particularly enthusiastic about several members of the Center’s faculty.

Issues raised with us by students included an almost universal disappointment with the fact that English is so often spoken in the Center; dissatisfaction with the discomfort of being too crowded in classes in the Center; anxiety about this year’s delay in obtaining a *carte de séjour*, which we assume will not happen again; and some frustration from students who failed to understand adequately the critical studies focus of the program before they came. Some full-year

students had complaints about the housing process, but spring semester students were happy with the process as well as their own choices.

A possibly serious issue concerns the very best students, who, if they came with a good background in Critical Studies, were in some cases frustrated by the lack of background of other students, and disappointed that the core course is more introductory than they would like. We have attempted to address this important matter to some extent above, and given the focus of this program and its unique character it is important that such concerns are taken seriously and addressed in any way possible.

**Recommendation 17:** We recommend that every effort be made to target participants for this program, and make sure that all applicants are adequately informed about its character, so that it can provide the unique experience that the best students seek.

## **IX. Safety and Security Issues**

It is perhaps characteristic of the attitude to student safety on this program that a student raised an issue regarding “le phonetree” in the core course, which suggested to us that students have been made well aware of this important form of group communication, and that when the Resident Director learned in conversation that there are instances of laptops being stolen in broad daylight from people working on them in wifi environments like McDonald’s, he immediately made a note to send an email of warning to everyone.

Emergency management is facilitated by the presence of two Directors at the Center, and a good deal of experience. One issue, however, is that it is not clear what the routine is for notifying sending institutions when something happens to an individual student. This appears to be a problem between Portland and Paris, and easily resolved by revisiting the emergency management protocol.

**Recommendation 18:** We recommend that the flow of communication in the emergency management protocol be reviewed and clarified.

## **X. The Program's Compliance with CIEE's Policies**

The program is compliant with CIEE policies.

## **XI. The Quality of Administration and Management of the Program**

### **A. Resident Director**

Sometimes a Resident Director’s interests and the needs of the program coincide in exceptional ways, and the evaluation team judges that this is the case with Brent Keever, who has been RD of the CSP since 2004. That a scholar with his intellectual interests would be a good resource for faculty and students is not

surprising, but in addition we feel that this is an RD with strong administrative talents, eager to work in close collaboration with his colleagues in Paris, with CIEE in Portland, and with the faculty at the university in highly innovative and productive ways. At the same time, his heart is evidently in the task of guiding students to the fullest possible engagement with French thought and with the city of Paris. Interested readers should consult the on-line evaluations for student assessment of Brent's talents and personality. The accolades and, in many cases, devotion he inspires are judged by the evaluation team to be well-deserved

### **B. Others**

This is an exceptional team, and is felt by the directors to be the best the program has seen in recent memory. The Directors of the CSP and the CFS Program both emphasized, when asked directly, that working together was in their interests and in those of both programs. They have assembled a team that works extremely well together and that is regarded by the students as both very friendly and supportive and very efficient. The new Center premises can only enhance an already excellent operation.

The evaluation team's only concern is that if the programs grow, resources will need to be allocated to maintain the current level of services to students. No one has much extra time, and indeed, people may already be doing a little more than they can easily accommodate, and this must be understood going forward. "Unfunded mandates" are as much an object of dread in study abroad programs as they are on our campuses, and the evaluation team is aware that expectation for new outreach, for web sites, for intense engagement with students, comes at a cost to staff.

## **XII. Future Prospects and Plans**

The growth in enrollment, the involvement of the Faculty Advisory Committee, the decision to move to new premises, and the assembly of an exceptional team of faculty all bode very well. The future needs of the University of California Education Abroad program in respect to its own exchange arrangements and the management of budgetary issues in the state do signal some uncertainties, given the importance of this relationship. Thus for example UC is next year for the first time allowing single semester enrollment as opposed to requiring full year. However, good will and good management will carry the program safely through whatever changes may come.

## **XIII. Relationship with previous evaluation**

The program was last evaluated in 2001, and was visited in 2003 by the Advisory Committee. This evaluation team studied these reports carefully, noted the recommendations and the extent to which they have been followed, and treated this evaluation visit as part of an ongoing engagement with the management of a

very successful program. The chief concerns do not change: can this program's focus be maintained and nurtured, and can students with good language skills and preparation find an extraordinary opportunity to explore with real depth the study of French critical thought, while the needs of less well-prepared students are also met? While these issues are not completely resolved, this Resident Director may find the optimum balance for the program.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The members of the evaluation team were very grateful for the warmth, friendliness, and concern for this process shown by the staff of CIEE and particularly the Resident Director. The dossier provided to the evaluation team was almost overwhelming in its completeness, and every request for information was greeted with an immediate and enthusiastic response. The schedule offered maximum opportunities for interaction with students, faculty and staff. The evaluation team would like to convey to faculty and students their appreciation of their candor, interest, and good will. We would also like to thank the staff for their cheerful acceptance of our intrusion. This was an extremely well-organized visit in every way, and we are very appreciative of the consideration extended to us.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend that CIEE and the Resident Director explore ways of managing credit equivalency which allow students to receive a full semester's credit for four rather than five courses.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that careful consideration be given to the structure and size of the core course. It is essential that an environment be created and maintained that provides the instructor with sufficient time to present and develop the course's fundamental concepts, and students with sufficient opportunities for discussion and exchange in addition to the individual presentations

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend the implementation of intellectual components that engage students deeply with current or ongoing developments in French critical thought. For example, students may be encouraged to take courses with contemporary French philosophers or social theorists in the Center or other academic institutions; the Center may organize formal lectures or informal events with important figures on the Parisian intellectual scene.

**Recommendation 4:** Following on the recommendation of the Faculty Advisory Committee, we recommend that the Center consider ways to enhance film studies components of the program so as to make it more attractive to students interested in the connection between film studies and critical theory.

**Recommendation 5:** While understanding that problems surrounding the acquisition of the carte de séjour, a necessary document for full-year students, were anomalous in fall 2006, we recommend that in future the Center acquire documentation for the carte de séjour and process applications, not leaving this to the students.

**Recommendation 6:** We recommend that the mission statement of the program be updated to reflect the program's unique focus on the intellectual contributions of post-68 French thought, which continues to engage in dialogue with contemporary critical currents in France and the US.

**Recommendation 7:** We recommend that a new strategy for communication between the Resident Director and incoming students be explored, introducing students to the specific character and expectations of this highly-focused program,

**Recommendation 8:** We recommend that pre-departure academic materials be streamlined and detailed instructions be provided for the use of the reading list and other supporting materials.

**Recommendation 9:** We recommend creating a critical studies program web site. This web site can be used for communicating with students and faculty and for providing information about all aspects of the program and links to other important Parisian sites. This web site can be used by students and faculty considering use of the program.

**Recommendation 10:** We recommend that the program further systematize the maintenance of information about student experience with University courses as far as possible, and help students use this information to reduce the stress surrounding the course registration process

**Recommendation 11:** We recommend that advising for advanced students focus on finding an appropriate balance between Center and University courses.

**Recommendation 12:** We recommend that in the new Center premises a new policy of seriously holding students to the expectation that only French will be spoken should be introduced.

**Recommendation 13:** that with the resident Director and the Faculty Advisory Committee CIEE develop a strategy for engaging US faculty in French critical Studies in the process of recruitment and advising

**Recommendation 14:** We recommend that CIEE explore taking action to protect the video resources of the program

**Recommendation 15:** We recommend that the program establish formal relations when possible with French institutions, to ensure that students have access to a wide range of courses and environments and to enrich the curriculum in critical studies

**Recommendation 16:** We recommend that, if needed, resources be provided to the Center for external engagement in the field of critical studies.

**Recommendation 17:** We recommend that every effort be made to target participants for this program, and make sure that all applicants are adequately informed about its character, so that it can provide the unique experience that the best students seek.

**Recommendation 18:** We recommend that the flow of communication in the emergency management protocol be reviewed and clarified.