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French and Italian

Piedmont Project

My participation in the Piedmont Project originated from my interest in the Contemporary. The interest in environment and the worry to protect it is a very contemporary project (different reasons, among them the fact that today we know better the state of the world). I teach Contemporary French culture, literature and cinema. Each semester I choose a theme of study and research. (Some of the themes were National Identity, Education, Wars in France, Migrations...) More often than not the anxiety about the state of the planet appeared in the discussions with students and it seemed to me that I had to propose a theme that would include this anxiety but I didn't know how. I was not knowledgeable and I didn't feel prepared to tackle the subject.

I thought that The Piedmont Project with its two-fold program, theory and practice, could be the necessary prompt to a class addressing sustainability. It was particularly important to me to know which kind of issues my colleagues from different disciplines were concerned with and how everyone and all of us, as a group, could answer them.

It was not surprising to me to see that one of the main conundrums appeared to be that the planet is common to all but that the countries and the people are not. When we speak of sustainability, we speak of the common good; however, as Howard Frumkin said during his conference, what is the common good and who decides what the common good is? The common good is of particular interest to me as a linguist as well. It is true that there is an emphasis on the negative language of the sustainability discourse (restrict, stop, prevent, in brief giving up something). But it is also true that a positive vocabulary doesn't solve the fact that the "common good" is a political notion and that political decisions are not universal.

The syllabus that I've designed for the Piedmont Project should put the students in contact with these questions. It is a class I plan to give in the Fall 2012. The course theme will be "Paris". It will be divided in four main parts of three weeks each: 1. Construction of a city 2. City and Suburb 3. Urban environment and sustainability 4. Real Paris, imaginary Paris.

La France Contemporaine [Contemporary France]

Fall 2012

Theme of the semester: Paris

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Week 1-4: Construction of a city

Geography of the city; its construction (from the center to the periphery; Haussmann, the great urbanist)

The population of the city vs the French population

Paris and history: the Algerian war

Paris, today: administrative organization, transport, lodging, Paris on internet, etc.

Reading: Georges Duby, *Histoire de la France urbaine* (Extraits)
Leïla Sebbar, *La Seine était rouge*
Alain Corbin, « Paris-Province »
Boris Razon, « La ville virtuelle »

Movie: Cedric Klapish, *Chacun cherche son chat*

Week 5-7: Suburb, the anti-Paris

Geography of the suburbs; history; population.

Specific problems: Inhuman urbanization; education of a lesser quality; unemployment of the young populations.

Readings: Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville* (Extraits)
Jean, Rolin, *Zones*
François Maspero, *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*
Loic Waquant, « Les banlieues populaires à l'heure de la marginalité avancée »

Movies: Jean-Luc Godard, *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*
Mathieu Kassovitz, *La Haine*

Week 8-10: City and sustainability

City and globalization; air, water, land: what harms Paris and what are the remedies? Sustainable daily life and tourism: bicycles, electrical car to borrow, etc.; recycling; the city web site; the limits of sustainability in Paris.

Reading: Olivier Mongin, *La condition urbaine* (Extraits)

Movies: Interview: “Do you think you respect the environment? (<http://youtu.be/IyXZINgJ8T8>)

Most documents are on youtube. For example, programs to teach sustainability to French children (youtube), projects to built “eco-quartiers” (organic neighborhoods), etc;

Week 11-13: The new Babel: real Paris, imaginary Paris

Paris seen and imagined by artists

Reading: Eric Hazan, *L'invention de Paris*

Gilles Tévéssin, *Un taxi nommé Nadir* (graphic book)

Gilles Heuré, « Paris ma muse »

Week 14 Conclusions

NOTES TO THE PIEDMONT PROJECT COMMITTEE

- My syllabus is typically in French. I wrote the main lines in French but most sources are in French.
- The syllabi in 313 are flexible and are adapted to the students' interests and level of French.
- The city might be changed (Marseille could be a riche example too), or the course might be on Cities with a case study.
- I place all the articles on Blackboard and the books and movies in reserve.