



# URBAN IDENTITIES, POPULAR CULTURE AND FRENCH MULTICULTURALISM

**APA Program:** Paris: August Short-Term

**Language of instruction:** French

**US semester credits:** 4.0

**Contact hours:** 36

**Term availability:** August Short-Term (3 weeks)

**Instructor:** Laura Steil

## Course Description

In this course, we will explore France's popular culture and multicultural urban identities. Afro-diasporic cultural practices and scenes, in particular those relating to hip-hop, will be both a focus and a lens to look at broader questions that concern the construction of citizenship, nationhood, self & other, cultural memory, and social/racial justice. Part of our learning will take place in the classroom and will draw on frameworks from anthropology, sociology, history and cultural studies. The other part will happen as we immerse in the field, where we will attend performances, talks, workshops and participate in a variety of informal and formal events to study how local people learn about, think about, talk about and navigate Paris and its immediate outskirts. Our guests feature urban dancers, emcees, community organizers and educators, who play active roles in the development of urban culture in France, and the Paris region in particular.

## Course Objectives

- Explore and historicize the contemporary realities of French multiculturalism by studying France's colonial history, its migration and citizenship policies, and its urban politics relating to public schools of subsidized housing.
- Critically reflect on how people in France process ideas about identity, race, blackness, ethnicity, belonging, and cultural difference through urban culture.
- Learn about the political and social impact of urban art forms, dance and music in particular, in shaping the Parisian identity and experience.
- Experience the Parisian context by body, whether through dance workshops or subway navigation. Drawing on the tools of ethnography, learn how to make sense and analyze embodied and sensory data in order to gain a hands-on understanding of what it means to be a Parisien(ne).

## Core Readings

CONSTANT Fred (ed.), 2009, *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, University of Illinois Press

KLEINMAN Julie, 2019, *Adventure Capital: Migration and the Making of an African Hub in Paris, Oakland*: The University of California Press

ROLLEFSON Griffith J., 2017, *Flip the Script: European Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postcoloniality*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press

TSHIMANGA C., GONDOLA D., and BLOOM P. J. (eds.), 2009, *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press

KEATON Trica Danielle, SHARPLEY-WHITING T. Denean & STOVALL Tyler, 2012, *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness*, Durham and London: Duke University Press

## Films

*Le Défi*, 2002, Blanca Li, 94 min

*Intouchables*, 2011, Olivier Nakache & Éric Toledano, 112 min

*Bande de Filles*, 2014, Céline Sciamma, 112 min

*Les Promesses du Sol*, 2017, Raphaël Stora, série ARTE, 8x6 min

*Les Misérables*, 2019, Ladj Ly, 103 min

*Tu préfères*, 2020, Lise Akoka & Romane Gueret, série ARTE, 10x7 min (*in French*)

## Selected Guests

- Miguel “Dandyguel” is a MC, a freestyler, a beatmaker, an ambienceur, and a sound lover. People call him the “Jean-Pierre Foucault of the ghetto.”
- Anais “Nan’s” Henneuse: Pro-active and activist, she is a dancer, community organizer, mentor and urban journalist who has been evolving within the hip-hop world for almost 20 years.
- Philippe “Physs” Almeida is a dancer, choreographer and educator, and a major figure in the international hip hop dance circuit.

## Assessment

- **Participation (25%)**
  - Students are expected to read critically ahead of course sessions, as per syllabus, and be prepared to engage in dialogue about their experiences and readings.
- **AQCI Summaries and Discussion (25%)**
  - The instructor will assign readings to student groups randomly during the first class. Each student must individually complete one written AQCI per reading (Argument, most important Quote, Connections to other readings, Implications of the argument). Then, in class, the student group will collectively co-lead a discussion on their assigned reading, using the analytical questions developed by each of the members of the group.
- **Field Journal (50%)**
  - The course will give students the opportunity to reflect on personal, sensory and embodied, experiences at social events, performances, shows, in studios, theatres, community centers, the streets, listening to the radio or to online podcasts, and anywhere urban culture manifests in Paris. Initial observations will be enriched through more detailed descriptive narratives produced after the events or experiences/ The field journal will also include graphic or visual documents, whether sketches or maps, printed-out photos, flyers, newspaper and magazine excerpts, and may be accompanied by digital files such videos or soundbites collected personally by the student on location.