

**Annual Study Center Review  
CIEE Study Center at the University of Paris and the CIEE Paris Center for Critical  
Studies, France  
Critical Studies  
2008**

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Each summer, program directors write a Study Center Review for each CIEE Study Center program commenting on the previous academic year. The program director writes the review based on input from the CIEE Academic Consortium Board members, resident directors, sending institutions, and student evaluations. Each report is made public on the CIEE website at [www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org).

### **Program Goals**

The CIEE Critical Studies program is geared to students who have completed at least five semesters of French study or are at the high intermediate or advanced level in their language study. Students should have a strong interest in a critical approach to contemporary French thought in the fields of literature, film, philosophy, art, and aesthetics.

These goals were met this year.

### **New and Noteworthy Features**

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#### **Academic Features**

##### **French Language**

##### **Community Language Commitment**

The Paris Critical Studies program has always offered its students a totally French learning experience. The use of English while at the Center is presented as an “emergency only” possibility, and even though students are not policed, they are reminded that resorting to English is rude and contradicts their choice of program. The language commitment holds well on an academic and staff level, with Critical Studies students only conversing in French with instructors and the Resident Director. Even though an increasing number of program students spoke exclusively in French even with each other, there were still far too many who relapsed into English between themselves and with certain staff members. To avoid treating this as a pathology, the Critical Studies program offered a Theory of Translation course in the spring semester. This heavily attended class took the language bull by the horns and showed the stakes of language learning by making English a foreign language.

##### **Language training/Language materials for CIEE courses**

The Intensive Language Program (ILP) continues to be central part of the program’s language learning. Both semesters’ students perfected their French during this program while using the three Parisian “quartiers” (Montmartre, Montparnasse and Saint-Germain). The language team continues to include more and more multi-media resources and structured documentation for

the cultural discovery side of this grammar course. The Writing Workshop, the semester continuation of the ILP, went remarkably well as usual for both fall and spring semesters.

The Resident Director is in regular, often daily contact with the language team leader. The language team leader is a central player in the Critical Studies program. She has begun doing research and participating in conferences drawing from her experience teaching the ILP and the Writing Workshop. This kind of professional development has made an excellent instructor even better.

### **Out of Classroom Activities**

The Critical Studies program is still proud to offer its Respiration, Articulation and Pronunciation sessions to students who would like to improve their intonation, accent, and fluidity in spoken French. These sessions were attended by half of the Critical Studies students and proved to be useful on both a linguistic and psychological level, helping students overcome many barriers in their classes and everyday life.

Thanks to the extraordinary organization of the CIEE Program Coordinator, the language exchange program, bringing French speakers and center students together at the Center, began last year. Although all students were matched up with a language partner, few followed through past the first encounter. Next year, this exchange will be presented in a more “contractual” manner, pushing students to speak with their French counterpart at least three times a semester.

### **Subject Area Courses**

#### **CIEE courses**

In fall, the Critical Studies program offered the following courses: French Writing Workshop (required), Theory and Method in Critical Studies (required), The Spectacle of the Century (film studies), French and Francophone Literature (Francophone literary studies), Universality and the Individual (philosophy), 19th-Century French Painting (art history), and Aesthetics and Art Criticism (Art History, Philo). A University of Paris, VIII professor brought the Aesthetics class back to life after a five year hiatus. She was a wonderful instructor who introduced her dynamic group of students to the gesture art can make faced with the weight of 20th-century history as well as helping interested students take part in University of Paris, VIII courses. A vibrant cinema scholar, who is also a French-language instructor, taught the Spectacle of the Century class for the first time. Despite very low enrollment in this class, she proved to be a dynamic and engaged addition to the teaching team, working out the link between theory and film. Reactions to Theory and Method were overall positive, which has much to do with the exploration of one notion, the Other, across the many areas of critical studies, as well as the attempt to integrate outings into the course itself. (This despite the seasonal resistance of some students to the study of critical theory as an obligation). The fall teaching team remains strong and reliable, and CIEE courses highly appreciated by the students.

In spring, the following courses were offered: French Writing Workshop (required for Spring only students), Theory and Method in Critical Studies (Spring only required), Advanced Writing Workshop (open to AYP students only), Contemporary French Cinema (film studies), French Avant-Garde Painting (art history), Literature and Politics (political science, literature), Re-reading the Cogito (philosophy), Metaphors of Translation (French studies), and Gender and Difference (gender studies). This semester’s new class, Metaphors of Translation, as mentioned above, was extremely successful. The instructor, a professor of French and translator in his own right, beautifully exposed students to the complexity, trials and joys of navigating between

French and English. As in the fall semester, enrollments were low for two classes (Contemporary French Cinema and Re-reading the Cogito). Both classes were loved by the students who attended were held despite the low numbers. It should also be noted that in spring, a young researcher from the University of Paris, VIII, took over teaching the Theory and Method course, freeing up the resident director to explore university relations during that semester. Her ambitious presentation of contemporary French theory around questions concerning memory, archives and technology appealed greatly to students truly enthralled by critical theory, but the sheer bulk of the reading and logistical issues related to outings made this course a hard one to carry off. Nevertheless, she proved to be an excellent instructor and will be taking on the Aesthetics class in fall 2009.

### **Out of classroom activities**

In the fall semester, outings were organized for the Art History class with visits to such museums as the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, and Musée Marmottan. The ILP, as mentioned above, also incorporated three outings to Montparnasse, Montmartre and Saint-Germain as capstones to the three-week intensive session. The Theory and Method class also included outings to the Musée Quai Branly, the Jardin des Plantes, and a "Psychoanalysis Sunday" that included a film about Jacques Lacan, omelets (Lacan joke), and a visit to the Musée de l'Erotisme, all in conjunction with texts studied.

In the spring semester, ILP reduced its focus to two Paris neighborhoods due to time constraints, exploring Montparnasse and Saint-Germain. The Art History course took students to see avant-garde works at the Centre Pompidou, Musée d'art moderne, and Musée Picasso. A theater outing to see Samuel Beckett plays at the Bouffes du Nord was linked to the Literature and Politics and Cogito classes. It should also be noted that two lectures were given by translators in the Metaphors of Translation class, one dealing with the translation of children's literature and the life of a translator in general in France, and the other on subtitling documentary films.

### **Direct Enrollment courses**

All fall and spring Critical Studies program students were required to take at least one class at the University of Paris each semester. This commitment to getting students out of the Center to experience a purely French academic atmosphere and approach to learning is strong, and the program's philosophy continues to think it necessary to give the students a bittersweet taste of what this grand French institution has to offer. They have the language level to do so and are all officially enrolled at the University of Paris. Center classes train them in French university method and rhetoric, and the essence of this study-abroad "experience" is to show them a kind of learning other than what they would have in the U.S.

In the fall, most students took a range of liberal arts classes, and the vast majority of the classes taken fell well within the purview of critical studies. It should be noted that many took classes in cinema outside of the Center, which may explain the low enrollment in the cinema class offered in the fall. Two students were also able to enroll in a foreign-language learning faculty and took advanced courses in Turkish and Russian, respectively. One student was able to attend biology classes. The major event of the fall was the blocking of French universities as a response to the reforms voted by the new Sarkozy government. Universities closed their doors for between four and six weeks toward the end of the year, as a reaction to the loi Pécresse, designed to offer individual university presidents more autonomy in the organization of their departments, throwing into question the life-span of certain departments, particularly in the humanities, and making it possible for universities to band together into groups that would make them more competitive in the global marketplace. Such liberalization met with often fierce opposition in

Paris, as such many CIEE students were blocked from access to their classes. The CIEE response was to organize emergency seminars around the four poles of literary studies, visual arts studies, socio-historical studies and philosophy. Students were thus able to continue their study and produce work at the end of the semester that could be assessed when most classes re-opened. This went well as a stop-gap measure, although, as usual, it was highly uncomfortable for the students. But the link between being a student and being a social entity in France was made resoundingly clear. Below are the courses the fall students took at the University of Paris:

What is Leftist Thinking Today?	Africa in the Mirror of the Francophone Novel
Russian Language and Linguistic Theory	Faust on Stage
Beginning Turkish	Cinema and Architecture
Contemporary Turkish Society	Aspects of French Short Films
Intermediate Russian	20th- and 21st-Century Contemporary Art
French and European Political Life	Austrian Studies: Literature
Historical Introduction to Public Opinion	1914-1918: Between History and Memory
19th-Century Investigation and Its Cultures	Immunology
Introduction to Ancient Greek	Film Workshop / Practical
History of the Roman Empire	Reflexivity and Research Situations
History of the French Revolution: Religions and Revolution	Francophone Literature: Writing in the Face of Death
Contemporary History of International Relations: The Two Europes During the Cold War	Aesthetics of the Actor-Dancer: Foreign Languages and the Poetic Language of the Body
Economic History in France	Introduction to Multi-Media
French Language and Society	Cinema of the Fantastic in France
French Orientalism and Arabian Occidentalism	The Place of Ethnological Cinema
History of Filmic Form: Hazy Shapes	Black African Literature: Between Tradition and Modernity
Religion and Politics in the Arab World	Democracy, Autonomy, Representation
Reflexive Forms in Modern Cinema	
The Melodrama: An Excessive Genre	

In the spring semester, students took classes in a much larger range of subject matters. Even though many concentrated on philosophy, the arts and the humanities, some took classes in communication studies, economics and political history. One student created an independent study at the Institut Pasteur to do work in molecular biology research. Most students proved serious and did well in their University classes. Following are the courses the spring students took at the University of Paris:

French Scientific Culture	Poetry and Ideography
Immunology and Research	Sociolinguistics: Variation and Diachrony in French
History of Photography	The Evolution of Television and Its Industry
Seminar on the Study of the Cold War	American Horror in Cinema
Seminar on the Study of Modern Social Changes	Bodies and Masks: Theater and Improvisation
Introduction to Ancient Greek	Literature of the Present: Proust and Woolf
Kant and the Foundation of Aesthetic Judgment	The Nouveau Roman : France/Latin America
Seminar on the Study of Multinationals	The Subject and Memory in 20th-Century French Literature
History of Italian Film: Neorealism	General Aesthetics
Seminar on the Study of International Monetary Issues	The Romantic Myth of Satan
Seminar on the Study of Hellenistic Greece	Symbols of Separation
Seminar on the Study of French Economy	Women and the Press
Seminar on the Study of Arab Societies Today	Jean-Luc Godard
Hollywood and Television	The Actor and Cinema: American Film

20th-Century French Literature: The Myth of Orpheus  
Political Forces and Behaviors in Europe  
The Image from Rome to the Renaissance  
Cinema and Literature  
Mixed Images of America in Literature  
Europe and Its Nations: 1914-1945  
Fundamental Rights in Europe  
The Novel and 20th-Century History  
12th-Century French Literature: Arthur and Myth

Media, Information and Telecommunications: France and the US  
19th- and 20th-Century French Literature  
Maimonides and Philosophy  
Intermediate Russian 2  
Biochemistry and Cellular Regulation  
Molecular Biology and Genetics: Cancer  
Chalk-drawing Workshop  
Video Studio: Image and Philosophy  
Ethics of Dis-identification

## **Non-Academic Features**

### **CIEE Orientation**

Orientations for both fall and spring semesters went very well. As the student evaluations make clear, students appreciated this period devoted to getting their bearings. Staff experimented both times with a treasure hunt focused around Paris addresses to introduce students to the use of the Metro. The spirit of this was good, but the weather was awful. In the future locations will be altered to better reflect the philosophical and critical theory import of the city of Paris. Housing and meals were appreciated by the students.

## **Cultural Activities/Field Trips**

### **Day or Evening Activities**

In the fall, students had guided walking tours of “Paris under the occupation”, “Paris of Edith Piaf”, “Paris Chocolat”, “Paris, Crimes et mysteries”, a wine-tasting evening at the home of a French person, and an evening at the Comédie française: *Le Malade imaginaire* by Molière. All of these events were linked to classes, were well-attended and well-received. Also in fall, day-trips were made to the château of Vaux le Vicomte and to the Vallée de la Seine. Both trips proved the importance of mixing the two CIEE programs (Contemporary French Studies and Critical Studies) from time to time for the better psychological health of the Center.

In spring, the students participated a guided walking tour of Belleville, Paris and the outskirts (banlieu), Montparnasse, dinner at the Cartoucherie, a guided walking tour of the hidden side of Canal St. Martin, a guided walking tour of the writers of the Left Bank, Amboise, a visit to the Académie française, Champagne and a wine tasting. Once more, these outings were highly appreciated and offered a good supplementary exploration of the city of Paris. In the future, as these outings will be better-tailored to fit the critical studies profile. Paris must be opened up as a site of intellectual history and present contention. Although many of the above activities, for both semesters did resonate with students, staff believe a new approach is needed to discovering the city.

### **Overnight Fieldtrips**

In the fall, the Critical Studies and Contemporary French Studies program students spent the weekend in Dijon. The trip was perfectly organized, and students got a taste of good Burgundy cuisine, were toured about the city and the Palace of the Dukes of Burgundy, and spent a day in the Hospices of Beaune. Although it was nice to have the two groups together, it all became slightly unmanageable during tours and dinners, much more resembling “herding”, with low student contact. The decision was made to split the programs for weekend trips for the spring 2008 semester and beyond.

In the spring, the Critical Studies program went to Strasbourg for a weekend trip. All enjoyed the excellent, copious Alsatian food as well as the charm of that “border” city. The Sunday was spent at the castle of Haut-Koenigsburg and an exceptional time was had later at Monkey Mountain, an Alsatian park with free-ranging macaques. It was surreal and well-appreciated.

### **Housing**

In the fall, students were placed in either studios or rooms in Parisian apartments according to their answers to the housing questionnaire. Out of those students, a minority chose studios and the majority chose rooms in Parisian homes. In the spring, a minority again chose studios, and the majority rooms in apartments. As can be inferred above, there is a marked change in the housing wishes of Critical Studies students. Whereas in the past at least a good third would have chosen a more independent studio option, students now ask for a more familial, roommate situation.

Overall, the general paradox in housing is one that is felt elsewhere: students call strongly for more independence, but also require greater assistance, while sometimes not being able to communicate what could be a real problem.

### **Community Engagement and Integration**

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There were no reports of students participating in not-for-credit community service or volunteer projects this year.

### **Challenges and Future Directions**

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#### **Academic**

All students have an appropriate French level for the program, with half, however, displaying certain basic language-learning problems that staff speculates are linked both to a rather relaxed American pedagogy at some universities who rightfully think about filling their French classes and “pushing students through” as well as the acceptance of AP credits in French by universities, which sometimes alters the meaning of the “5-semesters of college French” requirement. And yet, all students, even those who come with near-fluency, state that their French improved through the program in ways that it never could have at home.

The perennial challenge of creating a program that addresses the needs of those who are strong in critical theory, while helping those who may have a lower theory level, occurred in both the fall and spring semesters, but to a lesser degree than in the past. Also continuing from past semesters is the issue of some students simply not having the interest in the focus of the program. Luckily, the Contemporary French Studies program is also housed in the Center and a few students were able to switch to this program.

As mentioned above, due to the fact that all students must take at least one class at the University of Paris, the CIEE Center classes are not always full, with some only attracting two or three students. The challenge comes, of course, in maintaining a vibrant teaching team with the same “esprit de corps”, offering the same wonderful courses, and getting all of those classes filled with enough students. In the end, this is all about recruiting more students to the program.

Students, overall, gave very high evaluations of the courses offered by CIEE. Both language and content courses were considered outstanding across the board in fall, which definitely

contributed to students' overall positive academic experience, despite the disappointment of University of Paris closures. The core course formula of small discussion groups, less ponderous, more focused readings, and integrated outings worked well.

In spring, a new instructor for Theory and Method did a wonderful job, but was met by some resistance due to, once again, some students lacking in critical theory objectives. Logistical problems also made it harder to organize Theory and Method outings and events. Nevertheless, the course was solidly instructed and students came away with an enormous amount of knowledge from a bright, competent young French thinker. The language course and the elective courses offered at the Center were well-liked, overall.

The Resident Director is in regular contact with all CIEE professors and seeks out input from them about how to best tailor and improve the program and how best to present the rigors of French methodology to American students. Student-teacher contact, due to intensity and unrelenting organization of French academic prose and presentations, led to one small clash in the spring semester, but the Resident Director was able to talk this through with students, as well as use it as a pedagogical lesson for the instructor.

On the average, student attendance was very good, with a few exceptions in the spring due to enactment of a stricter attendance policy. Next year, students will be met with a stricter tardiness policy as well: students who are more than 15 minutes late will be counted as absent, even though they may attend class.

Students dutifully handed in work, attended classes at the University of Paris diligently, and were good about handing in week-by-week summaries of their courses to the RD, along with all work done.

### **Non-Academic**

Group dynamics tend to be fine, with some tension coming from students who consider themselves more "serious" than others. This seriousness in program students comes in either a passion for critical theory or a strong work-ethic. This is in no way a problem, because it would seem to just be part of the perfectionist, passionate profile of critical studies students.

WiFi worked well at the Center. Unfortunately, students used the internet to avoid immersing themselves in Paris. Those who did not have internet at home did complain, but the difference in new technology culture between the US and France should and does remain an important part of their experience in France.

Housing challenges were few, but came about mainly because of lack of communication between students. The language exchange between French people and the students sometimes blossomed into friendships, and some became quite close to their French roommates, but the real integration of the students came in their ability to navigate the urban terrain that is Paris, as well as facing up to and resolving problems that any regular French student may have at the university level. They showed grit and resolve.

### **Future Directions**

Great changes are planned for the core course, Theory and Method, for next year, the fruit of advice offered by the CIEE Paris Faculty Advisory Committee will see the Resident Director taking it over once again. The course will be completely arranged around intellectual and academic activities in Paris with "theory labs" organized in small groups to dig deeper into what is happening in theory in Paris today. There will be more use of the city of Paris in classes

(particularly the core course) as a space where intellectual life is played out – integrated lectures at the Collège International, participation in colloquia, more visits to problematic or contested cultural sites and more exposure to cultural sites.