

Visions of the Dark Years: World War II and its Legacy in France
A Five-Week Summer Seminar for School Teachers held in Paris and Caen, France
June 24 – July 29, 2009

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Dear Colleague,

We are delighted you are interested in our five-week summer seminar for school teachers “Visions of the Dark Years: World War II and its Legacy in Paris and France” to be held in Normandy. Below you will find a detailed description of the work of the seminar and its locations. You will also find a description of lodgings and accommodations for our stay in France.

Rationale for the Seminar: In a recent essay on contemporary Europe, Timothy Garton Ash asserts: “The question of what nations should do about a difficult past is one of the great subjects of our time.” The veracity and pertinence of this observation are readily evident in the continuing debates in many European countries over their respective World War II pasts. Subject to shifting political, social and cultural concerns, these pasts have been obfuscated, manipulated, and revised during the postwar period. Because these shifts, modifications, and changes engage sensitive issues of national identity, controversy very often ensues.

Perhaps nowhere has the memory of World War II proven more troubling, controversial, and unstable—especially in recent years—than in France. As the historian Henry Rousso has brilliantly shown in his classic study, *The Vichy Syndrome*, the memory of World War II and of the Vichy regime and its policies and practices in particular has undergone several important transformations resulting in four distinct phases of memory spanning the period from 1944 to the present. These phases are, as Rousso labels them: “Unfinished Mourning” (1944-1954); “Repressions” (1954-1970); “the Broken Mirror” (1970-1974); and “Obsession” (1974-1990). They correspond roughly to the postwar purges and punishment of collaborators with the Nazis; the period of Gaullist hegemony, when the myth of an almost unanimous resistance to the Nazis and their Vichy minions held sway; the end of Gaullism and the arrival of a new generation unwilling to adopt the parental version of the past; and, finally, a long period of national obsession with and malaise over the Vichy past and especially its persecution of the Jews and complicity in the Nazi Final Solution.

As Rousso points out, the shift from one phase to the next has not been marked by smooth transitions, and while at certain times the memory of the Vichy has proven unproblematic and marginal to the national psyche, at other times it has held center stage for long periods of time. In this fashion, it has demonstrated a capacity for remaining scandalously present in the public eye. The memory of Vichy has proven to be a major and persistent source of controversy in the media, in the courts and even in the institutions of government. Especially since the student revolts of May 1968 and the release of Marcel Ophüls’s classic documentary, *The Sorrow and the Pity*—a film which exposed not only the complex realities of the period but the less-than-admirable attitudes and actions of many of the French—France has suffered through any number of “flare-ups” of a kind of national malaise over the past that inspired the title of Rousso’s book. Evidence of the “Vichy Syndrome” in French public life can be found in controversies surrounding the trials for crimes against humanity of the German Klaus Barbie in the 1980s and of the Frenchmen Paul Touvier and Maurice Papon in the 1990s (both Touvier and Papon were implicated in Vichy’s persecutions of the Jews); in periodic manifestations of *négationnisme*—the French version of the Holocaust denial—in the 1994 scandal surrounding the extent of former President François Mitterrand’s service to Vichy; in efforts to fully acknowledge France’s role in the Final Solution and to commemorate its victims; in debates over the re-emergence of an indigenous French Fascism in the guise of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s *Front National*; and, finally, in the regular appearance of controversial films and novels attempting to come to terms with the memory of what the French often simply

call the “Dark Years.” In the cinema, films include works by France’s most distinguished film makers of the postwar period, including Louis Malle (*Lacombe Lucien* [1974] and *Au revoir les enfants* [1987]), François Truffaut (*Le dernier métro* [1980]), Claude Berri (*Uranus* [1991] and *Lucie Aubrac* [1997]) as well as controversial masterpieces by Claude Chabrol, Claude Lanzmann, Jacques Audiard, and many other distinguished film makers. In literature, the Dark Years have inspired literary masterpieces including novels, plays, short stories by Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Marcel Aymé, Albert Camus, Marguerite Duras, Patrick Modiano, Michel Tournier, and many others. As American historian Robert Paxton wryly observed at the time of the Mitterrand scandal, the Vichy past interests the French more than money or sex. And as the historian Gérard Noiriel argued a few years later, one crucial reason for this is that the Dark Years constitute a turning point in French history comparable in Noiriel’s view to that marked by the French Revolution. Noiriel may be overstating the case, but the Dark Years do certainly constitute an anomaly—historical, cultural, and even psychological—with which the nation is still coming to terms some sixty years later.

The purpose of our NEH Seminar for School Teachers will be to explore the legacy and memory of World War II in France, in order to understand how that past has affected the nation’s political and cultural life in the postwar years. Our “texts” will include classic works of the history and memory of the period, literary masterpieces, and ground breaking films which have not only exposed the realities of the troubled Vichy past but have helped shape its memory. We will also visit monuments and museums in Paris and Lyons, the town of Vichy itself, as well as the Normandy landing beaches and important installations of Hitler’s “Atlantic Wall.” Through the use of these texts and “places of memory,” to use Pierre Nora’s famous term, we will achieve not only a better understanding of France’s past, but its present as well.

STRUCTURE

WEEK I: Before undertaking our initial assessments of the War and Occupation, we will take a moment to get acquainted with a brief reception Sunday evening June 28, at the *Centre International de Séjour (Centre Maurice Ravel)* in Paris, where we will be housed for the first five days. *The Centre Maurice Ravel* is a modern dormitory-style guest facility administered by the city of Paris and offers lodgings, a restaurant, and meeting rooms. Each participant will have his or her own room with private bathroom and shower. *The Centre Ravel* is located just a few minutes walk from metro station Porte de Vincennes (on line 1 running through heart of the city and connecting with all other lines of the metro). Metro stations Bel Air (on line 6) and Porte Dorée (on line 8), in addition to the Parc de Vincennes, with its historic chateau and hundreds of acres of wooded walking paths and small lakes, are also just a ten minute walk from the *Centre Ravel*.

On Monday morning June 29, we will use Robert Paxton's groundbreaking work, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* and Paxton's analysis of Vichy's “National Revolution,” cultural politics, and anti-Semitism to provide a general orientation for our study. We will also consider the fundamental issues of history and memory that we will encounter throughout the seminar. Monday afternoon, we will visit *Le mémorial des martyrs de la déportation*, a monument located just behind the Notre Dame cathedral and which is emblematic of WWII memory in the early 1960s, since it provides an example of the Gaullist desire to commemorate under the banner of the French Republic all those (forced laborers, members of the Résistance, and Jews) deported from France by the Nazis. We will also take in a bit of Parisian culture with a visit (conducted in French) to the *Hôtel de Ville* hosted by the city of Paris and a welcoming banquet at the CISP in the evening.

On Tuesday morning June 30, we will first discuss the May - June 1940 debacle which led to the creation of the Vichy regime and which serves as the context for the first part of Irène Némirovsky's *Suite française*. We will then prepare for our afternoon visit of *Le Mémorial de la Shoah* by turning our attention to Vichy's anti-Semitic policies and its implication in the identification, arrest, detention, and transfer of Jews into Nazi hands. *Le*

Mémorial de la Shoah (formerly known as *Le Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu*), emphasizes the specificity of Jewish victims deported and murdered simply by virtue of their identity. It is also the site of the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, the most important archival source on the Holocaust in France, whose holdings have been used not only by all researchers writing on the Jews in France during the war, but also in several crimes against humanities proceedings, including those against Klaus Barbie and René Bousquet.

On Wednesday morning July 1, Olivier Rubinstein will retrace the itinerary of Irène Némirovsky, the author of the highly-acclaimed *Suite française* and of the manuscript that was only recently discovered and published. On Wednesday afternoon, Bracher will lead afternoon's field trip to three museums, the Musée Leclerc, the Musée Jean Moulin, and the Musée de la Libération de Paris, all housed together in one facility on the Esplanade constructed over the Montparnasse train station in Paris (where the German General von Scholtitz signed his surrender in the presence of De Gaulle's representatives). The Musée Leclerc documents the career of the most illustrious military leader of De Gaulle's France Combattante (General Leclerc), while the Musée Jean Moulin recounts (in French) the life of the leader of the mainland Resistance who, tortured to death by Klaus Barbie, became a martyr and national icon. The Musée de la Libération de Paris uses a multi-media narrative to tell the dramatic story of the Parisian insurrection culminating in the German withdrawal from the city, the rousing speech delivered by De Gaulle at the Hôtel de Ville (visited the previous day), and the triumphant parade down the Champs-Élysées marking the liberation of the French capital and the restoration of democratic institutions, all of which are presented by means of audio-visual documents dating from the Liberation period itself.

On Thursday morning July 2, we will focus on the crimes against humanity trials of Klaus Barbie, Paul Touvier, and Maurice Papon with Annette Lévy-Willard, the reporter who covered these events for the Parisian daily newspaper *Libération* and who had an exclusive interview with Papon before his trial. We will address the troubled legal and moral context of these trials in order to understand why they took place a half-century after the crimes themselves.

On Thursday afternoon, Bracher will lead the group to one of the most uniformly revered sites of the Résistance, the Mont Valérien, a promontory overlooking Paris from the east where the Germans executed at least 1,500 résistants, hostages, and Jewish detainees. On the instigation of General de Gaulle, it was on this site that Le Mémorial de la France Combattante was constructed: the monument, which includes twelve massive sculptures and a crypt containing the coffins of sixteen figures emblematic of the various social and ethnic components of the Résistance, is doubtless the most famous architectural embodiment of the Gaullist memory of the Résistance. Here again, our hosts will conduct the visit in French.

On the morning of Friday July 3, we will begin reflecting on possible projects and prepare for our bus transfer to Lyon. Saturday July 4 will be devoted to a visit to *Le Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation*, constructed on the site of German police headquarters in Lyon, contains the only film available to the public of the 1987 trial of the Klaus Barbie. The next morning, we will leave for Vichy, and pass through Caluire, located in a quiet suburb of Lyon. Although a small monument to the Resistance is located there, there is little to suggest the historical and symbolic significance of the 1943 arrest of Jean Moulin by Barbie or the controversy that continues to swirl around the event. Nevertheless, it is possible—and fascinating—to visualize how the arrest took place, how one figure in the Resistance (René Hardy—later accused of and tried for betraying Moulin) managed to escape, etc.

On Sunday afternoon July 5, we will arrive at Vichy, the capital of the collaborationist Pétain regime, and what can now best be described as a site of "anti-memory." Our walking tour will be led by Jean-Jacques Fleury, a certified National Historical Tour Guide, whose tour will reveal the degree to which all traces of the wartime government and administration have been effaced. Ironically, the traces of memory that are in evidence include

commemorative plaques to the Resistance and to Jewish deportees. Indeed, when we walked through Vichy in 1999 with a group of college teachers, we were accosted by a townspeople who insisted that dredging up the memory of the past was shamefully “anti-French.” Clearly, old wounds were not entirely healed.

WEEK II: On Monday July 6, we will leave Vichy and return to the *Centre Ravel* in Paris. Having examined a number of important aspects of Vichy and its memory, it will be our great pleasure on the morning of Tuesday July 7 to welcome Henry Rousso to the Seminar to discuss (in French) his book *The Vichy Syndrome*. Rousso will assess what progress France has now achieved in confronting the painful legacy of the Dark Years. He will also address a series of questions that will remain pertinent throughout the seminar: has France now indeed achieved, as contend Éric Conan and Henry Rousso in *Vichy: un passé qui ne passe pas*, an overwhelming consensus on Vichy? Has too much attention been focused on the active participation of Vichy in the "Final Solution," as some historians have maintained? Has the time truly come, as Conan and Rousso now insist, to turn the page and go on, or is more probing still necessary?

In the afternoon, the Directors will meet with the seminar members individually to discuss ideas for their research projects. After the first week, the participants should have a very good idea of the range of possibilities and should begin to formulate a clear idea of what aspect of Vichy and its memory interests them.

On Wednesday, July 8, after breakfast and final errands in Paris, we will take the bus to Caen at 11:00 am. We will arrive about five in the afternoon, and begin settling in to our new residence, the *Tempologis* (see description below under accommodations).

On Thursday, July 9 we will discuss several selections from Irène Némirovsky's *Suite française*. In the afternoon, participants will orient themselves at the *Mémorial* and meet with the Directors individually to discuss their research projects. Then on Friday, 10 July and Saturday, 11 July, we will welcome the French historian Rémy Desquesnes, a leading authority on Hitler's Atlantic Wall and especially the many forms of commemoration of the battle of Normandy. Desquesnes will host us on a two-day bus tour of the beaches, cemeteries, fortifications, and landing sites and will make detailed historical presentations at each stop. He will address the group in French. To give participants a sense of the concrete impact of the war, we will devote the next two days to field trips to key World War II sites in Normandy. At La Pointe du Hoc, one of the major gun positions first taken by the Rangers, we will have a detailed view of the Germans' Atlantic Wall system of defense. A visit to Omaha Beach and to the American cemetery at Colleville where almost 10,000 American soldiers are buried will be important in gauging the human cost of the war. At each of the sites, Professor Desquesnes will point out the complexities of Operation Overlord and the human drama specific to each of the many different theatres and phases of the battle of Normandy before, during, and after the D-Day landing. We will also visit the almost perfectly preserved German gun battery at Longues-sur-mer, and the Cinema in the Round's 360 theater to view a film celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Allied landing in Normandy. Professor Desquesnes will also lead seminar participants to contemplate the significance of sites largely overlooked by visitors: from a V1 launch pad constructed by Soviet forced laborers, to a somber German cemetery filled with the graves of teenage conscripts, to the secluded castle where the first surrender of a German general to American forces took place, every corner of the Normandy countryside will, thanks to Desquesnes' knowledge, bear poignant testimony to the fierce combats of a half-century ago.

WEEKS III AND IV: After the Sunday break, we will resume on Monday July 13. Over the next several days, and up through the end of the fourth week of the seminar, we will turn our attention to some of the most representative works of film and literature dealing with the postwar memory of Vichy and the Dark Years. We will begin with a discussion of Vercors' *The Silence of the Sea*. Vercors's *The Silence of the Sea* is a brief novella that spoke out in behalf of Resistance and in opposition to Nazi brutality. When it was published in

1942, it became an underground sensation—and inspiration.

On the afternoons of July 13 and 14, we will screen *The Sorrow and the Pity*, Ophul's classic documentary and the work which more than any blew the lid off the Gaullist myth of Resistance and the brought the troubled realities of the Dark Years before the public eye. The next mornings (14 July and 15 July) we will discuss film, its reception, and the features that made it so scandalous at the time (French complacency and anti-Semitism, the idea that there might be a fascist "idealism" as exemplified in the person of Christian de la Mazière, its de-emphasizing of de Gaulle and the Free French while emphasizing the importance of the internal Resistance, etc.). On the afternoon of Wednesday 15 July, we will screen another cinematic *succès de scandale* of the 1970s, Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien*.

On Thursday July 16, we will discuss *Lacombe Lucien*. Malle's fundamentally sympathetic portrait in the film of an adolescent collaborator, driven not by ideological beliefs but simply by a desire for adventure and a need to belong (indeed, the young protagonist originally tries to join the Resistance but is turned down) blurred the distinction between collaboration and resistance and raised the troubling possibility that not all collaborators were fascist zealots or corrupt opportunists. In our previous seminars, this film has stimulated a great deal of discussion, not only because Malle's deliberate ambiguity is so troubling but because for many school teachers, Lucien Lacombe is very similar to many of the adolescents they deal with in their own classrooms. In conjunction with *Lacombe Lucien*, we will also discuss Marguerite Duras's *The War*. More fragmentary in form and resisting facile literary classification (Duras claims that part of the work is fictional, part personal diary, and part autobiographical), *The War*, despite the fact that it appeared in the 1985, the book brings together most of the issues, problems and ambiguities we will have discussed during the seminar. For example, dealing directly with the Holocaust, Duras refuses to attribute the Nazi horror to the "Other" while exonerating the French themselves. Duras's text also challenges comfortable notions of good and evil, innocence and guilt, associated respectively with resistance and collaboration. For example, the fictional young *milicien*, Ter, associated with the most heinous and vicious of collaborationist organizations, is presented as innocence personified in the novel, while the interrogation of a collaborator in another section of *The War* shockingly portrays the brutality of the Resistance fighters and calls their solidarity into question. Here, Duras raises a question virtually inconceivable in the immediate postwar period: what is the difference between a resistance fighter and a collaborator, if both are capable of unspeakable brutality? Duras's novel takes us a long way from the comforting certainties of the Gaullist myth of Resistance.

After a three day weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 17-19), to catch our breath and catch up on our reading, on Monday morning July 20, we will turn our attention to Albert Camus's classic 1947 novel *The Plague*. Researched and written for the most part in the tiny Protestant village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, where some 5,000 Jews found refuge from persecution and deportation, Camus's novel constitutes one of the most powerful expressions of the moral impact of the war and the Occupation's human devastation, as the various protagonists find themselves torn between the imperatives of collective action and the aspirations and desires of their personal lives. The action of the novel takes place in Oran, where the citizens join together to fight an outbreak of the Bubonic plague.

In our afternoon screening and discussion on July 20, we will step out of chronological order in terms of our presentation of films and texts and view Malle's second great masterpiece dealing with the Dark Years, *Au revoir les enfants*, released in 1987. The film presents a poignant depiction of a Jewish boy first hidden in a French boarding school, then inadvertently betrayed by his friend and captured by the Gestapo before being deported to Auschwitz. This film, which relates a true story while sketching a sort of microcosm of French society under the Occupation, will enable us to analyze the attitudes and behavior of the French toward the Jews in the context of the Holocaust, very much a central aspect of the Vichy Syndrome in the

mid to late 1980s and into the 1990s as well. Viewing Malle's films in the order of their production will also allow us to assess the ways his own perception of the Occupation changed in the interim between the two films, and how his deliberate aesthetics of ambiguity have affected his cinematic representations of the history and memory of Vichy.

Our next film will be François Truffaut's *The Last Metro*, which will be screened and discussed on Tuesday July 21. Attacked by some critics as a whimsical, if not escapist attempt to whitewash the unsettling realities of collaboration and French anti-Semitism, Truffaut's Oscar-winning story of a Jewish playwright hiding out under the stage of his own theater in occupied Paris has been defended by others as a subtle, yet powerful depiction of the physical and material hardships endured by the French and the courage shown by the Resistance while not ignoring the moral ambiguities of the period and the ingrained anti-Semitism displayed by many.

Wednesday July 22 will be devoted to the screening and discussion of our last film, Claude Berri's *Lucie Aubrac* (1997). As opposed to the majority of the films which emphasize the moral ambiguities of the period, *Lucie Aubrac* is an overtly hagiographic presentation of one of the most renowned and heroic Jewish Resistance figures who boldly organized and participated in the commando raid that liberated her husband from the hands of the Gestapo. The polemic which occurred at the time of the release of the film over the veracity of the Aubrac narrative involved some of the most highly respected scholars of the war years (including Henry Rousso) and dramatized the tensions between the scholarly reconstitution of historical events and personal memory of those who took part in them. The confrontation was moreover symptomatic of a series of controversies over the legacy of the Resistance, and in particular over Jean Moulin, that spanned the 1990s in France. We shall try to determine what prompted these debates and assess their implications for the overall memory of the Occupation.

On the morning of Thursday July 23, we will discuss our final text, Patrick Modiano's 1997 work, *Dora Bruder*. Part historical investigation, part memoir, and part meditation on history and political power, *Dora Bruder* is the finest work by a writer associated with the Vichy Syndrome since the beginning of his career in 1968 (Modiano co-wrote the script for *Lacombe Lucien* with Louis Malle). *Dora Bruder* tells the story of the novelists search for the traces of the real Jewish girl, Dora Bruder, who was hidden in a Catholic school during the occupation, who ran away and was subsequently arrested by French police and deported to her death at Auschwitz. The book is also a personal account of Modiano's troubled relationship with his father who was Jewish and a black marketeer during the occupation and who survived the Dark Years. Finally, *Dora Bruder* is a meditation on the meaning of Vichy in moral and historical terms in relation to both French and European history.

WEEK V: The last week of the seminar, July 27-29 will be devoted to the presentation of the participants' projects. We anticipate that, as with our previous seminars, these will cover a range of literary, historical, and cultural topics. If past experience is an accurate indicator, some participants will choose to present topics of personal interest, others will opt to develop teaching units for films viewed or literary works read during the course of the seminar. Monday 27 July and Tuesday 28 July, will thus be devoted to the presentations of the projects. Some of the participants may choose to present their projects in French, and we will welcome this, as we will, of course, welcome projects in English. On Wednesday, 29 July, we will have our final meeting before our bus will take the group back to Paris. The bus will make two stops in and around Paris, Charles de Gaulle Airport and the Denfert Rochereau Metro Bus Stop and Taxi Stand which has a large open area with a taxi stand. Participants who will return to the states on Thursday will probably want to get off the bus at the airport and stay overnight in one of the many hotels at the airport. Those who will be continuing their stay will be best advised to get off the bus at its final stop at the Denfert Rochereau Metro Bus Stop and Taxi Stand.

ACCOMMODATIONS: As noted earlier, in Paris the participants will be housed at the *CISP Maurice Ravel*. During our trip to Lyons and Vichy, the participants will stay in comfortable, modestly priced hotels along the way. Once in Caen, the participants will be housed in comfortable, fully equipped studio apartments (with dishes, sheets and blankets, laundry room, television, and internet hook-up, etc.) at the *Tempologis* Residence.

These apartments are located about four hundred yards from the *Mémorial*, where all Institute meetings will take place. The building has a laundry room as well as a small breakfast room where, if participants wish, they can meet to eat their breakfast. Please note that each apartment will have a television and internet connection but no phone. Participants will need to pay for their all own meals while in Caen. Downtown Caen is about a twenty-five minute walk (1+ mile) from the *Tempologis* and the *Mémorial*. Buses from the *Mémorial* run into town approximately every 20 minutes during the day, and less frequently at night. There are two shopping centers, a post office, a café, a park with botanical gardens and tennis courts as well as a mini-golf course (!) within 10 minutes walk from the *Tempologis*. Downtown Caen is noted for its restaurants, William the Conqueror's castle, and a walkable downtown shopping area. **Please note:** Neither the *CISP* in Paris nor the *Tempologis* in Caen is air-conditioned.

STIPENDS: The stipend amount set by the NEH for a five-week Seminar is \$3800 and is intended to help defray the cost of books, transportation, lodging and board. *Please note that the cost for lodging in Paris and some meals (as noted, breakfast and lunch everyday, plus one evening meal in Paris, then breakfast only during our trip to Lyons and Vichy), lodging on the bus tour, as well as the cost of lodging in Caen, must be paid in advance, and will need to be deducted from the stipend of each participant (the anticipated deduction is \$1,900). Stipend checks sent to participants before their departure will reflect those deductions. Once the participants are selected, they will be required to give their consent in writing to these deductions. Please note as well that the Seminar will not be able to accommodate or make special arrangements for spouses and family members.*

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS: The Seminar should be of interest to language and literature teachers as well as teachers of social studies, modern history, and Holocaust studies.

LANGUAGE FACILITY: Although this seminar will function in English much of the time, with all of the required readings available in English, participants will need to have a working knowledge of French. A “working knowledge” does not necessarily entail a high level of fluency. “Receptive” skills, especially listening, are the key. Several of the lectures and commentaries will be given in French (Fleury, Rousso, Rubinstein, and Desquesnes); the holdings of the *Mémorial* are especially rich in French books, documents, and films; and the culture of everyday life in France is opened up to the visitor with a “working knowledge” of the language. Please provide information on your language preparation and experience, including course-work and any experience in a French-speaking country.

Again, thank you for your interest in the seminar. If you have any questions not answered in the description above, please contact Ede Hilton-Lowe at ede@tamu.edu, Nathan Bracher at nbracher@tamu.edu, Joe Golsan at rjgolsan@tamu.edu or Nancy Golsan at i-golsan@tamu.edu for further assistance. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Golsan and Nathan Bracher
Directors