LLEA 270

Fantasy, Madness, and Monsters:
Paris Voyages Glittering and Dark through Tales, Art, and Places

Professor Kathryn Hoffmann

UH Course Title: Freaks and Monsters (DL)

Note: If students going on study abroad have taken LLEA 270, this course can be revised to fulfill LLEA 471B, with additional readings and assignments

“Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.”
-Italo Calvino

The Paris of this course is encountered in part through stories from France’s wonderful history fantastic literature. The other part Paris itself tells you, as a city unlike any other in the world; a place of imaginaries all around you in gardens, fountains, metro entrances, architectural details, and even door knockers.

From the Medieval story of a woman who turned into a dragon and flew away, across more than 200 fairy tales written in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries with fairy chariots drawn by winged serpents and ruby-eyed dragons, to the fantastic tales of Maupassant, Gautier, Balzac, Leroux, and others, France has been the home of fantastic literature. We will read tales of fantasy, imagination and sometimes madness as well. As we do, we will go out and find the spaces of fantasy in Paris.

Our trip will start in the Middle Ages and the tales of a woman-dragon and a woman-headed serpent in the Garden of Eden. You will see women-headed serpents today on the Gothic churches of Paris (although almost no one ever notices them). When we read fairy tales with glass slippers and dragons with ruby eyes, students will experience the real-world architectural and garden fantasies of seventeenth-century Versailles; the hall of mirrors, and the gilded dragons, gods, hybrid creatures and the half-buried giant of the Versailles gardens. Other voyages will be into the imaginary underground realm of the Phantom of the Opera and the real underground realms of Paris that inspired fantasies. We will read two stories where narrators have gone mad (or perhaps not), and take a look at the history of
psychiatry and outsider art, what one museum calls "the edge of normality." We will look at how a collection of African animals became today's animal parade in the Gallery of Evolution, read a tale inspired by the zoo, and students will have the option to visit a historical (and odd) anatomical collection. Paris was home of and the setting for French science fiction movies. The movie museum, and the places where the movies were filmed (one among dinosaur skeletons) will be among your choices.

With eyes looking for imagination, you will visit Paris neighborhoods and see the Paris of imagination and fantasy all around you: Theseus wrestling with the Minotaur in the Tuileries Gardens, winged goddesses and giant human-headed bulls from Mesopotamia in the Louvre, Egyptian follies in the Parc Monceau, woman/plant hybrids on Art Nouveau buildings, and if you look closely, even door knockers full of fantasy. Your list of possible experiences includes important places and ones that are barely noticed by tourists, like the tiny Museum of magic. Students are invited to turn Paris and Versailles into their classrooms.

**Experiential learning**

Decisions in your own life brought you out of your home, took you out of your comfort zone, and to Paris. The point of this course is now for you to be as fully immersed in Paris as possible (while still doing all your other coursework of course!). I will provide the readings, posted on Laulima. Your job is to read them and go out and experience the places in Paris and Versailles where you can see fantasy at work.

Students will visit at least 10 places during the semester from the list (other sites not listed may be checked with me). The list includes museums and sites that charge an entrance fee or require tickets (museums, the opera, etc.) and many places that are free (the many gardens of Paris, outdoor sculptures, fountains, monuments, etc.). Your 10 places must include at least 5 museums. Students who want to focus on art and who choose the Louvre and become a friend of the Louvre, for example may use that museum as their primary research space for five visits, or more upon request). When I was a student in Paris, I visited the Louvre every Sunday for the nine months of my program (I never finished it by the way). I am a specialist of Versailles and the reign of Louis XIV, and I have an annual pass (that costs less than two visits on the days of the musical fountain displays). You may do the same, and spend as many days as you like walking around the gardens and the palace. It is worth going to the Centre Pompidou this year, as it is scheduled to close for four years of renovations beginning in 2023. You may choose to vary your experiences and visit many kinds of places, such as the opera house, gardens and sculpture gardens, museums of natural history, the zoo, greenhouses, and tiny museums like the museum of magic. Some museums, like the Rodin museum, have sculpture gardens. You may do five visits outside as walks that will cost you nothing, looking at decorations on monuments, fantasy-themed doorknocks, hybrid creatures in fountains, Art Nouveau buildings and the windows of antique dealers. If your schedules permit we will try to do some together and I will have some weekend visits where I can be your guide, but mostly you will explore on your own and turn Paris into your own learning space. You will have a "Research and
Experiential Learning” document with additional information.

**LLEA 270 WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS**

"Anyone who does not grasp the close juxtaposition of the vulgar and the scholarly has either too refined or too compartmentalized a view of life."
-- Stephen J. Gould

**Week 1. Introduction to the course.**
Where we will go (in learning terms and in real voyages), how to understand the course. Distribution of museum list and discussion of how to visit site, purchase passes, etc.

**Week 2. Devils, Demons, Dragons, Mermaids**
Medieval and later fantasies, French style
Texts: illustrated Medieval manuscripts with hybrid creatures
Definition of a "monster" from a 17th-c. French dictionary
Hell French style in Gothic cathedrals and Churches
Texts: Medieval illustrated manuscripts

**Week 3. Sirens, woman/bird and woman/serpent mixtures, where they come from and where to look for them.**
Texts: Jean d’Arras, *Mélusine* (excerpt), illustrated bibles
Art: Mesopotamian winged woman, Etruscan art, Greek art
Suggested sites: Louvre, Sainte-Chapelle

**Week 4. Cabinets of curiosities- the forerunners of museums.** Fancies of collecting
Text: reading on *wunderkammer*
Art and the natural word: the things collected from the natural world, the products of human creation, and the world of mirabilia (marvels real and ones that never existed at all).
Suggested sites: 18th c, cabinet of Bonnier de La Mosson, Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle

**Week 5. Cabinet-of curiosity inspired art of the 20th and 21st centuries**
Artists including André Breton, Maïssa Toulet, and others
Visit: Musée de la Chasse et de la nature
Suggested visit: Centre Pompidou

**Week 6. Fairy tales, life and death, jewels, glass, and oranges**
d’Aulnoy, "Queen Cat" (English version), "Chatte blanche" (French)
Lubert: "Princess Camion"
jewels and glass
Suggested sites: jewel collections, Museum of Decorative Arts, jewelry stores

Week 7. Fairy tale palaces and a real one: Palace and Gardens of Versailles
texts: Charles Perrault, "Les fées" / "The fairies," "Cendrillon" / "Cinderella"
Site: Palace and Park of Versailles

Week 8. How to discover and read French gardens and their fanciful buildings, fountains and artworks that are part of them. Versailles and Paris.
Film: Jean Cocteau, La Belle et la Bête
Suggested sites: Gardens of Versailles and/or gardens around Paris: dragons, sea creatures, giants, sphinxes etc.
Suggested gardens in Paris: Parc Monceau, Jardin des Tuileries, Jardin de Luxembourg, La Coulée verte/Promenade Plantée, others (all free)

Week 9. Impossible fantasies, magical places
Gautier: "La Cafetière" / "The Coffee Pot"
Aymé: "Le passe-muraille" / "Walker through Walls"
Suggested sites: Museum of Magic; a sculpture in Paris based on Aymé’s short story; the Museum of Fairground Arts (if possible)

"The Edge of Normality":
Darker (or Just Stranger) Fantasies in Fictional and Real Paris

Madness deranges, it throws us off balance, and makes us lose our footing.
It leads us to the edge of normality. But where does the norm end and chaos begin?
And who decides where to draw the line...
--Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent

Text: Gaston Leroux Phantom of the Opera (excerpts). The world of Paris Opera houses and the imaginaries they inspired
History of the Paris metro
Suggested sites: Palais Garnier and/or other Paris theaters; the catacombs, sewers, the metro.

Week 11. Darker Paris: fantasies of weird things beyond life and the strange history of anatomical displays
Texts: Maupassant short stories: "The Hand" and the "Skinned Man’s Hand"
Suggested sites: Fragonard Museum and Museum of Veterinary Medicine, Musée des Moulages
Option for those who don’t want to visit an anatomical museum: Jean Cocteau film: *Orpheus*; visit to the Gallery of Evolution in the Museum of Natural History for the parade of taxidermied animals (with sound effects)

**Week 12. "The Edge of Normality": Tales from the psychiatric institutions, and Outsider Art.**
Short story by Maupassant, "Chevelure" ("The hair" or "The head of hair")
Outsider art and naive art
Suggested site in Paris: Museum of Naive Art
For traveling students (more on the museums list)
- Ghent, Belgium: Museum Dr. Guislain (a museum in the old Guislain Asylum with a history of psychiatry and an important collection of Outsider Art. The Museum Dr. Guislain is one of the participating partners in the project MindTour (Mindful Tourism Services for Mentally Disordered People). The Museum Dr. Guislain has an important collection of outsider art. Its special exhibition "On Jitterbugs, Melancholics and Mad-Doctors" will be running during our stay in Paris.
- Lille, France: Lille Museum of Modern, Contemporary and Outsider Art (LaM)
- Heidelberg Germany: Prinzhorn Collection

**Week 13. Fantasy and error in ethnology and anthropology. The history of international exhibitions, comparative anatomy, and a human zoo in the 1931 colonial exhibition in Paris.**
Texts: Cortázar, "Axolotl" (set in the Museum of Natural History), excerpts from Cuvier
History of Saartjie Baartman, "The Hottentot Venus" in Paris
Suggested sites: Axolotl display in the Jardin des Plantes, Musée de l’homme (Museum of Man), Musée du Quai Branly (with former anthropological collections), Palais de la Porte Dorée (building designed for the 1931 Paris Colonial Exhibition) and the National Museum of the History of Immigration.

**Week 14. French science fiction. Did you know that France made some of the earliest, and most influential science fiction movies?**
Suggested sites: Eiffel Tower; Museum of Natural History paleontological collection (where part of *La Jetée* was filmed, among the dinosaur skeletons); Cinema Museum/Musée de la Cinémathèque (also visit the Bercy neighborhood while you are there).

**Week 15. conclusion**

Note: the list of suggested sites may be adjusted on arrival, based on museum openings or closures or to permit students to see special exhibitions, performances,
etc. Students will learn to find/use publications and internet sites with guides to performances, temporary exhibitions, etc.

**Grading:**
15% participation in class (including 3 quizzes)
35% visiting at least 10 sites
35% producing an illustrated "guide to Odd Paris" based on your visits
15% final document, a reflection on what you learned from your site visits

Required visits: on your own or with the professor (current or approximate prices):

- Palace and Gardens of Versailles (cost varies according to whether you choose a regular day, just the gardens or just the palace, a day with the musical fountain shows, etc. We will look at all the visit possibilities. Minimum estimate for basic ticket Palace and gardens: 20 euro (+ RER ticket)
- Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature: 8 euro

Other visits are your own choices. Students may choose to do five visits in one museum if it is a large one (Louvre or the Palace of Versailles for example). Information will be given to students on annual passes (sometimes only slightly more expensive than one or two visits), the Paris Museums Pass, etc. The visit list includes free sites: the many gardens of Paris, streets, fountains, buildings with architectural details, monuments, where to look for fantasy-themed doorknockers, and others. Costs will vary according to student interests and curiosities.

**Grading description**

**Participation:** students are expected to be in class, prepared with the readings for the day, and to contribute to the discussion. Students are allowed two absences (for a course that meets twice a week, one absence (for a course that meets once a week). A week of absences is normally enough to handle colds, flus, and most of life's minor emergencies. Work must be made up. If you need more absences than that, you need to contact me so I know what is going on.

**Researching, experiential learning and the "Guide to Odd Paris" project.** See separate handout.
A special part of this study abroad course involves site visits, some with me as guide (as feasible given your schedules), others on your own. This is interactive, experiential learning and part of the reason to study in Paris.

**Strategic learning objectives. Students will:**
• be able to identify and analyze works by major writers of imaginative literature including fairy tales and the fantastic in France (d'Arras, Perrault, d'Aulnoy, Lubert, Maupassant, Leroux, Gautier and Aymé, among others)
• engage with a range of works of art (from the fine arts, decorative arts, performing arts, architecture, garden arts, etc.), as well as literary and historical texts (maps, posters, advertisements, etc.
• actively engage with the culture of France by visiting museums, parks, gardens, and other sites independently and/or in guided visits to complete projects
• engage in interdisciplinary work by moving beyond disciplinary limits to see ways in which works of literature and works from the arts, the decorative arts, gardens, etc. can be analyzed and discussed
• develop and expand basic research tools appropriate for interdisciplinary research in the fields of literature, art history, material culture, and cultural history
• develop the kind of individual active learning experiences that can occur only in a study abroad context. Students will actively expand the course topic by producing their own interdisciplinary research, using a combination of the following: the many museum collections of Paris and nearby towns other museums or sites they may visit during their stay that complement their learning; related readings or visual and historical material available on the internet, such as (for example)
• create, record, organize their individual interdisciplinary learning experiences in the form of a "Guide to Odd Paris"
• seek to teach the teacher something new.

The course is held in English. Students may do the major readings of French works in either English or French.

**Class ethics and course content:** My courses are designed to function in ethical ways. You are required to treat all members of the class and everyone you encounter on site visits with courtesy and respect, no matter how different they may be from you.

All students are expected to cover the course material on the syllabus and presented in class. This course contains material that some may find strange, unusual, perplexing, disturbing, shocking, or unattractive. Students will encounter historical and literary treatment of human beings that is racist, misogynistic, ostracizing and belittling. You will also encounter phenomena and places that are fascinating, curious, compelling, thought-provoking, stimulating, entertaining, and inspiring. “Monstrosity” and fantasy lie at the limits where problems of knowledge, entertainment, life and death, self and other, intersect.

Enrolling in this course means you agree to a basic contract. You will attend class, visit sites with me or on your own, do your readings, do your best to learn, and ask questions if you get lost. You understand that the course has no academic prerequisites but does have an intellectual one—an open mind. You have read the syllabus, including the disclaimer and the class ethics statements, and agree to them. You will try to learn something new and to approach topics in medicine, the history of psychiatry, and human exhibitions in ways that are intellectual and rational, rather than superstitious or fearful. I hope you will also enjoy learning (it works better that way). As your professor I will prepare every day, will try to choose readings and materials that represent solid, scholarly approaches to the topic and that give the topic interdisciplinary breadth. I will do my best to make your lessons intellectually challenging and stimulating. In the very large fields
covered by notions of oddness and “monstrosity,” I hope I will learn a few new things from you as well.

**My course is a no-cheating zone, ever, for any reason.** You are required to familiarize yourself with the University of Hawaii Student Conduct Code. It can be found at: http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/#IV. Pay particular attention to section IV.B.1 "Acts of Dishonesty" and to the University sanctions for academic dishonesty. No excuses for unfamiliarity with the code will be accepted. If you need help, let me know.

**Accommodating difference and disability.** I support the following statement from the KOKUA Program:

If you feel you need reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a disability, please 1) contact the KOKUA Program (V/T) at 956-7511 or 956-7612 in room 013 of the QLCSS; 2) speak to me privately if you wish to discuss your needs. I will be happy to work with you and the KOKUA Program to meet your access needs related to your documented disability.

I want my classroom to be accessible, safe, and as comfortable as possible for anyone with any difference, disability, condition, or special need. If there is something I can do to make life easier, please let me know.

**Problems?** I’m hoping that you will enjoy learning about literature and the world in this class. If you aren’t enjoying the class or you have a problem, please let me know about it right away. I can’t fix it if I don’t know about it.

**Ideas?** This course can only scratch the surface of the enormous fields of strange and fantastic things in French literature, art, culture, and history. Learning new things is part of the fun of teaching for me. Feel free to e-mail, make an appointment, or go have a coffee with me to tell me about them. I am always up for coffee (and pastry).