

**University of Florida
Paris Research Center
Intensive Study Abroad over Spring Break
March 11-17, 2007**

African Americans in Paris (AFA 3930, 2 Credits)

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This course will explore the African American presence in Paris. Since the mid-1700s scores of African Americans have visited, lived, and worked in France. Students will research the experiences and perceptions of Black Americans and study why and how a sustained pattern of visitation has occurred. Students will look at African Americans in Paris through their own academic lens and make connections from their own scholarly disciplines to the topic of African Americans in Paris.

There are many disciplinary approaches that will facilitate learning about African Americans in Paris. For example, political science, performing arts, English and creative writing, sociology, history, and economics all offer a point of entry to this topic. The course will be designed to approach topics chronologically, but will mainly be organized thematically to show the various reasons African Americans have continued to engage in Parisian life.

The course will introduce students to three groups Black Americans who have traveled to Paris: 1) political persons, 2) academics, and 3) culture bearers. These themes will be explored via geographic visitations to the *arrondissements* where Black Americans experienced world wars, Pan-Africanist movement, study abroad, writer's life, café culture, and Jazz Age club life.

1) Political Persons

Black people's visits to Paris have often been framed by socio-political contexts. For example, Sally Hemmings was enslaved by Thomas Jefferson (who had an apartment at the Hôtel Langeac from 1785-1789) and stayed with him in his apartment (92 Champs-Élysées). Their visit was during a time when African enslavement worldwide was accepted; however, African Americans like abolitionist AME Bishop Daniel Payne would visit Paris in 1857 (for the World Antislavery Conference), after Britain abolished slavery in 1833 and France followed suit in 1848. The way the majority of Black Americans visited Paris was through participation as fighting troops in World War I. The comparative acceptance of Black troops in France and their relative abuse by American military systems--investigated by the NAACP's W.E.B. Du Bois--is a source of much interest when



The Raising of Lazarus, Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1896

studying U.S. history. Also of great importance to ideas of political organization was the 1919 Pan-African Conference, headed by Du Bois. political engagement continued a century after Bishop Payne's visit: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at the American Cathedral and the Salle de la Mutualité in 1965; Stokely Carmichael spoke against the Vietnam war in 1966; and the student protest movement in 1960s Paris that mirrored the upheaval on U.S. campuses demonstrates a sustained critical interaction of African Americans and Parisians.

2) Academics

One central site will be of particular interest in retracing African American's scholarly involvement in Paris: the Sorbonne. Students like Carter G. Woodson (1907), Anna Julia Cooper (1910s; 1924-25), and Angela Davis (1963-64) have studied at the University of Paris, Sorbonne and in the late 1960s, Black students like Julia Wright (Richard Wright's daughter) helped Sorbonne students in their fight against the school's administration. In particular, Anna Cooper will be highlighted in this course. She earned her doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1925 and was the subject of the recent virtual project on "Jazz Age Montmartre." In an effort to trace Dr. Cooper's life, I visited Paris in 2003 through PRC sponsorship. I located areas of relevance such as her flat on Rue Rollin and the Richelieu amphitheater where she defended her dissertation and will guide students to these locations. The Sorbonne is a central site to the course and will allow students an opportunity to see how "study abroad" has been a valued practice for African Americans since the early twentieth century. Also, Parisian bookstores, especially the *Présence Africaine* and the *Anglophone Village Voice* will be sites of interest as they are centers of culture and have fed those who have come to Paris over the years for focused study. In addition to the Sorbonne, scholars have taken classes at the Louvre some Black American soldiers took advantage of the G.I. Bill to study in Paris after World War II. In the 1990s Toni Morrison taught classes at the College de France and 1992, a conference on "African Americans in Europe" was held where scholars like Ishmael Reed and Ernest Gaines participated. These events will be used to analyze opportunities for study in Europe that often eluded African Americans in the U.S.

3) Culture Bearers

Writers, visual artists, and performers have all had a strong presence in Paris. It is well known that writers such as Jessie Fausset, Claude McKay, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and James Baldwin enjoyed Paris life and some even chose to reside in France rather than the United States. The 1956 Congress of Negro Artists and Writers was held at the Sorbonne and was a source of much debate between Black writers in the African Diaspora. The Olympia Music Hall (28 boulevard des Capucines), was founded in 1888 by Joseph Oller who also established the Moulin Rouge. Such stars as Louis Armstrong, Josephine Baker, Sidney Bechet, Mahalia Jackson, Quincy Jones, and Nina Simone have performed there. Artist Henry Ossawa Tanner's painting, *Pilgrims at Emmaüs*, was displayed at the Louvre in 1904, as was his piece *The Raising of Lazarus*. Other artists from jazz musician Miles Davis to photographer and filmmaker Gordon Parks have frequented Paris. Maya Angelou, known as an author, also performed in the play *Porgy and Bess* in Paris. Performances from Josephine Baker (1920s) to Katherine Dunham (1940s) and Alvin Ailey (1960s) have ignited Parisian audiences with their dance prowess. Black culture has interacted much with Parisian culture over the years...in many fascinating ways. Proprietors Josephine Baker and Ada

"Bricktop" Smith demonstrate that many artistic African Americans lived in Paris and contributed to the Harlem Renaissance spirit abroad.

Scope and Guiding Questions

Surely, no clear lines can be drawn between politics, scholarship, and culture; yet these three categories provide entry points into discussion of the many ways and reasons African Americans have been attracted to the City of Light. Paris holds a unique position as a center of cultural exchange in Black life. This course will explore the details of why and how this phenomenon has taken place. The Paris Research Center will be an exceptional facilitator of this course. The location of the PRC is within the 6th arrondissement, which houses the Montparnasse district, (described as the "Bohemian capital of Paris") where many African Americans visited. The PRC is also right next to the Sorbonne (5th arrondissement); students will be in a central location where they can make connections to the surrounding area with ease.

In the course *African Americans in Paris*, Students will explore the perceptions and experiences of African Americans who visited Paris before the Civil War, during American Reconstruction, in the midst of World War I and II, during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and in the current era.

Guiding questions for students in the course will be: 1) When and why did Black Americans go to Paris? 2) How did their perceptions and experiences differ over time and what reflections expose similar patterns? 3) How do the experiences of Black Americans and Black Africans in Paris differ? 4) What can African American experiences in Paris teach you about your chosen academic discipline? After reading primary and secondary sources, students will visit the sites of interest and hear from scholars and residents who articulate important context to understanding past and present Black visitors and residents in Paris.

Required assignments

Complete prior to departure

- ✓ Articles (TBA - selections from Maxima, Lamar, Baldwin, Hughes, Du Bois, Cooper, etc.)
- ✓ Read the following books: *Harlem in Montmartre*, Shack; *Black Girl in Paris*, Youngblood; *Paris Reflections*, Anderson & Wells

Recommended reading (not required)

From Harem to Paris, Fabre

The Josephine Baker Story, Wood

Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s, Archer-Straw

Black Paris, Jules-Rosette

Upon returning to UF

Write 8-10 page paper, incorporating required readings, travel and lecture experiences, 2 books and 2 articles from your academic major.

Tentative Schedule of Site Visits

Sunday, March 11

- 3:30 PM -4:30 PM Reception at the Paris Research Center (Grande Salle, Reid Hall)
- Welcome information: Dr. Gayle Zachmann, Director, UF Paris Research Center
 - Logistic information: Rachel Gora, Coordinator of Logistics, UF Paris Research Center
- 5:00 PM – 6:45 PM Group Dinner, Chez Fernand, 9, rue Christine, 6th arr. (Metro: Odéon)

Monday, March 12

The Ninth Arrondissement – “Black Montmartre & Club Scene”

- 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Orientation at the Paris Research Center, Grande Salle, Reid Hall
- Orientation: Dr. Gayle Zachmann, Director, UF Paris Research Center
 - Individual course meetings
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- 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM Paris Story (45 minute film on Paris)
- 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM Jazz Age Montmartre
- Reading: *Harlem in Montmartre*
- Clubs of Jazz Age (Bricktop's, Cotton Club, OR Le Grand Duc)
 - Harry's Restaurant
 - The Grand Hotel (Pan-African Congress)
 - Lecture: Ricki Stevenson, founder, *Black Paris Tours*

Tuesday, March 13

Arrondissement #6 - Writer Café Walk & Présence Africaine

- 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Présence Africaine Bookstore, 25bis rue des Ecoles, 5th
- 2:30 PM - 5:30 PM Paris Research Center
Lecture, Daniel Maximin

Wednesday, March 14

The Fifth Arrondissement – La Sorbonne

- 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM L'Université de Paris – La Sorbonne
Maison de la Recherche, 28 rue Serpente, 6th, M: Odéon
Lecture, Marie-Madeleine Martinet, Liliane Gallet-Blanchard
Visit the Amphithéâtre Richelieu
- 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM Lunch at the Sorbonne
- 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM Lecture, Blacks at the Sorbonne from 1900s to 1990s
- 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM Walking Tour
- Anna Cooper's flat (and Hemingway's, 74 rue Cardinal Lemoine, 5th)
- FNAC, 136 rue de Rennes, 6th
- Village Voice, 6 rue Princesse, 6th
- Images d'Ailleurs Movie theater, 21 rue Clef, 5th
- 7:45 PM – 10:00 PM Louvre
Henry Ossawa Tanner: 'Black Art' at the Louvre

Thursday, March 15

Eighth and Seventeenth Arrondissements - Arc de Triomphe & Josephine Baker

- 10:00 AM-12:00 PM Reading: Josephine Baker Story; the Arc and Black visitations
- Josephine Baker Theaters
Théâtre des Champs Elysées, 15 ave Montaigne, 8th
- Arc de Triomphe
- 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM: Paris Research Center
Lecture, Jake Lamar
- 11:00 PM Jazz Club, *Caveau des Oubliettes*

Friday, March 16

First Arrondissement - Jefferson's Flat & Louvre

- 11:00 PM – 12:00 PM Summation: Political, academic, and cultural lens of Blacks in Paris
- Site of Sally Hemmings & Thomas Jefferson's flat, 92 ave des Champs-
 Elysées, site of the former Hôtel Langeac
- 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM Paris Research Center
 Lecture, Bob Swaim
- 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM Farewell group dinner; Hayne's Soul Food and Live Music,
 3 rue Clauzel, 9th, M: St. Georges.