

FREN 311: Topics in Modern France
Splendeurs et misères de la "Belle" Époque en France
Libby Murphy

Course Description

In this course we will examine the "Belle" Époque (1880-1914) in France through the overlapping lenses of politics, society, and culture. The course will begin with an overview of the Third Republic before moving to an examination of daily life from the point of view of different social groups—peasants, workers, colonial subjects, women, and children—paying particular attention to the ways in which those groups were defined and constructed through political discourse and popular culture. We will consider the cultural, artistic, technological, and scientific innovations that changed people's relationships to time—work time, leisure time, family time, and historical time. Along the way we will consider the ways in which the "Belle" Époque has been constructed as a historical and cultural moment, asking ourselves at each step "How "belle" was the "Belle" Époque?"

Rationale

This course will respond to French majors' strong interest in non-literature based content courses taught in the target language, giving them a solid working knowledge of the major political, social, and cultural developments in Modern France. Students will explore primary texts not commonly considered "literary"—manifestos, guidebooks, textbooks, posters, etc. Recent scholarly articles will give students a sense of the ways in which the writing of history is an imaginative, interpretive, polemical, and often literary endeavor. Prerequisite: French 301 or the equivalent. History majors with strong preparation in French language will be encouraged to enroll.

Preparation:

A course release will enable me to identify, reproduce, and prepare appropriate primary texts, set up a Blackboard site, identify appropriate secondary and reference sources, write lectures, prepare visual and audio support materials, collaborate with colleagues, and work with Megan Mitchell on developing research assignments.