

**Annual Study Center Review  
CIEE Study Center at the University of Paris and the CIEE Paris Center for Critical  
Studies, France  
Critical Studies  
2009**

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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 for the 2008-09 academic year. CIEE was pleased to be able to reinvigorate the program core course based on the very useful recommendations from the program's Faculty Advisory Committee that met in Paris during spring 2008.

**New and Noteworthy**

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**Academic**

**French Language**

**Community Language Commitment**

The Paris Critical Studies (CS) program has always offered its students a "100% French" study abroad experience. From the moment of arrival, through orientation, throughout the semester and year, and right to the end, French is the only language accepted in the classroom (with the exception of the Metaphors of Translation class) and in any contact with Paris center staff (except in time of emotional or physical crisis). CIEE staff have endeavored to reinforce a French presence at the Center this year, both through facilitated, required conversation exchanges with French volunteers and through a new partnership with the Collège International de Philosophie, whose seminars were hosted twice a week in the evening during the Spring 2009 semester.

To avoid gravitating toward the English language, a constant temptation, a language commitment charter was drawn up for Spring 2009 as well. Despite these efforts, only about 1/3 of Paris Critical Studies students interacted with each other in French. It must be said that the Spring 2009 French University strikes put a damper on a central part of Paris CS students French language engagement. That said, the vast majority of students clearly made enormous headway in their French language, both in their own estimation and in that of their instructors.

For 2009-2010, more emphasis will be put on the community language commitment charter, and CIEE resident staff have already organized joint learning projects at the Université de Paris Diderot between French students and program students, which will occur on the campus of Paris Diderot.

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

The Intensive Language Program (ILP) still integrates two Parisian “quartiers” (Montmartre / Montparnasse and Saint-Germain) into the 3-week Fall and 2-week Spring sessions. Paris Critical Studies head French instructor Marie-Christine Ricci has perfected the dossiers about these neighborhoods to give content to the intense review of grammar and vocabulary as well as a hardy introduction to French argumentation. The Writing Workshop, the semester continuation of the ILP, was overall appreciated in both fall and spring semesters, despite some infrequent problems with class dynamics.

Marie-Christine Ricci continues to be the pivot of students’ French-language learning. The skills she provides them makes it possible for them to do as well as they do in their Center and French university classes. She also continues to continue her research into the history of the city, its artists and its artistic movements to perfect the way Parisian content is included in the French language classes in the Critical Studies program.

### **Out of Classroom Activities**

The Respiration, Articulation and Pronunciation sessions with Anne-Marie Ollier continue to help some students feel more at ease in their French oral expression. She continues to be wildly appreciated by those she helps, and her strong presence at the Center and participation in Center events has turned into a mainstay for each students’ experience.

French As A Foreign Language interns from that Paris- Diderot were welcomed into the Center to observe the Writing Workshops, interact with students, and organize workshops as a way to practice their pedagogical strategies in the classroom. The Paris CS intern organized two-such workshops: one on Man Ray, and the other on a film by Jean Cocteau, *Le Retour éternel*. The Intern was a welcome, kind addition to the Center and organized activities with students that went above and beyond the calling of his internship.

CS students were matched again this year with French language partners. An initial encounter was organized at the Center, and two other required meetings were proposed to students. This year, these encounters met with mixed success. A number of students did not feel any common ground with their partner, any shared interest, and the exchange was not renewed past the second meeting. For next year, resident staff will try to reinforce the necessity of these encounters as well as pair Paris CS students with French students enrolled in the same classes as CIEE students. These encounters will take place at the Université de Paris and not at the CIEE Study Center, and will be organized in conjunction with the study-abroad offices of the program’s university partners.

### **Subject Area Courses**

#### **CIEE courses**

In Fall 2008, the Paris CS program offered 4 sections of its required Writing Workshop, a reworked edition of its required Theory and Method in Critical Studies course, as well as 4 elective classes, The Spectacle of the Century (which focused on the study of film space and integrated an outing to the Cinémathèque Française), French Painting of the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century (which integrated numerous visits to the Musée d’Orsay, Musée Marmottan, and the Louvre),

Aesthetics and Art Criticism (which integrated a visit to the Palais de Tokyo), Francophone Literatures and Cultures (focusing on the question of identity, and including outings to the Sénat and attending a play written by a Francophone Lebanese playwright). All elective were appreciated by students, particularly for the dynamic class participation.

In Spring 2009, the following courses were offered: French Writing Workshop (, Theory and Method in Critical Studies (with changes as mentioned above), Advanced Writing Workshop (open to yearlong students only), Contemporary French Cinema (film studies with an incorporated outing to the Terre Natale exhibition with a focus on Raymond Depardon), French Avant-Garde Painting (art history with outings to Musée Picasso, Centre Pompidou, and the Musée d'Art Moderne), Re-reading the Cogito (philosophy with an outing to the Kandinsky exhibition at the Centre Pompidou), Metaphors of Translation (French studies with guest speakers in the fields of translation and subtitling), and Gender and Difference (gender studies with a visit to the studio of the sculptor Alain Kirili).

Due to the almost semester-long French university strikes during the spring semester, the Critical Studies program also offered three new class options for students in need of courses. A handful of students took part in structured Independent Studies in literature with Anne Bourse, the Theory and Methods professor, who led a weekly workshop that brought all concerned students together and helped direct their research and writing. Given the fact that university strikes have become an all-too-common part of students' experience, CIEE decided to take the bull by the horns and offered a course about the strikes and context of this social movement. University and Society in Today's France: The Strike of 2009 offered students the opportunity to attend one "anti-class" at the Université de Paris (gatherings of students and professors organized around a common theme linked to the strike) per week and then a workshop to further investigate the tradition of striking in France, the social status of students and professors, the political reasons and reasoning for the strike, and the fiery history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century French protest. Ironically, despite the current meaningfulness of this course, few students enrolled.

The option that seemed to work best for program students was the Structured Seminars in Philosophy at the Collège International de Philosophie. Thanks to CIEE's new partnership with the Collège, students were able to organize classes around the vast number of seminars proposed by this wonderful institution, one that has been at the cutting edge of critical theory since its birth in the 70s. Topics included The Limits of Subjectivization, Trauma and Identity, and Human Plant and Machine Consciousness (see below).

As noted above, the required core course in Critical Studies, Theory and Method and Critical Studies, was once again reworked, following the advice of last year's CIEE Faculty Advisory Committee. Past versions of this class always included outings to museums and cultural sites, but this year's courses were given entirely around an exploration of the city of Paris as an intellectual work site. Built around the theme of "Faire la connaissance" ("Encountering" as well as "Constructing knowledge"), structured explorations of such sites as the Musée du Quai Branly, the Fondation Cartier and the experimental music IRCAM center, intense analyses of documentaries and films on Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Lacan, as well as lectures given by such leading young thinkers as Evelyne Grossman and Mathieu Potte-Bonneville, breathed life into students' analyses of the central texts for this course. These "encounters" were then discussed in small weekly workshops to ensure that students were coming away with a good understanding of the theoretical terms that would make up their own critical "tool box". This approach to the core course met with great success, was well-appreciated by students, and will be continued into 2009-2010.

### **Out of classroom activities**

As mentioned above, all Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 Paris Critical Studies classes all incorporated at least one structured outing into the course. Professors and students were thus able to bring to life the texts under discussion and reveal how the city of Paris remains a fabulous arena for intellectual life and critical debate. This experiment in “experiential learning” takes its strongest form in the Theory and Methods class (composed centrally of structured “encounters”), as well as in the pre-semester Intensive French Language Program classes, during which Critical Studies students can add living content to their formal studies in language and cultural history. It is one thing to give an oral presentation about, for example, the importance of the Coupole café for the painters and artists of Montparnasse in a classroom, but quite another thing indeed to talk about this famous site while seated at one of its tables. The Critical Studies French Writing Workshops also incorporated theater outings into its content, with *Le Malade imaginaire* of Molière in fall and *En attendant Godot* by Beckett in spring. Spring semester students also toured the Académie française in March, that perfectly French establishment devoted to preserving, valorizing and policing the rules and vocabulary of the French language.

### **Direct Enrollment courses**

CIEE’s Paris Critical Studies program is devoted to offering participating students an understanding of the particularities of the French critical theoretical tradition in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as well as an encounter with the institutions of learning that interrogate, promote, rework or reject that tradition. This is why all critical studies students are required to take at least one class at the Université de Paris per semester, and yearlong students highly encouraged to take the vast majority of their classes at the French university system during their second semester. By testing their mettle in the sometimes daunting but always different context of a French college class, students come away with a better understanding of how education and the transmission of culture and critique functions in France.

In the fall, students could take classes at the program’s traditional partner, the Université de Paris III—Sorbonne Nouvelle (specializing in language, literature, film studies, theater and Arab world studies), and at the program’s new faculty partner, the Université de Paris Diderot (Paris 7). Paris Diderot offers a wide variety of humanities courses in literature, the arts and cinema, with a strong interdisciplinary approach, as well as courses in history, sociology, psychology, Asian languages and studies, economy, and urban studies. It is also possible for students to take classes in physics, chemistry and biology. Students who attended classes at Paris 7 greatly appreciated the new Paris 7 campus (a sprawling renovation of the old grain mills of Paris right on the Seine) as well as the open, congenial atmosphere of the institution.

In the fall, students directly enrolled in classes in the fields of film studies, theater studies, comparative and French literature, history, Russian and linguistics, from the sophomore to the first-year MA level. Their experience was overall positive, with certain perennial complaints about the seeming disorganization of the Paris faculty and differences in pedagogical style. Enrollment and authorization to take courses went as smoothly as can be expected. Below is a list of classes taken at the Université de Paris in Fall 2008.

Introductory Russian  
The Situation of the Novel in Europe Today  
Ultra-contemporary Theater  
Language of Films Dubbed and Subtitled in French  
Documentary and/or Fiction Films ?  
Sociolinguistic Surveys in Urban Culture

Economy of American Cinema  
Introduction to Political Science  
Rhetorical Approaches to Television Analysis  
The Femme Fatale in Literature  
Dream Stories, Childhood Memories  
Phonetics  
Violent Spectacle  
Literature and Photography  
Utopia in Cinema  
Introduction to Greek History: The Birth of the City  
Language Systems: " Langues et langage "  
History of Classic French Cinema  
Elements of Linguistic Phonetics  
Twentieth-Century European Literature  
The Aesthetics of Sensation  
The Coronation of the Novel in the 19th Century

The spring semester at both the Université de Paris 3 and Paris Diderot was marked by an almost two-month-long university strike. Faculty, administrators and students banded together to protest against the reforms put into practice by the current Sarkozy government. Whereas last year's strikes against the university reforms were mostly student led, the strike of 2009 brought together almost all the members of the university community, effectively reducing course offerings to CIEE students to a bare minimum. Professors either went on total strike and did not hold any classes, or transformed their classes into forums of debate and discussion about the meaning and nature of education in the French Republic (creating "anti-classes"), or decided that the best way to fight against these changes was to hold classes however possible (in cafés, parks, shifting classrooms, over the Internet). Although the university closures were peaceful and protest strategies creative, this was the longest French university strike in recent history and proved to be wearing for CIEE students, French students, French faculty and the Critical Studies Resident Director.

As mentioned above, the CS program organized classes to make up for the lack of French university courses. Normally, academic year students take the majority of their second-semester classes at the Université de Paris. This was an unfortunate impossibility in spring. Despite the strike, however, some students were able to directly enroll in some classes, in such fields as linguistics, comparative literature, philosophy, media and film studies. Below is a list of those classes.

Introductory Russian Written and Oral Expression  
Introductory Russian Grammar and Phonetics  
Modernity in French and Arabic Poetry  
Children's Literature  
Semantics  
Narrative Systems: From Literature to Cinema  
The Detective Novel / The Philosophical Novel  
Contemporary Spanish Cinema: Memory and Politics  
Phonology  
9/11 in the Media and Cinema  
Language and Nation  
Morphology and Syntax  
Practices of the Image in Modernity

Psycholinguistics and Second Language Acquisition  
Classic French Cinema: 1940 to 1950  
Deleuze  
Cinema Auteur Studies : Alfred Hitchcock  
Urban History: Contemporary Paris  
Languages of the World

Students with an advanced level in critical theory were also able to take part in the above-mentioned classes at the Collège International de Philosophie. Students were able to bring together a number of seminars offered by the Collège to create courses and were warmly welcomed by lecturers who assessed a final, long research paper at the end of the semester. Thanks to our agreement with the Collège, a good number of seminars took place at the CIEE Paris Center for Critical Studies every Tuesday and Thursday evening, reinforcing the presence of French speakers at the Center. Below is a list of Structured Seminars followed by some of CIEE students.

Structured Seminars in Philosophy -- CIPh: The Limits of Subjectivization  
Structured Seminars in Philosophy -- CIPh: Human, Plant, Machine Consciousness  
Structured Seminars in Philosophy -- CIPh: The Physics of Contemporary Creation  
Structured Seminars in Philosophy -- CIPh: Hélène Cixous  
Structured Seminars in Philosophy -- CIPh: Identity and Trauma  
Structured Seminars in Philosophy -- CIPh: The Base and Future of National Identity

### **Non-Academic Features**

#### **CIEE Orientation**

Fall and Spring semester orientations went well. Students on the whole appreciated the information about living in Paris and succeeding academically during their time abroad. The scavenger hunt of Paris offered to students the day of their arrival was streamlined and students learned how to use the Métro independently. Due to certain criticisms, this activity will be improved next year by increasing the size of the teams and reducing the number of addresses students need to locate.

Some students complained about having to stay so long in the orientation and temporary housing before moving into their regular housing. This is necessary, particularly in fall, due to the fact that Parisians do not return from vacation until early September, in general. CIEE students must thus spend 2 to 2 ½ weeks in their temporary housing. In the future, this necessity will be made clearer to students during orientation and in predeparture materials, for the calendar cannot be shortened due to the lengthy and essential Intensive Language Program.

### **Cultural Activities/Field Trips**

#### **Day or Evening Activities**

In fall, Critical Studies students took part in a series of activities designed to better acquaint them with the city of Paris, the life of the Center, and French culture in general. Students took part in a bike tour of the city in September, and met their French language exchange partners during that month as well. They were also treated to a production of Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire* and toward the end of the semester were invited to employ their own creative capacities in French by participating in a poetry evening. Thanksgiving was also held at the Center with turkey, stuffing, and refreshments.

Students participated on a day trip to Vaux-le-Vicomte in the fall and Reims in the spring. Unfortunately, the Reims trip happened in January and the weather was too cold. The spring program also had a day trip to Amboise.

In spring, students took part in a lengthy, guided boat trip across Paris in January, followed in February by a soirée during which they met their language exchange partners. In March, students went to a production of *En attendant Godot* at the Théâtre de l'Athénée, followed by a second language-exchange party to ensure a second contact. An evening of poetry, sketches, and photo presentation was offered later that month, as well as the outing to the Académie française with our French language professor, Marie-Christine Ricci.

Throughout the year, CIEE organized various linguistic and outreach activities including a conversation exchange evening, poetry evening and contest, and a Thanksgiving potluck dinner. The program also offered special activities related to the discovery of Paris: Paris à vélo, Paris walk, bateaux mouches, theater evening, and a "chocolate walk".

### **Overnight Fieldtrips**

In the fall, the Critical Studies students spent an October weekend in the Drôme region of southern France. After a Friday evening spent in the historical city of Valence with its Rabelaisian flavors, the students set off to the small town of Hautesrives to discover magnificent Palais Idéal, a phantasmagorical castle bristling with mythological beasts and baroque towers built entirely by a local mailman, the Facteur Cheval, out of the stones that he found while making his rounds. This stupefying manifestation of the stubborn, poetic dream of one man inspired such artists as André Breton, Picasso and Pablo Neruda. The program dined on good local goat cheese and fine raviolis, and appreciated the calm and quiet of rural France under the bright sun. Students appreciated the theme of this outing, linked to their investigations of dream, desire, art and the unconscious, but felt too much time was spent in the small village.

In the spring, the Critical Studies program went to port city of La Rochelle for an April weekend. After dining on oysters plucked right out of the sea, they explored this white-stoned city, one of the jumping-off points for the French exploration of the New World, as well as a principle point in the Golden Triangle of the French slave trade. After a tour of the town, the students went to the Museum of Natural History, which has maintained its Enlightenment era organization of the natural world, with stuffed animals dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The transition from the study of animal to the study of man as part of the natural sciences proved to be a striking reminder of what Michel Foucault strived to demonstrate in his *Les Mots et les choses*. Overall, students appreciated the weekend which was rich in good food and ended with a picnic on the beach.

### **Housing**

In fall, out of 26 students, 23 Critical Studies students chose to live in rooms of apartments with French people. Three found housing on their own. This move away from the studio option, which was the overwhelming choice in the past, further reinforces a marked change in the Critical Studies student population. Although students still do claim a certain independence in their housing experience, they are also looking for more and more personal support and contact.

In spring, out of 27 students, 23 chose apartments, two, studios, and two chose to find housing on their own. The housing experience went well overall but there were, however, a handful of problems and complaints. It should be noted here that when students communicated these problems to staff, the CIEE housing coordinator was quick to react in offering them solutions or

alternative housing when the problem was not resolvable. But a very few students with housing difficulties chose not to change housing in the end. Resident staff, as usual, continue to talk to students about the kinds of rights and responsibilities they have within CIEE Paris housing, and also remain in regular contact with them to help them define what is working and what is not, what is a simple difference in the art of living and what is a real problem.

## **Community Engagement and Integration**

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Four Paris Critical Studies students participated in school-tutoring for young people in the Barbès district of Paris in Spring 2009.

## **Challenges**

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### **Academic**

The vast majority of students have an adequate French language level to take part in the Paris Critical Studies program. The French language and teaching staff are however still concerned about the very low-level of French proficiency of a small handful of students who meet the 5-semester-college-French requirement. It is difficult to identify the source of this discrepancy between French classes successfully taken and actual French level, but through the French language and content classes, the exposure to the French university system (when it's up and running), and the RAP speech therapy sessions, even a student with great difficulties in French can come away from the program with a vastly improved level, both in the eyes of our instructors, and in the opinion of our participating students.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, the program was pleased to welcome Critical Studies students who were, in the overwhelming majority, well-adapted to a program in critical theory and contemporary French thought. The fact that the program requires students to clearly state their study project and curiosity in French theory in their personal statement, a document that is actually the first bit of homework used in the Theory and Method core course, has played a decisive role in guiding the right kind of students to the program, with steadily decreasing exceptions to the rule.

The CIEE Paris Critical Studies content courses remain highly appreciated by students. The courses offer a fine mix of French exigency and American one-on-one engagement. New courses in gender studies and the critique of technology, as well as poetic theory, are to be offered in the coming year, both to respond to student demand and to offer the kind of courses that might be more difficult to find in the French university system. Students overall give CIEE courses high marks, despite certain criticisms that again can be linked to a "stricter" academic culture in France, where there is still such a thing as a wrong answer.

The changes in the Theory and Method class proved to be very successful, and students benefitted from the structured yet open nature of the weekly "encounters". The 1.5 hour discussion workshops, in small groups, provided a welcome space for discussion and clarification.

The Resident Director remains in constant contact with the critical studies teaching team and strives to make sure that that mix between American and French expectations, both from the students and from the instructors, creates a fertile learning environment. This often amounts to talking about how to clarify instructors' rules and roles in the classroom and attempting to explain to students that the criticism of their work is in no way personal. Even though outings

and events are now a part of all Paris CS courses, staff must work with professors to link them more closely to the content of the classes.

The addition of the Université de Paris Diderot as a French university partner proved to be a wonderful one. Students appreciated the campus atmosphere and CIEE looks forward to deepening ties with faculty.

The tribulations of the French university strikes actually bore some wondrous fruit in the form of the Collège International de Philosophie structured seminars offered as “out-of-Center” courses. Staff will continue to host the Collège’s seminars and lectures in 2009-2010 and look forward to working with appropriate students willing to venture out into some impressively innovative and new critical theory terrain.

### **Non-Academic**

Students remain overly immersed in the world of the Internet, which sometimes impedes their ability to get out of the WiFi zone of the Center and experience the grime and glory of the city of Paris. This phenomenon will, in 2009-10, play a major role in the Theory and Method course, as staff have grown tired of bewailing this cultural behavior and should now be forced to confront and study it with program students. An entire course on “Technocritique” is to be offered in Spring 2010

The few housing problems were nicely handled by the Student Housing Coordinator, when the student was willing and able to be helped out. As usual, maintaining a healthy balance between supporting and empowering students is difficult, but resident staff can only continue to demand that they remain in continuous contact with CIEE. On the average, students took the study-abroad bull by the horns when in Paris and made the most of their time.

### **Future Directions**

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The program will continue to offer innovative opportunities to Critical Studies students, by maintaining and deepening the relationships with the two Paris university partners as well as with the Collège International de Philosophie. New partnerships along the lines of what we do with the Collège will be explored, in the fields of cultural critique and artistic creation. To better ensure a more satisfying integration into the French student life, more cooperative efforts with CIEE’s French university partners will be created and more emphasis will be put on the community language commitment charter. Resident staff will try to reinforce the necessity of language exchanges as well as pair Paris CS students with French students enrolled in the same classes as CIEE students. These encounters will take place at the Université de Paris and not at the CIEE Study Center, and will be organized in conjunction with the study-abroad offices of the program’s Paris university partners.