

FR245-15 In the Family Way: Birth Sex & Death in French 17thc Culture & Text

26/27

Department

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Cathy Hampton

Credit value

15

Module duration

11 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

In my research on interpersonal relations and social codes in the early modern period, the challenge and the excitement has been to 'get inside' another culture and to analyse how it wrestles with these universal human experiences. What images, symbols and metaphors are used? How do ideas about gender and social status inform perceptions of family roles and duties? How were children viewed in early modern France?

From our 21st-century perspectives, we bring a number of our own questions, critical approaches and pre-suppositions to the table: ideas about human psychology, medicine, gender, inherited characteristics and so on. The module will examine both 17th century perceptions and our own, including

seventeenth-century theories and fantasies about the relationship of the human person to his / her environment, and about the role of blood ties.

reflections on the human life cycle and family life:

medical questions (childbirth, the issue of abortion);

anxieties over power at the level of family and state (sibling and generational rivalry, the role of gender);

fantasies of the journey from innocence to sexual maturity (fairy tales and the unconscious).

Module aims

- To explore a range of texts that reveal how the social elites of seventeenth-century France articulated moral, ethical, social and political concerns emerging from their conceptions, real and symbolic, of how the human life cycle operated
- To explore medical questions (childbirth, the issue of abortion); anxieties over power at the level of family and state (sibling and generational rivalry, the role of gender); and fantasies of the journey from innocence to sexual maturity (fairy tales and the unconscious).
- It avails itself of texts that draw on personal experience and make some claim to realism (the letter and the récit) as well as those that are more self-consciously literary and imaginative.
- To represent a development of analytical techniques acquired in the first year. Appropriately greater emphasis will also be placed upon the simulation of secondary critical material and on the correct employment of this in essay writing and seminar discussion

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Weeks 1 – 3: Ethics of birth and death: the midwife's tale Louise Bourgeois: *Récit véritable de la naissance de messeigneurs et dames les enfans de France*, and *Instructions à ma fille*. Extracts that give account of royal births, and of the challenges – social, moral, medical and professional – that beset midwifery practice and its radical documentation in print. Weeks 4 – 5: Questions of authority and its origins: blood ties and birth rights Pierre Corneille, *Rodogune* Weeks 7 – 9: Are there any happy endings? From childish fantasy to adult anxiety Charles Perrault, *Histoires ou contes du tems passé*; Madame D'Aulnoy, *Contes de fées*. A selection. Week 10-: Stepping out of shadows: feminism and the mother-daughter bond Sévigné, Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, *Mme de, lettres*. A selection.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Use knowledge acquired in lectures, seminars and from prescribed reading as basis for individual research [cognitive skills]
- Demonstrate relevant factual knowledge about the authors, texts, contexts and issues under discussion
- Demonstrate understanding of the texts at a thematic as well as linguistic and stylistic level. [subject knowledge]
- Develop linguistic grasp of the target language French, especially vocabulary and notion of style [professional skills]
- Critically analyse the texts and engage where appropriate with scholarly debates surrounding the texts [cognitive skills]
- Evaluate the literary devices proper to each genre of text under discussion [subject specific skills]

- Distinguish between different textual genres and the nature of the socio-cultural information that may be yielded from these [subject specific skills]

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

International

All modules delivered in SMLC are necessarily international. Students engage with themes and ideas from a culture other than that of the UK and employ their linguistic skills in the analysis of primary materials from a non-Anglophone context. Students will also be encouraged to draw on the experiences of visiting exchange students in the classroom and will frequently engage with theoretical and critical frameworks from across the world.

Subject specific skills

This module will develop students' linguistic skills through engaging with primary materials in the target language. It will build students' capacity to engage with aspects of French culture through analysis of this primary material and through seminar discussion aimed at deeper critical thinking. In particular, students' awareness of birth, sex & death in French 17thc culture & text will be enhanced through lectures and seminars which engage in scholarship in the field.

Transferable skills

All SMLC culture modules demand critical and analytical engagement with artefacts from target-language cultures. In the course of independent study, class work and assessment students will develop the following skills: written and oral communication, creative and critical thinking, problem solving and analysis, time management and organisation, independent research in both English and their target language(s), intercultural understanding and the ability to mediate between languages and cultures, ICT literacy in both English and the target language(s), personal responsibility and the exercise of initiative.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	11 sessions of 1 hour (7%)
Seminars	11 sessions of 1 hour (7%)
Private study	128 hours (85%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

This module will require regular and consistent independent study, in the form of reading of primary and secondary sources. You will spend approx. 5 - 7 hours a week on the module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Assessed Essay	50%		Yes (extension)
Discursive essay: title can be devised by students in discussion with module tutor, or chosen from a list of titles.			

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component			
Student Devised Assessment	50%		Yes (extension)
Students will have the opportunity to choose from a range of possible tasks, each of which links a primary text with a modern context, or to devise a similar task in consultation with the module tutor. Some examples might include: writing a preface for an edition of a text; writing imagined correspondence to an author; looking at how 21st century models of caregiving compare with those expressed in our texts. The task will also involve an element of reflection.			

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Feedback will be provided in the course of the module in a number of ways. Feedback should be understood to be both formal and informal and is not restricted to feedback on formal written work. Oral feedback will be provided by the module tutor in the course of seminar discussion. This may include feedback on points raised in small group work or in the course of individual presentations or larger group discussion.

Written feedback will be provided on formal assessment using the standard SMLC Assessed Work feedback form appropriate to the assessment. Feedback is intended to enable continuous improvement throughout the module and written feedback is generally the final stage of this feedback process. Feedback will always demonstrate areas of success and areas for future development, which can be applied to future assessment. Feedback will be both discipline-specific and focussed on key transferrable skills, enabling students to apply this feedback to their future professional lives. Feedback will be fair and reasonable and will be linked to the SMLC marking scheme appropriate to the module.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of ULAA-MR00 Undergraduate Law with French

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UPOA-M163 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and French