

Last update: May 2021

**Office Hours & Course Number:** TBD.

## **French Upper-Division “Postcolonial Zola”**

### **Bonjour!**

Bienvenue à notre cours, "Postcolonial Zola." You can call me Valentin (pronouns: he/him/his), and reach out if you have any questions: [vduquet@utexas.edu](mailto:vduquet@utexas.edu).

### **Course Description:**

Émile Zola (1840-1902) is one of the all-time great novelists. He is remembered and famous for his incendiary defense of Alfred Dreyfus (a Jewish officer in the French military), as well as for authoring more than 30 books. He saw his writing as the scientific and sociological documentation of people from all walks of life in nineteenth-century France—in stark contrast with the earlier style of Romanticism. This course explores Zola’s novels through bite-size extracts organized based on themes which are relevant to all students today, such as: gender and sexuality, religion, capitalism, imperialism and race. We will look at French society—then and now—through a journalistic lens by reading Zola’s texts in tandem with newspaper articles dealing with contemporary issues since 1960. Zola’s modernist stories will inform our own post-modernity and provide context on current cultural and political issues. For instance, we will analyze Zola’s “J’Accuse” alongside the question of Islam in recent years and the accusations against French scholar Tariq Ramadan; we will compare the oppositions between capitalism and socialism in fin-de-siècle France and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and we will debate activism, anarchism and the use of violence in protests. In this course, you will get the chance to lead the discussion based on your own interests and specialization, all the while gaining a deeper understanding of French language and history. I will provide free eBooks and audiobooks, as well as novel summaries before you start reading excerpts. In addition to Zola’s novels, we will look at relevant articles from newspapers like *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Libération*, *L’Humanité* and *La Croix*.

### **Courses Objectives:**

This course will be held entirely in French. Students will get a chance to practice all core skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) at an advanced level. By the end of the semester, you should be able to (in French): discuss a work of literature according to theme and context; exchange ideas with classmates comfortably and respectfully; present and articulate complex thoughts with more ease; and write a short journalistic piece connecting two texts or more. Additionally, you will have a better understanding of the systems and structures of power in place in France and globally from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward. Perfect fluency in French is not required (nor is it expected!); the point of the course is to workshop ideas, thoughts and language in a safe and friendly space.

### **Grading:**

Attendance & Participation: 20%

Discussion Posts on Canvas (before each day of class): 20%

Two Oral Presentations: 15% + 15%

Final Paper: 30%

**Attendance:**

You will get two free absences. Any further unexcused absence will cost you 5 points out of 20 from your participation grade. Repeated tardiness will also impact your grade.

**Work Expectations:**

- **Reading:** Even though whole chapters and longer passages will be provided if you're curious, we will limit the number of pages to read to about 60 for the Tuesday class and 40 for the Thursday class. If needed, specific cuts will be recommended ahead of time to expediate your work. Since we are not doing close readings, different students will come to class with different interests and voices. Analyzing Zola politically and not poetically means that a deep understanding of every stylistic choice is not required. In other words, unless you are presenting on the text, you are not expected to have comprehended and assimilated everything. I recommend looking up words in a dictionary only if you cannot get the general gist of a paragraph on your own.
- **Discussion Posts:** Before each class, every student (except those presenting that day) will need to submit a brief discussion post on Canvas raising up to three questions and identifying one specific quote or passage for us to revisit later. Explain why this passage interests you and tease out a critical response or interpretation you are forming in your head.
- **Presentations:** Whenever possible, you will work in groups of two. On days when you are presenting, you will provide an introduction (10 min per person) at the beginning of class and continue to animate and facilitate the discussion thereafter. For each theme, I will propose and make available different articles that relate to the topic of the day. (You are welcome to suggest another journalistic piece, pending my approval.) If you are presenting, you must draw a parallel between the novel and at least one article. Introduce the article and explain how this contemporary topic connects with our theme of the week.
- **Final Paper:** Course assignments will *not* include any line-by-line *explication de texte*, comprehension quiz, or midterm exam. The bulk of your grade will come from two class presentations and a final essay (5 pages) connecting an approved 19<sup>th</sup>-century text (from our syllabus or else) to a topic of interest from an article not previously discussed. This paper should not be a scholarly research article; you can think of it instead as a robust blog post from *Medium* providing historical perspective and cultural analysis on a theme from class.

<b>Points</b>	<b>Grade</b>		
93-100	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	0-59	F

**Course Schedule:**

Week 1: Introduction: overview of 19<sup>th</sup> century French fiction and the Postcolonial method

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## **RACE & GENEALOGY**

Week 2, class 1: *Docteur Pascal*, extracts from [chapter 2](#) & [chapter 8](#)

Week 2, class 2: extract from [La Fortune des Rougon](#): the case of Antoine Macquart

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## **GENDER & SEXUALITY**

Week 3, class 1: *Nana*, [chapter 1](#): Nana the performer

Week 3, class 2: *Nana*, extracts from [chapters 7, 10](#) & [13](#): Nana the mistress and prostitute

Week 4, class 1: *La Curée*, extracts from [chapter 3](#) & [chapter 4](#): queerness and incest

Week 4, class 2: extracts from [Paris](#) and [Docteur Pascal](#): the virgin & the mother

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## **AGRICULTURE & THE LAND**

Week 5, class 1: *La Terre*, extracts from [part I, chapter 5](#) & [part IV, chapter 5](#)

Week 5, class 2: [La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret](#), extracts from part I: the story of Désirée

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## **RELIGION & SECULARISM**

Week 6, class 1: [La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret](#), extracts from part II: the Garden of Eden

Week 6, class 2: "[J'Accuse...](#)!": Zola and l'affaire Dreyfus

Week 7, class 1: *Lourdes*, extracts from day 2, [chapter 2](#) & [chapter 4](#): the faith of pilgrims

Week 7, class 2: [Rome](#), chapter XIV: face-to-face with Pope Leo XIII

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## **MONEY & CAPITALISM**

Week 8, class 1: [Rome](#), extract from chapter VIII: real estate speculation in the Eternal City

Week 8, class 2: *La Curée*, extracts from [chapter 3](#) & [chapter 4](#): real estate speculation in Paris

## **Spring Break**

Week 9, class 1: [Au Bonheur des dames](#), chapter 6: the business of the Grand Magasins

Week 9, class 2: [L'Argent](#), chapter 8: stock market speculation and manipulation

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## **IMPERIALISM & COLONIALISM**

Week 10, class 1: [L'Argent](#), extracts from chapter 2: Universal Bank & Oriental railways

Week 10, class 2: [Fécondité](#), book VI, chapter 5: settler colonialism in the French Sudan

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## **SOCIALISM & ANARCHISM**

Week 11, class 1: *Germinal*, extracts from part 2, [chapter 1](#) & part 7, [chapter 2](#)

Week 11, class 2: *Germinal*, extracts from part 7, [chapter 5](#) & [chapter 6](#): the resolution

Week 12, class 1: *Paris*, book IV, [chapter 5](#) & book V, [chapter 1](#): the trial & the execution  
Week 12, class 2: *Paris*, book V, [chapter 4](#) & [chapter 5](#): the averted disaster

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### **UTOPIANISM & FUTURISM**

Week 13, class 1: [Travail](#), extracts from book III, chapters 3 & 4  
Week 13, class 2: [Travail](#), book III, chapter 5

Week 14, class 1: [Vérité](#), book IV, chapter 3  
Week 14, class 2: [Vérité](#), book IV, chapter 4

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Week 15, class 1: Peer-review of final paper drafts  
Week 15, class 2: Conclusion & evaluations

### **Official Resources:**

#### **[University of Texas Honor Code](#)**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the *student's own work*. Should plagiarism, i.e. appropriation of another's work without proper attribution, be deemed to have occurred, the student will automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

#### **[Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#)**

SSD ensures students with disabilities have equal access to their academic experiences at the University of Texas at Austin by determining eligibility and approving reasonable accommodations.

#### **[Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students](#)**

E-mail is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your e-mail for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—I recommend daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical.

[Thrive](#) is a free iPhone app designed to enhance UT Austin student well-being and help better manage the ups and downs of campus life. Students will find short videos of actual UT Austin students sharing their own stories as well as interactive activities designed to help them apply these concepts to their own unique experience.

### **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050.

### **Counselors in Academic Residence Program (CARE)**

CARE is a program of the Counseling and Mental Health Center that was created in collaboration with the Office of the Provost. CARE counselors are located within the colleges they serve. They are licensed mental health professionals and work with students who have been referred by faculty and staff. CARE's primary mission is to provide access to mental health support for students who are struggling emotionally and/or academically. Cassy Moreno, LPC, is the CARE counselor for Liberal Arts and is available to meet with COLA students in need of mental health assistance.

### **Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC)**

In addition to CARE, students can visit the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) for counseling services: Counseling and Mental Health Center Crisis Line 512-471-CALL (2255). (UT Students Only - available every day of the year including holidays). CMHC Crisis Line is a confidential service of CMHC that offers an opportunity for UT-Austin students to talk with trained counselors about urgent concerns. A counselor is available every day of the year, including holidays. You can call us when you want, at your convenience. Our telephone counselors will spend time addressing your immediate concerns. Our telephone counselors also have specific training in responding to crisis situations. Counseling and Mental Health Center offers several discussion groups students may attend that cover various topics. Some groups are drop-in groups while other groups topics range from identity-based groups, Voices Against Violence, Mindfulness groups, and other support groups. A list of all the group options are available at [this link](#).

### **Student Emergency Services (SES)**

Student Emergency Services provides assistance, intervention, and referrals to support students navigating challenging or unexpected issues that impact their well-being and academic success. SES can be reached at 512-471-5017 (Mon – Fri from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.). Emergency situations include but are not limited to: Missing Student; Family Emergency; Fire or Natural Disaster; Student Death (current or former); Medical or Mental Health Concern; Academic difficulties due to crisis or emergency situations; Interpersonal Violence (stalking, harassment, physical and/or sexual assault).

### **UT Outpost**

UT Outpost will help battle hunger and food insecurities of our students, as well as giving students access to professional attire for job and internship interviews. The service is located in the UA9 Building (2609 University Avenue) which is behind the Student Services Building (SSB).

### **Center for Students in Recovery (CSR)**

The Center for Students in Recovery (CSR) provides a safe space and supportive community for students in recovery or seeking recovery from addiction. Participation at CSR is completely voluntary and there is no barrier to entry. Students at any stage of recovery and at any point in their academic journeys are welcome.

### **Sanger Learning Center**

The Sanger Learning Center is UT Austin's main resource for academic support. Some of the services offered at the Sanger Learning Center include but aren't limited to: 1-on-1 tutoring or drop in tutoring; improving your study skills with a learning specialist; weekly meetings with a Peer Academic Coach; and help with public speaking assignment.

### **Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC)**

The mission of the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) is to provide opportunities for all members of the UT Austin community to explore, organize, and promote learning around issues of gender and sexuality. The center also facilitates a greater responsiveness to the needs of women and the LGBTQIA+ communities through education, outreach, and advocacy.

### **Religious Holy Days**

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.