

Studies in the Novel: Narrative Explorations
11:00 – 12:15 MW 2066 Wescoe

In very broad terms, this course will follow the evolution of the French novel from Balzac to the New Novel of the 1950s, and then offer a glimpse into the profusion of narrative modes, and the undermining of firm narrative categories, that we see today. Balzac serves as an appropriate point of departure, since it was the stereotypical image of the Balzacian novel that the New Novelists of the 1950s rejected; to cite Jean Ricardou's famous formula, the "narration of adventure" was to be replaced by the "adventure of narration." But well before the narrative explorations of Nathalie Sarraute, Alain Robbe-Grillet, or Michel Butor attracted notoriety (if not a large readership), novelists had already been probing the boundaries of conventional storytelling and exploring new narrative models. Since the period of the New Novel, that trend has clearly continued. While most of the works to be read in this course are novels, the last two illustrate the blurring of clear-cut generic boundaries that characterizes a good deal of literary writing in France over the last several decades.

Texts (with editions to be ordered):

Balzac	<i>Eugénie Grandet</i> (Garnier-Flammarion)
Gide	Gide, <i>L'Immoraliste</i> (Folio)
Colette	<i>La Vagabonde</i> (Livre de poche)
Proust	<i>Combray</i> (Petits Classiques Larousse)
Camus	<i>La chute</i> (Folio)
Robbe-Grillet	<i>La Jalousie</i> (Minuit)
Beauvoir	<i>La Femme rompue</i> (Folio)
Laurens	<i>L'Amour, roman</i> (Folio)
Ernaux	<i>Les Années</i> (Folio)

La Jalousie is apparently still available only in the Editions de Minuit, which is relatively expensive. Rather than order it through the bookstore, I will leave it up to students to find or order an edition. (It is also available online through the ARTFL project.)

The typical class period will be devoted to discussion of the reading assigned for that day. While I will give some attention to literary history, and may provide or assign selected critical writings from time to time, the primary emphasis will be on the individual works themselves.

Work required: periodic short "reactions" (a paragraph) to assigned readings, two short papers (2-4 pages each, on a passage from one of the works on the syllabus); a short oral presentation (10 minutes), focusing on a passage from the reading assigned that day; a mid-term and final exam; a semester paper (12-15 pages) of a critical/research nature.