Toward a Cultural Curriculum for Graduate Studies: The Case of French

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MY TASK in this paper is to present French culture studies as an example of possible directions in graduate culture studies. The model I refer to is based largely on the culture and civilization graduate concentration at Penn State (evolved alongside two other concentrations—literature and language—over the past fifteen years). Beyond this, however, I write in my own voice, although to some extent as a continuation of various ongoing dialogues.

A Comparison: Cultural Studies and French

Culture Studies

Intellectually, the cultural turn in French studies has not evolved primarily from English-language versions of cultural studies (with their origin and theoretical base in the Birmingham school and subsequent avatars in the United States and Australia) or from German critical theory (the Frankfurt school, currently represented by Jürgen Habermas). Rather, it is a development substantially autochthonous to the field of French studies—an outgrowth of twentieth-century French thought (history, sociology, anthropology, semiotics, philosophy). Institutionally, its legitimation within French studies in the United States has been both spurred and checked by the boom and perceived profile of cultural studies within the American academy. Recognizing its relative autonomy—as well as its contributions to and dialogue with cultural studies globally—should diminish a certain “anxiety of influence,” while grounding it more firmly in language study.

Hence my suggestion that we name this turn “French ‘culture studies’” (the slight marker signaling both belonging and difference) or “studies in French culture and civilization.” The comparison with other cultural studies traditions I develop below also serves as a springboard for the discussion of curricular issues in the last section of this article.

Expanding on the comparison I had drawn in a 1996 Transcultural article (“Culture Studies”; see 27–32) with the version of Anglo-Saxon cultural studies presented in the introduction to a 1992 volume, Cultural Studies (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler), I now bring into discussion two other publications that have since appeared in Great Britain and Australia respectively: The Cultural Studies Reader (During), and Cultural Studies and Critical Theory (Fuery and Mansfield).

Here is an abbreviated definition of the field according to the introduction to Cultural Studies: “[C]ultural studies is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad, anthropological and a more narrowly humanistic conception of culture. Unlike traditional anthropology, however, it has grown out of analyses of modern industrial societies.” This definition is in contrast to “[a]cademic disciplines [that] often decontextualize both their methods and their objects of study” (14). Methodologically, cultural studies draws broadly “from many of the major bodies of theory of the last several decades, from Marxism and feminism to psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and postmodernism” (2).

A striking difference between the Cultural Studies volume and the later two is the substantial place the two give French theory (practically absent from the first, but absolutely central in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory), as well as the presence of German critical theory (in The Cultural Studies Reader). In their inclusion of Continental theory they echo an earlier landmark British article, by Richard Johnson, “What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?”

In the introduction to The Cultural Studies Reader regarding the specificity and influence of French theory During writes, “The French model breaks from earlier
forms of cultural studies. To begin with, it downgrades the way in which economic scarcities operate systematically across many fields. Because it conceives of social fields as ‘partially autonomous,’ [in] the French model [...] there is a drift to affirm both culture’s utopian force and those forms of resistance [...] possible only in the cracks and gaps of the larger, apparently impregnable, system. After cultural studies came to accept, in the late 1970s to the early 1980s, under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan, this kind of “relatively depoliticized analyses,” “it orientated itself towards [...] the ‘culture of difference’ and became a genuinely global movement” (11).


The presentation of the first issue of *Cultural Studies* reads, in part, “Cultural Studies is a new international journal, dedicated to the notion that the study of cultural processes, and especially of popular culture, is important, complex, and both theoretically and politically rewarding. [...] Cultural Studies will seek to develop and transform those perspectives which have traditionally informed the field [...] Theories of discourse, of power, of pleasure and of the institutionalization of meaning are crucial to its enterprise; so too are those which stress the ethnography of culture” (Editorial [Cultural Studies]). The January 1998 editorial statement reads, “We expect to publish work that is politically and strategically driven, empirically grounded, theoretically sophisticated, contextually defined and reflexive about its status, however critical, within the range of cultural studies” (Grossberg and Pollock).

By contrast, the editorial statement of the first issue of *French Cultural Studies* defines as follows the journal’s threefold theoretical orientation: “[C]ultural studies [...] springs [...] from convergences between literary, historical, and sociological enquiry. [...] Though its focus [...] has been] the English-speaking world,” it will now include France’s production, “since the Second World War [...] of work on critical and social theory” and the “particular impetus [...] given to French cultural studies by a group of young French historians, of whom the best known is Pascal Ory” (Kelly 1-2; see Ory).

The *French Cultural Studies* team has also produced an excellent collection of essays entitled *French Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Forbes and Kelly), followed, from England again, by *Contemporary French Cultural Studies* (Kidd and Reynolds). Forbes and Kelly define cultural analysis as that which “brings out [the] function [of cultural objects] as signifying practices,” historically: “cultural studies is not just the study of the constructed rather than the given world, but also of the ways in which, over time, cultural objects and the relations between them have come to seem significant, and how they become ideologically eloquent” (Forbes 295). *Contemporary French Cultural Studies* devotes an entire chapter to “the French contribution to contemporary cultural analysis,” which traces the reorientation of French culture, from the 1950s onward, away from an exclusive focus on works of great art and literature toward an understanding of everyday life and mass culture (289, 297).

While *French Cultural Studies: An Introduction* starts with the crucial date of 1870 (the Franco-Prussian war, the Commune, and the founding of the Third Republic), *Contemporary French Cultural Studies* focuses on the hexagon at the end of the twentieth century; but both stress explicitly the importance of the historical past in the construction and understanding of the present. Both as well include, in different proportions, popular and elite culture (while minimizing the divide), together with a variety of cultural technologies. Forbes and Kelly, “cultural studies [...] will explore [...] and elucidate [...] aesthetic, social, and ethical concerns” (Forbes 295).

Finally, in the United States, a special 1997 issue of *Contemporary French Civilization*, entitled *Cultural Studies, Culture Wars* (Fourny and Schehr), addresses the field’s underlying pedagogical, theoretical, and institutional assumptions and contradictions. It is in a sense complemented by a collection of object-specific analyses that double as position papers, *French Cultural Studies: Criticism at the Crossroads* (Le Hir and Strand).

What can be learned from this rapid survey? Overall, French culture studies on the other side of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans seems more open to the inclusion of learned culture and historical perspective than does American cultural studies globally. It also defines itself as an academic discipline, thus less politically militant: if the journal “Cultural Studies is about theorizing politics and politicizing theory” (Grossberg and Pollock), *French Cultural Studies* is about filling a perceived professional need for “a forum and a resource in several important and rapidly developing areas of French studies” (Kelly 3). Among collections and journals specializing in French culture studies, those based overseas, unlike their American counterparts, entertain an identifiable (if tacit) relation with cultural studies’ theoretical traditions. They also focus on the modern and progressist aspects of twentieth-century France—stressing not only the challenges brought historically by “processes of modernization” to “the conception of national culture elaborated after 1870” (Forbes 291) but also the country’s current dynamic modernity, including the constructive ways in which cultures (plural) mesh in today’s France (Kidd and Reynolds 3, 5).
Implications for Curricular Considerations

Just like these publications, a graduate curriculum in French culture studies, while presenting affinities with established models of cultural studies, will differ from them in several important ways.

One way it will differ pertains to the question of national, cultural, or linguistic specificity ("French-speaking" in the case at hand) not only of the object of study, but also of theoretical framework. From a curricular point of view, while Theodor Adorno, Mikhail Bakhtin, bell hooks, Clifford Geertz, Habermas, or Raymond Williams (to name but a few) are central to the elucidation of certain topics in French or any other culture studies area, theories and analyses produced in the target language and culture present pedagogical advantages, not only for the opportunity to use the language but also for what they teach about that culture and its history, as well as about the history of theory as a component of the history of ideas. Roland Barthes’ Mythologies, for instance, while offering an exemplary approach to practitioners of culture studies everywhere, is firmly grounded in the late 1950s French culture and theory. Journals examined in context or comparatively can yield a wealth of information—for example, Philippe Sollers’s Tel Quel versus Jean-Paul Sartre’s Les temps modernes. Similarly, Michel de Certeau’s writings on immigration, May 1968, daily life, or the city. The prominence of self-reflexivity of French historiography in this century, as well as the importance of history in French culture traditionally and the learning opportunities that history affords, considerable pedagogical use can be made of, for instance, selections from Pierre Nora’s three-volume Lieux de mémoire, for approaching questions of nationhood, identity, and memory.

This is not to detract from the value of comparative culture studies (French and American for instance; see Mathy; Fassin; Caroll; see also Chambers) or from the importance of tuning in to cross-cultural debates (on modernity and postmodernity for example; see Critiqué in the 1980s and beyond [Lytard; Habermas; Rorty]). Moreover, German critical theory perspectives can be at least as pertinent for work in French culture as those of Anglo-Saxon cultural studies, given a shared reference to European intellectual and political history, particularly the Enlightenment, the 1930s, and World War II and its aftermath, as well as the importance of topics such as modernity and modernism, mass and high culture, public and private spheres.

The second way a graduate curriculum in French studies will differ from established models involves the question of appropriate breadth and focus. If cultural studies (according to the Cultural Studies introduction) functions exclusively within the framework of “modernity” (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 15) or the “modern society” (5) understood as the twentieth-century’s or today’s society, and as such it has become much invested in mass communication and media studies (5, 9), the discipline of French studies, having evolved out of traditional humanistic inquiry, holds on to a vast educational mandate in terms of historical scope and to a grounding in texts (verbal, visual, or cultural). French culture and civilization studies share this orientation. Thus history is of paramount importance, an expanded notion of textual analysis is central, and media and mass culture can claim only a parcel of the terrain.

While historical breadth is the most distinctive feature of a curriculum in French culture and civilization as compared with Anglo-Saxon cultural studies, the focus on text can be a matter of some contention. The introduction to Cultural Studies considers close analysis of cultural texts a possibility but not a must. Johnson’s article accords this type of analysis much more attention and weight. So does The Cultural Studies Reader. It would be expected that a field traditionally grounded in language and literature, such as French studies, would emphasize this orientation, even as it diversifies its range of texts or objects of study. But I argue that when the model of analysis and the questions asked are derived from history or the social sciences (because of the nature of the object or the researcher’s interests), the focus of the approach may legitimately shift to thematic, contextual, historical, or quantitative methods of analysis, unless one operates within these disciplines’ own “linguistic turn” (see de Baeue; Milo; White). So, while attention to the formal dimension of cultural objects and practices enriches their analysis considerably, it should not be a requirement for every type of inquiry.

Pedagogically, both close-reading methods and historical perspective can help keep in check the subjectivity inherent in any descriptive, interpretative, and evaluative task. An analysis informed by both these perspectives will yield the most complex insights, as exemplified by the collection Identity Papers (Ungar and Conley) and affirmed as a programmatic exigency for the future of French cultural studies by French Cultural Studies: An Introduction (Forbes and Kelly)—both of which claim a methodological grounding in French traditions. That said, the realities of the profession may not allow for this kind of complexity at all stages. Consequently, while a sound curriculum should sensitize students to these techniques and professional standards, discrete studies or dissertations conducted under the time pressures of today may consciously have to bracket one of these perspectives.

The third difference concerns the question of the political role of the field. Surely, any pedagogy and intellectual activity is political, especially when questions of society, culture, and politics are at its core and are circulating in the classroom. The content of French culture studies, like that of cultural studies, is in part concerned with power relations, a “sense of the margins versus the center” (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler, Introduction 12), processes of legitimation and inclusion or exclusion.
But it does not, as an academic field, make it a primary aim to be an agent of “intervention” or have an “impact on public policy” (5, 6). In any case, it would be unclear whose policy we would aim to influence: that of the target culture or that of the culture we function in. And yet, academic discourse has had political impact even across the Atlantic in both directions, on such questions as gender and sexual parity, the heritage of colonialism and World War II, policies deriving from notions of universalism versus multiculturalism, problems of urban planning and design (see Mathy, Extrême Occident, French Resistance; Fassin; Yaari, “Identitaire”). But I see this more as a diffuse result of the permeability of fields and public discourses than as a direct result of an academic discipline’s political agenda.

The fourth difference involves objects and methods and leads into taxonomic issues. In literary studies, the objects examined belong to the category of representations or symbolic expression. What, then, are we examining when we study culture, which also belongs to the symbolic realm? Cultural forms; content; the way either or both is produced, communicated, and received? What does “examining” mean? There is a substantial difference between understanding the theories, methods, and theses at work in existing analyses of objects, periods, or problems (needed to acquire competency in the field) versus (as a next step) knowing how to isolate or constitute an object of study and select pertinent concepts and methods derived from different disciplines in order to perform an analysis independently. In a curriculum, both these dimensions will be incorporated, but the selection of those tools necessary for the second task, which alone will turn students into independent scholars, has to be pursued in part individually.

Cultural studies comprises (according to Johnson) three dynamic models of analysis, always in flux: text-based studies (text can be a culture text); studies of lived cultures (the “whole way of life”); and production and consumption processes (53–75). The first model is analogous to that of literary studies (extended to different types of texts, including popular culture). But a much broader spectrum can be achieved in French culture studies by making inroads into the second and third categories (based respectively in sociology and anthropology or ethnography and requiring fieldwork) than by staying within the confines of the first. Theoretical sources in French for these areas abound, from Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of culture, as developed throughout his work and his journal Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales (see Distinction, Les règles, “Vous avez dit!”) to journals such as Ethnologie française. These, then, would be the types of French culture studies closest to the British tradition.

But in keeping with the notion of history as a central interlocutor for French culture and civilization studies, we can turn to French cultural history in search of other orientations. I focus on this branch of history for its direct connection to our topic, its capaciousness, and its current status within historical studies: “Cultural history wins the moment the economic, social, and political importance of culture emerges everywhere,” writes de Certeau (“L’opération” 13). For Roger Chartier, cultural history is the access to the social through the cultural, namely through the pregnant concept of “representation.” As to contemporary cultural history, it is, according to Ory, the sum of collective representations manifest in sensibilities and aesthetic fields, linked to specific technologies and cultural policies, and examined through their mode of existence in society rather than their referents (Ory, multiple sources; see also Rioux and Sirinelli).

While the concept of representation (just like that of text) is familiar to literature scholars, tackling cultural systems or cultural technologies, archives either dusty or elusive, documents hard to define, and complex questions of correlation of sources may seem daunting. Yet small pieces of these systems or technologies, a yet unwritten page or chapter in their evolution, can become objects of inquiry for properly trained practitioners of culture studies (see Silverman; Bauseron; Bowles).

That said, whereas the focus of cultural studies takes us away from learned and print culture and cultural history, it neither privileges the arts nor studies them intrinsically (just like new art history; see T. J. Clark; Boime; Bryson, Holly, and Moxey, Visual Theory, Visual Culture; Bryson, Calligram, Word; Dax; Moulin; Nochlin), French culture and civilization studies have no reason to avoid high culture forms (painting, photography, public sculpture; architectural, urban, and garden design; stage design and opera; see Yaari, “Combas & Co.,” “Who/What,” “Identitaire”) while embracing popular and hybrid forms (youth music, graffiti and murals, poster art, performance art, film, documentaries, and video clips). Likewise, exhibitions, museums, cultural centers, theme parks, commemorations and parades, monuments, and funeral art can also be rich sites for the study of culture high and low, in all its interdisciplinary ramifications—esthetic, social, political, historical (see Marin, “Disneyland”; Baudrillard, Des mondes; Leruth, “Spectacle”). Nor is there any reason to ignore written cultural forms.

For the type of analysis performed on this expanded range of objects, we might borrow Mieke Bal’s acceptance of “cultural analysis”: “Cultural analysis as a critical practice is [... ] based on a keen awareness of a critic’s situatedness in [... ] the social and cultural present from which we look, and look back, at the objects that are always already of the past, objects that we can take to define as our present culture. Thus, it can be summarized by the phrase ‘cultural memory in the present’” (Bal and de Vries 1). A widely encompassing term associated with social thought and cultural studies, cultural analysis becomes in Bal’s usage a Continental avatar of cultural studies. “Cultural analysis stands for an approach [... that is] primarily...
analytical” (12), whose method “requires the integrative collaboration of linguistic and literary, of visual and philosophical, and of anthropological and social studies” (7). “Some aspect or version” (5) of “exposition, exposé, and exposure,” “because it defines cultural behavior if not ‘culture’ as such,” “is central in the issues I would like to propose as the agenda for cultural analysis ‘beyond’—after, as well as in continuation of—[...]. cultural studies as is now commonly conceived in the United States and England” (4). For Bal, the museum both literally and metaphorically becomes the “mise en abyme of culture’s present, a present that carries the past within itself” (5).

Lastly, does approaching high art as art rather than as cultural object, through aesthetics, psychoanalysis, history of ideas, and philosophy, mean staying outside of culture and civilization studies? I don’t think so. But given that institutionally this type of work has found a niche within literary studies, especially as “film” or “word and image” studies, it may be said to straddle literary and cultural studies. Comparative studies among the arts have come to be known since the mid-1980s as interarts discourse (see Yaari, “Ironies,” “Ironic Architecture,” “Who/What”). But interarts discourse, just like art history, has gradually moved closer to cultural studies, cultural history, or cultural analysis and in so doing has expanded in many intriguing ways (see Bryson; Hutcheon; Mitchell; also Yaari, “Culture Studies” 22–23, 38).32 Looking at Kristeva’s, Lyotard’s, or Derrida’s work on art and architecture or at Pierre Boulez’s theory and practice of modernity through the intersection of music and technology might yield new directions of research.

As a twentieth-century scholar, it is obviously easier for me to imagine developments in contemporary culture studies than in earlier periods. But a wealth of documents (and monuments) are accessible—if less readily perhaps—for those periods as well, and the advantage of working with the past may simply be that the object of study does not shift before our eyes at a dizzying speed.

To sum up, we have arrived at a typology for the kinds of studies subsumed under the proposed rubric of French culture studies. These categories are cultural studies; cultural history, including of the contemporary period; cultural analysis, including interarts discourse. The disciplines informing them are anthropology and sociology, history and the history of ideas, theory and critical theory, semiotics and analysis of discourse. Intersections among them are possible, and I will zero in briefly, further below, on one important convergence—the history of the present and cultural studies. However tentative, I hope this typology can serve as a tool to think things through.

A Curriculum

Let us now turn to a discussion of a graduate curriculum. I begin with a clarification of three key terms.

Key Terms

Culture/Civilization

There may be arguments for preferring the term “culture” to “civilization” in naming a program and its subject matter in the United States, given the widespread awareness that “civilization” has been tainted by the colonial and imperialist ideology of France’s mission civilisatrice from the 1880s through the 1960s, while “culture,” in its anthropological meaning, is more capacious and connotes relativism. A second reason may be derived from the French context itself, given that the term histoire culturelle, borrowed from the German, has gained ground in France and may overshadow the connotations of the word “civilisations” (plural) used in the Annales journal’s subtitle: Economies, sociétés, civilisations. However, in a broad European context from the interwar period onward, the term “culture” has itself been tainted, through appropriations by totalitarian regimes and political parties of the extreme Left and Right alike (Communism and Nazism; Stalin, Hitler, and Pétain). At any rate, these terms need to be foregrounded in the curriculum, with due attention to their repeatedly interchanged connotations throughout history in various national and political contexts, France’s included. To that end, we may turn to Philippe Bénétton’s Histoire de mots: Culture et civilisation.33

As to current French usage, Bénétton suggests that it may be “civilization” and not “culture” that connotes greater cultural relativism (145–46). Moreover, programs equivalent to ours in France about the United States or other foreign cultures use the designation “civilization” (“civilisation américaine,” for example).34 So perhaps in naming a French program of culture studies “culture/civilization,” the flicker of that slash may constitute the best index of these issues’ complexities.

Culture Text

The notion of culture text within a broad semiotics of culture represents an expansion of the linguistic model to all the signifying systems and practices that constitute culture.35 Concrete culture texts, defined by syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic elements and interpreted contextually, can be simple or hybrid (see Winner 52–56), the hybrid texts containing elements from various types of media, as is the case with exhibitions, urban complexes, parades, or daily practices. The question analysts ask of texts is how they signify within their context or audience. Examples of analyses of culture texts, weaving textual and contextual readings, range from Barthes’s mythologies (his “Guide bleu” for instance), whose pedagogical value for the novice is unequalled, to Louis Marin’s interpretations of seventeenth-century paintings (“La peinture,” “Towards a Theory”) or de Certeau’s urban trajectories (“Pratiques,” “Les revenants”).36
The objects of study in cultural history are there to answer questions that will lead to the elucidation of a problem or the understanding of a phenomenon, an event, or a transformation. But it is the cultural historian who constitutes the object, from various documents. Since anything can be considered a document (as the historians of the Annales school and Michel Foucault have shown),\textsuperscript{33} selecting the appropriate documents leading to the construction of a pertinent object of study (according to criteria of validity and availability) is the first part of the researcher’s task. The second is that of identifying the most relevant aspects to be analyzed in order to arrive at an interpretation, a task that may require perspectives from several disciplines.

A Foundation: Theory and History

**Breadth**

My view and that which underlies Penn State’s current program is that both historical and theoretical-methodological coverage should be ensured. In our program, this foundation consists of one theoretical course, Approaches to French Civilization (in which history and its making is a constant reference), and three period courses in cultural analysis and history (themselves quite theoretical), covering the Middle Ages and the ancien régime; the French Revolution and the nineteenth century up to the birth of the Third Republic; and contemporary France from the Third Republic to the present. This could constitute an MA curriculum (although it is not precisely that at Penn State).\textsuperscript{31}

The modular Approaches course contains sections on the semiotics of culture (from Barthes to Jean Baudrillard and Régis Debray), the sociology of culture (from Bourdieu to Pierre Daix and Raymonde Moulin), and historiography (from *nouvelle histoire* to *histoire du présent*), with reference to a range of key concepts (civilization/culture, nation/region, identity; history/memory; popular culture), rotating topics (such as pedagogy of culture), objects (art, architecture, daily life, film, literature, media), and course non-French perspectives.\textsuperscript{34}

The historical sequence addresses the development of socioeconomic and political structures; political events in European and international contexts; popular and learned art forms; religious, philosophical, and social thought; and concepts such as tradition, modernity, and modernity’s critique; the center and the margins; private and public spheres—treated in part through documents (Froissart’s fourteenth-century *Chroniques*, women’s 1789 *Cahiers des doléances*, utopian architecture, political speeches) or representations and their analyses (Foucault, Marín, Jean-Marie Apostolidès; film, public spectacle, advertisement).

**Depth and Interdisciplinarity**

Depth, which alone can lead to further specialization, is provided according to the competencies available in the home department, acquired through new hires or offered by other departments, in accordance with what one hopes is a consensual view of the field—sometimes hard to achieve. Divergent views can exist between supporters of the humanities and those of social sciences; theorists, empiricists, and advocates (like me) of a constant weaving of theory with concrete givens; different acceptations and versions of theory and history; advocates of learned versus popular culture (while historians, semioticians, and cultural critics alike have shown the interdependency of the two); and, finally, regarding the feasibility of field work, archival work, or interdisciplinary research when financial resources are scarce.

At Penn State so far (where a slight reconfiguration of the program is currently being considered), in the program’s first fifteen years the orientation of the core faculty in culture studies can be summarized as representing cultural anthropology, cultural history, interarts discourse, and francophone culture. Students receive training in all four areas, as reflected in PhD examination rubrics: Approaches, Sociopolitical History, Intellectual and Artistic Currents, Regions/ Francophone Culture. Regular graduate course offerings, beyond the basic four mentioned earlier (Approaches and three period courses), include Folklore and Popular Culture, French Regions, Francophone Culture, History of the Book, Belle Epoque, Interarts Discourse, Modern/Postmodern.\textsuperscript{35} Special topic seminars offered over the years have included The French Revolution, Food and Cuisine, Irony and the Modern. Certain courses offered under “Lit,” given their cultural content or theoretical slant, are counted as electives in “Civ”: The Baroque, Paris in the Middle Ages. Currently in preparation or being considered by an expanded faculty are Film Culture, What Is Enlightenment?, The Intercar Period. These courses, together with training outside the department and a judicious choice of electives in accordance with the students’ research interests (or weaknesses needing to be corrected), typically constitute the PhD curriculum in culture/civilization.

To pursue their individual research interests, students turn to the departments of history, sociology, and philosophy or the schools of communication and art and architecture. As a result, directing a dissertation sometimes becomes a task akin to that of an orchestra conductor and a prodding critic.\textsuperscript{36} But I for one have welcomed the opportunity of “producing” (to use a much abused metaphor) scholars with an orientation essentially different from my own.

What constitutes a legitimate interdisciplinary topic and methodology needs further elaboration. Tentatively, I would suggest:

Effecting a convergence of two (or more) fields or objects to shed light on a problem or on a hybrid text, or ap-
plying the approaches and methods of one field to elucidate a problem or analyze an object in another field. Establishing criteria and reasons for this convergence—formal, historical, ideological, and field-specific—For any formal analysis, drawing on the specificity of the medium and its history. For a focalization on conditions of production, reproduction, or reception and on the sociopolitical situation at any given moment, taking into account a diachronic perspective.

Theoretical arguments in favor of interdisciplinary curricula and scholarship can be found in the American and European academies among proponents of cultural studies, comparatists, cultural historians, scholars of new art history and visual culture. But it is de Certeau who applied his “disconcerting pluridisciplinarity” (Antoine Spire, qtd. in Cressard) (psychology, theology, history, anthropology, sociology, linguistics) to an expanded set of contemporary issues (practices of everyday life, the question of otherness, urban uprising), “uncovering the ways in which [. . .] disciplinary enterprises rely upon models and paradigms borrowed from each other” (Godzich x).37

**History Theorized**

In keeping with the above assertion that a knowledge of history is essential, this discipline’s own evolution in France during the last hundred years (emblematic for the history of ideas) provides us with key concepts for cultural analysis as well as examples of interdisciplinary practices. Through history’s own self-searching epistemological questioning, we can also follow the mutual enhancement that has taken place between it and the social sciences, as well as its (often conflictual, sometimes dialogical) relation with poststructuralist theory.

The Annales school, founded in 1929 (a few years after the beginnings, in Germany, of the Frankfurt school, home of critical theory),38 was institutionalized after World War II through the creation of the VIIth Section (economic and social)39 of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and sowed robust seeds in Europe and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (precisely at the time when the Birmingham school of cultural studies was taking shape in England).40 The first comprehensive surveys of this “histoire nouvelle” (see Le Goff, Histoire de la civilisation française [Duby and Mandrou]) and panoramic statements (Faire de l’histoire [Le Goff and Nora]; La nouvelle histoire [Le Goff, Chartier, and Revel]; Histoire du féminisme français [Alliboust and Armogathe]) reflected its interdisciplinary approaches (resulting in such subfields as social history and historical anthropology); new concepts (mentalités and longue durée [see Ariès, Vovelle] replacing event); nonhierarchal range of objects (death, food, sexuality, folk tales, fêtes); new topics (women, sociability; see Duby and Perrot; Agulhon, Le cercle); and penchant for the Middle Ages with its “immobile” rural society (Le Roy Ladurie; see also Le Goff, Poser un autre; Duby, Le chevalier) though by no means exclusive (Ozouf).

From this quasi-anthropological bent, the center of interest moved in the next decade (under the joint influence of Norbert Elias and Foucault) toward the modern period—the ancien régime and the emergence of the centralized state. Histoire des mentalités evolved into histoire culturelle, as print culture (Chartier, Introduction), urban culture, and the question of power moved to center stage. New panoramas appeared in the 1980s–1990s: Histoire de la vie privée (Ariès and Duby), Histoire des femmes (Duby and Perrot), Histoire de la France urbaine (Duby). Cultural history refined and foregrounded the concept of representation, inspired in part by Foucault’s and de Certeau’s notions of discursive practices as well as by literary theory (Chartier, Introduction; Hunt), while further expanding into the nineteenth century (Agulhon, Marianne).

Finally, contemporary history (from the French Revolution onward) came to the fore, together with a renewal of political history and political thought, in turn picked up by the emerging field of the history of the present (post–World War II). These developments stemmed from the combined impact of Solchintsyn’s Guélat; the thinking through of the revolution’s heritage in the light of its bicentennial (Furet); the collapse of the communist system; the reframing of national identity questions with respect to immigration; the European Union and increased American hegemony worldwide; and a “change of paradigm” related to the “rehabilitation” of agency (Gauchet 474). In addition to the development of the history of the present, the 1990s saw a further refining of the subfields of cultural (Ory; Introduction; Rioux and Sirinelli) and political (Rémond) history, and their convergence into studies of cultural institutions and policies (Ory; Urfalino; Poirier).

This evolution is recounted, within a general history of ideas, in Gérard Noiriel’s Qu’est-ce que l’histoire contemporaine? (For an account not focused on France, see Schorske.) Two issues are particularly relevant for curricular concerns. One is the role played by the teaching of history in contemporary France and its most recent evolution, under the pressure of various critics (notably Citron et al.), toward the inclusion of previously “taboo” topics (Noiriel 218). The second is the conceptualization of historiography in the postmodern era (influenced by Barthes and Foucault): the linguistic turn and the unsettling of the notions of “truth” and “objectivity” (121–24), as well as of history’s traditional categories by “constructivist” approaches (161–62). While appreciative of these contributions, Noiriel argues that epistemologically relativistic positions are not “defendable to the end,” unless we are willing to entertain the (unthinkable) possibility of the gas chambers’ ficticiousness (124).41

We may pursue this issue further, through de Certeau. “In history, any ‘doctrine’ that represses its relation to...
society is abstract” (“L’opération” 9).42 “only that theory which articulates a practice is acceptable” (4); and any explanation of the historiographical operation through recourse to a “philosophical elsewhere [ailleurs]” is an “ideological alibi” (3). Still—“[e]nvisaged as a ‘discipline,’ historiography is a science that lacks the means of being one” (“History” 219). But for this very reason “historical discourse is the struggle of reason with time, [ . . . ] in its fundamental workings, ethical” (220).43 In short, history “is neither the legend to which popularization reduces it, nor the criteriology that would make it merely the critical analysis of its procedures. It plays between them, on the margin that separates these two reductions” (Writing 44; qtd. in Poster, “Question” 96).

As the site of an articulation between history and poststructuralism, then, de Certeau allows us to work in the gap between history and philosophy. Moreover, by moving with de Certeau away from a view of the past as “other” to his ethnographic writings (see “History” 217), Mark Poster shows him as a practitioner of “culture studies” but one who, whereas “[i]n the United States cultural studies is often regarded as in opposition to poststructuralism,” in effect “emerged from poststructuralism” (“Question” 95).44

So just as the critical element of cultural studies can be further pursued with concepts derived from critical theory, history can be approached critically through its relation with philosophy and language (see Chartier, “Philosophie”). That said, it is legitimate in my view for French culture studies specialists (especially beginners) to opt to largely bracket these issues, as envisaged by Noiriel.

The Present Theorized

In the current configuration of French culture studies, it is cultural history from the Third Republic onward and the cultural analysis of the present (the 1930s, World War II, and the post-1968 period) that seem to have dominated as topics of investigation—not only their historical pertinence but also their accessibility in terms of sources, the creation of specialized journals (Le débat65 and Vingtième siècle68 in France, French Cultural Studies, Contemporary French Civilization, and Sites in the anglophone world), and the parallel with cultural studies generally. However, this situation may be changing, moving toward a more vigorous representation of earlier periods.

To interpret this last segment of the “contemporary,” Bourdieu’s sociology of symbolic forms (with its key concepts of habitus, distinction, and field) and Baudrillard’s analysis of the “floating signifiers” characteristic of contemporary “commodity culture” (Poster, Introduction 3, 5) have long become staples of literary and cultural criticism. Increasingly recognized in contemporary French culture studies are de Certeau’s work, particularly the poiesis of everyday practices, and Debray’s young discipline of médiologie that treats (I paraphrase a ludic definition) systems of transmission (of messages) and transportation (of people).45 Since I discussed these four orientations elsewhere (“Culture Studies” 41–47), I concentrate here only on the category of temps présent.

For the histoire du temps présent (history of the present), as it has been evolving in France since the creation in 1980 of the Institut de l’Histoire du Temps Présent,46 “the present” is the period for which there still are survivors. This new split within the elastic twentieth century carries methodological and curricular implications.

Two twin concepts are key to this new category: mémoire and histoire, the barrier between them practically collapsed within the institute (Noiriel, Qu’est-ce 199–206). Chief among these are popular oral memory and life histories (Hélias), Vichy (Wachtel and Valensi; A. Wieviorka; Rouss, the Algerian war (Stora), and national memory (such as it appeared in issues surrounding the bicentennial or in Nora’s three-volume series Les lieux de mémoire). Also important are concepts derived from print and audiovisual media: histoire immédiate (Lacouture) and “event” as constituted by the media (Nora, “Le retour”), both pointing to the porous frontier between history and journalism; fact, event, and document.

The histoire du temps présent field is closely identified with the institute. Beyond the interdisciplinarity the institute supports through research topics and colloquia, it also makes the scholars’ responsibility toward the community part and parcel of its official mandate (Noiriel, Qu’est-ce 176), while contributing to current developments in histoire conceptuelle du politique and histoire politique.51 In turn, the convergence of political history with cultural history leads to making official politique culturelle (cultural policy) a new terrain of investigation.

To sum up, the history of the present seems marked by three parameters: trauma (the events it is committed to explicate in order to reduce the likelihood of their recurrence), identity issues and potentially nostalgia (given the affective loci it endeavors to grasp and preserve), and evanescence (on the one hand, its temporal framework slips away quickly; on the other, the media whittle away at its “territory”).

A Potential Convergence: History of the Present / Cultural Studies

The history of the present opens interesting perspectives for French culture studies. While questions of mem-
Eagle, identity, and community resonate with literature, philosophy, and social thought, "immediate" history connects to media studies. The degree of implication of the historian of the present in the actual social world and the integration of competent journalists and living witnesses of events (Noiriel, Qu’est-ce 26, 174) into the community of scholars recall cultural studies’ practices, as does of course the category "present" itself in the definition of the field. Finally, cultural policy is emerging as a field of research and potential influence for both historians and cultural studies practitioners (see During, Introduction 16–17). These points of contact, between the primarily cultural history of the present and cultural studies (including its German critical theory component), may prove conducive to interdisciplinary explorations and bring to the fore a wealth of new topics, thus putting a fresh spin on French culture studies (see Dunne; Dalle).53

The Present Examined

Exhaustivity being out of the question, I only suggest here several promising avenues of investigation, all somewhat interrelated; with uneven detail, however, given the unevenness of my acquaintance with each.

Popular Culture

One domain that remains underrepresented in current research is that of popular culture—encompassing such widely different objects as life histories, theme parks, music, and the popular press (see Rosello; Le Hir, “The ‘Popular’”; Mark; Provencher). Some questions that may be posed are these: To what extent or in what way do forms of popular culture mesh, in France, with forms of learned culture? How might attitudes toward the popular have evolved within the dominant culture? How has the import of various world cultures contributed to this subfield? How does rural culture still differ from urban culture, in this era of increasing homogenization?

Cultural Identity and Citizenship

Traditionally and still recently, cultural identity in the French context was being addressed in relatively clear terms of nation (and region) (see Gusdorf; Bertho-Lavenir; Beaune). More recently, the problematization of the nation-state has resulted, on the one hand, in a greater importance placed on macro-regions and the supranational in political and cultural-linguistic terms (Europe and Francophonie) and, on the other hand, on the local (anthropologically and politically) (see Morin; Mayol; Giard; Charzat). In parallel, subjectivity has come to be seen as decentered, fragmented, and hybrid, while the bankruptcy of modernity’s metanarratives (Lyotard, Le postmoderne) raises questions as to the possibility and nature of an ethic and a politics.

But from the mid-1980s onward, in the wake of a critical return of the subject (see Renaut; Ferry and Renaut; Gifford and Gratton; Gauchet) and a reframing of French Enlightenment away from its ideological perversions, the concept of nation too has returned to the fore—revised and in perpetual renegotiation. At the core of these reformulations are questions regarding immigration, multiethnic society, meaning of and accession to citizenship, difference and human rights, and solidarity within a global economy.

The subject returns, for philosopher Alain Renaut, as nonindividualistic intersubjectivity founded on autonomy and “supra-individual” normativity (66–75; see Ferry and Renaut; Yaari, “Who/What”). Kristeva (Étrangers) and Todorov (Nous) reach similar conclusions and solutions: critical humanism, individual responsibility, limits to both universalism and particularism (for ethical and contractual reasons),54 the importance of a grounding in one or two cultures.55 From a psychoanalytic perspective, Kristeva argues that by “recognizing this strangeness intrinsic to each of us, [. . .] we have a better chance of accepting others’ strangeness” and of “trying to create [. . .] more polyphonic communities” (Contre 77).56

But casting the French nation’s loss of confidence during the 1980s as a case of “depression,” dangerous because capable of triggering “maniacal reaction[s . . . such as] the Front national and fundamentalism” (Contre 68–69), Kristeva suggests reestablishing the “patient’s” self-confidence through the cultivation and transmission of national memory (Lettre 29). Self-reflectively, this is in part what Nora’s Lieux amount to (cf. Sansot).

These works belong in the context of ongoing public debate on the question of access to citizenship, spurred especially by the Commission de la Nationalité (advisory to the government).57 Broadcast on national TV (1987) and resulting in the publication of Être français aujourd’hui et demain (France, Commission),58 the commission’s work and subsequent debates accompanied a series of see-saw revisions to the code de la nationalité (1988, 1993, 1996).

Among historians, Noiriel (Le creuset), criticizing his “master’s” (Fernand Braudel’s) approach and perfunctory treatment of the immigration question in L’identité de la France, places the neglected topic of immigration at the center of historical inquiry, before moving on to the question of the right to asylum.60

Finally, given the complexity of the immigration issue, sources on the topic cover a wide spectrum of orientations and fields—literature, sociology of immigration, urban anthropology, political science, as the following authors’ list suggests: Begag, Ben Jelloun, Bourdieau, Chaouite, Le Bras, Rosanvallon, Sayad, Schnapper, Taguieff, Todl, Tribalat, Weil, M. Wieviorka, Wirhol de Wenden.61 I wonder if this topic might become, in French culture studies, the equivalent of the theme of exile in comparative literature.
The Quotidian

The quotidian is a site where the divide between popular and learned culture can collapse. Daily life is, according to Lefebvre, the "common denominator" of modern, urban, industrialized society; the realm of unspecialized, unrationaled activity, increasingly "colonized" by the constraints and persuasion exerted upon groups and individuals by the "consumer society." This echoes the position of the situationists, an international avant-garde group active from the 1950s to the 1970s, led in France by Guy Debord, who coined the term la société du spectacle to designate desirously that consumer society (see also Ball). And it constitutes the very matter of de Certeau and his team in Practice of Everyday Life (see de Certeau, "Pratiques"; Mayol; Gurd).

Lefebvre, the situationists, and de Certeau share a certain confidence in agency as capable of opening up possibilities of relative freedom, play, and resistance: Lefebvre's "micro-decisions" and "creative transgression" (Critique 126, 152); the situationists' dérives and détournements (Ball 31, 37; see also Knabb); de Certeau's "tactics," "ruses," "bricolage," and "making do" ("Faire avec"), which "confirm . . . the impossibility of the full colonization of daily life by the system" (Poster, "Question" 103). They also share an interest in the city and questions of urban design in relation to its users—see the situationists' concept of psychogeography (Debord, "Introduction"), de Certeau's "Les revenants de la ville," and Lefebvre's Le droit à la ville. The last has become a standard reference in the contemporary discourse on the city.

The City

The city can be considered either an entry point into social, political, and aesthetic issues or an object of study in its own right whose understanding invokes these issues. My work moves between these two approaches. To illustrate, I simply sketch here my work in progress.

Starting from an inquiry into the notions of modern and postmodern, as they relate to national image construction through architecture in the last three decades, I discovered French architects' refusal of architectural postmodernism as an unwelcome import from either European neighbors with a totalitarian past or the hegemonic United States—guilty, therefore, of unhealthy nostalgia or consumerist populism.

Moving on, I saw regional capitals vying to enhance their image in order to become Eurocities and internationally attractive technopoles, through a distinctive architecture conceived to enhance their real and projected identities: Lille—northern and ultramodernist, in the Paris-London-Bruxelles triangle; Montpellier—Mediterranean and postmodern, on the Barcelona-Genova arch.

The case of Paris is at once singular, emblematic of national trends, and responsible for national image construction, as the city has attempted, since the postwar era, to affirm its modernity, enhance its role as international cultural capital, become a metropolitan node for international business networks, and face the needs of its most recent influx of population, ethnically diverse and economically depressed. The result is a dazzling display of modernist buildings, an ultimately postmodern (homeopathic) view of urban design, and, in poor peripheral neighborhoods, the implementation (with mixed results) of the politique de la ville.

On Paris's northeast "red" belt, in the twentieth arrondissement, the Belleville neighborhood—drawing on its strong sense of place and historical identity—managed to save its old flavor as well as its economic and racial diversity against a seemingly inexorable process of modernization, through the sheer tenacity of its militant associations supported by its local socialist mayor. Finally the Parc de la Villette, the first and most ambitious in a series of important new urban parks, is the only presidential grand projet that successfully allies avant-garde aesthetics with an educational, cultural, and social mission. The architecture of the city, then, can be a key (among many) to France.

French culture studies emerges as a still somewhat experimental field, although it has, by now, fashioned its own tools: a growing body of theoretical reflection, journals, and other publications, proficiency guidelines, curricula and programs, and dissertations that should ensure its perpetuation because they are (at long last) more than "mi-stigious." Practical implementation problems, however, remain and need to be addressed. In addition, the profession does not always accompany the process of designing a field with rewards commensurate with the investments required, because accountable results take time. But the process is rewarding in itself, apart from its intellectual excitement, because it opens the door to those very gifted and committed scholars who, unlike some of us, would never have joined the profession if this avenue had not existed. "One does not think I would have gone on to graduate studies in French if a program like Penn State's French civilization concentration did not exist," writes Michael Lenuth, now tenured at the College of William and Mary, while reflecting on the wide interest his courses and the prospect of graduate studies in French culture/civilization generate in his own students. "One hears so much discussion about diversity—this value should be as important in the institution of the Academy as in the discourse of the Academy."

Notes

1The volume is the result of a conference at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, April 1990. Twenty-seven of the volume's forty-four contributors are from American universities.

2See During's excellent introduction to The Cultural Studies Reader for a careful description and a critical history of the field as it
evolved from the 1950s through the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s in a primarily British but also international social, political, and academic context.


1In The Cultural Studies Reader, French theory is represented through texts by Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, and Jean-François Lyotard; German Frankfurt school critical theory, through excerpts from Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno and an article on Walter Benjamin.

In Cultural Studies and Critical Theory, while French theory is represented by Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Hélène Cixous, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Foucault, René Girard, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Lyotard, and Christian Metz (see in particular Lane), Frankfurt school critical theory is not included.

3In on the one hand, the introduction to perspectives of both Anglo-Saxon and French culture studies—see, for example, the focus on Barthes, Henri Lefebvre, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Derrida, Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva.

6Until 2001, edited by Bernard Quinn; its mission, according to its editorial statement: "an interdisciplinary journal devoted to the study of French-speaking cultures throughout the world."

11This is the chapter's title. The focus is on Barthes, Henri Lefebvre, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Derrida, Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva.

12The most encompassing statement is Kritzman's. Cf. Yaari and Mark, "Questions." Le Hir, "Imagining."

13It would be quite wrong [in spite of the French perception of 'multiculturalism' as 'ghettoization'] [to see France as a country which suppresses other cultures" (Kidd and Reynolds 5). See also Corbett, Through French Windows. The drawback with these sources, however, is that they are not in the target language.

14While by "French" is normally understood the "French-speaking world," the curriculum I present here focuses on the (highly hybrid) hexagon. The vast domain of francophone studies outside of France (one of the first, most dynamic, and well-documented areas of French cultural studies) is not within my expertise.

15I use the notion of theory in the broadest sense, encompassing all relevant theoretical discourses from the human and social sciences—not only structuralism, poststructuralism, or Tel Quel, but also the theoretical discourse of historians as well as current developments in political thought and ethics.

16The cultural specificity of theory has been recognized from the perspectives of both Anglo-Saxon and French culture studies—see, on the one hand, the introduction to Cultural Studies (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 7) and my discussion of this issue ("Culture Studies" 29); on the other, Suzanne Guerlac's analysis.

14"New history seems to be an essentially French [made in France] history," writes LeGoff ("L'histoire" 52), referring to the influential current that grew out of the Annales school. (My translation; all translations from the French, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.) The British historian Peter Burke concurs: A remarkable amount of the most innovative, the most memorable and the most significant historical writing of the twentieth century has been produced in France" (1). Signaling history's status in France today is the historian Pierre Nora's recent election to the Académie Française. Burke's definition of nouvelle histoire suggests affinities with cultural studies: "encouraged innovation" (1), "problem-oriented," "analytical," "the history of the whole range of human activities," based on "a collaboration with other disciplines" (2).

15The Frankfurt school is a useful complement to the work of Bourdieu, Foucault, Lyotard, Rensaut, or Todorov. See Rasmussen.

16This is the predominant practice, even if the definition in the introduction seems to claim a more evenly distributed field of study: "[C]ultural studies is [...] committed to the study of the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices," where "culture is understood both as a way of life—encompassing ideas, attitudes, languages, practices, institutions, and structures of power—and a whole range of cultural practices: artistic forms, texts, canons, architecture, mass-produced commodities, and so forth" (5). See also Pavel.

17The single piece by a historian appearing in Cultural Studies (Steedman) raises the question of history's pertinence to cultural studies. One respondent in Cultural Studies, Meaghan Morris, wholeheartedly welcomes it as both countering the "death of history" in cultural studies and being compatible with formalist approaches (see Steedman 622). "So what has history, and especially scholarly history, to do with [cultural studies]?" asks During, in his introduction to Steedman's piece, reprinted in his volume. Guardedly—not "nothing" (Reader 47). More forcefully, McRobbie's essay on Benjamin concludes, "One of the values of his work to cultural studies today is that while Benjamin [...] rejects the notion of progress and rejects history as a straight line, he argues [...] for the place of history in the study of culture" (96).

18I share Peter Brooks's view of the "poetic" as "one of humanity's basic accommodations in the world," which can also act as a powerful agent in the public, civic realm (516, 523). And following de Certeau and Kristeva (or Breton and Lefebvre), poiesis carries over beyond the artistic to all realms.

19Brooks again, regarding the task of the literary (potentially also cultural) analyst: "The critic needs the self-imposition of the formalist askeis [...] before judging and before making a premature ideological intervention" (522). See also M. P. Clark. But consider this claim's similarities to the historian's task according to de Certeau: "The historical operation consists in carving out [â]coûper] the given according to a present law which is different from its [past] 'other,' in taking a distance with respect to a given situation, and in marking, through discourse, the effective change that has permitted this distanciation" ("L'opération" 33).

20Ungar and Conley: a convergence of textual and historical approaches meant to combine the rigor of French tradition with cultural studies' breadth and pertinence (see Conley 279–80). Forbes: "drawing on the strong traditions of language and literary studies and their methodological insights" (294).
Andrew I favor “comprehension” of culture and its representations, and guiding questions of use over “political urgency” setting the research program (349, 345).

Outside French, Habermas’s theories of communicative practice and public space would be pertinent (Moral Consciousness, Structural Transformation).

See Vera Mark’s work (“Cultural Pastiche,” “Objects,” “Regional Accents”) on questions of identity and memory in rural France (first and second types). See also John’s dissertation (first and third types). Adam Leff’s dissertation in progress uses ethnographic method to study the problematic integration of an immigrant family in a peripheral urban community.

The term “cultural analysis” had thus far been claimed for a cultural sociology derived from selected social thinkers and applied to the study of “the symbolic-expressive dimensions of social life” (see Wuthnow et al. 259); more broadly, it has designated cultural studies analyses.

In curricular terms, Penn State offerings have included seminars in interarts discourse and the baroque. Lynn Palermo’s dissertation in progress, “Modernity and Its Discontents,” compares literary, architectural, and culture of display discourses around a set of emerging themes in the 1920s–1930s.

For further detail, see Norbert Elias and Lucien Febvre for, respectively, ancien régime and eighteenth-century uses of “civilization” (singular) versus the plural (normative versus relativistic), or A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn’s survey of the evolution of the term “culture” across national contexts and disciplines. They show how “culture” has covered both accumulated knowledge and the arts (as in “culture générale” or access to culture) and ways of life (the anthropological meaning) and how it has been perverted, to serve as the vehicle of an essentialist (therefore potentially racist) view of national character and nationhood.

My thanks to Marie-Christine Koop for this reminder.

The notion is derived primarily from the theses of the Moscow-Tartu school in the 1970s.

Outside French, see Linda Hutcheon’s readings of exhibitions and operatic productions in Irony’s Edge.

See Faître de l’Histoire (Le Goff and Nora), Nouvelle histoire (Le Goff, Chartier, and Revel), as well as Foucault’s valorization of document over monument in Archaeology of Knowledge.

For a more detailed discussion of intellectual content, see Yaari, “Culture Studies” 34–51.

For an early version of this course see Yaari and Mark, especially 434–44. (We owe the idea for the course to Mark.) These perspectives and themes are of course also incorporated in our BA curriculum and in the general education course France and the Francophone World.

Toward a Cultural Curriculum for Graduate Studies: The Case of French

An example: J. Kieran Dunne’s dissertation committee included a historian and a communications specialist from the respective departments.

He preferred transversality,” writes Spire, echoing the title of the interdisciplinary journal Traverses, closely associated with de Certeau. Cf. Gérard Noiriel’s notion of interdisciplinary “hybridization,” in contra-distinction to “translation” (“Foucault”).

Actually the Institute for Social Research, under the auspices of the University of Frankfurt, founded in 1923.

Since 1975, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Notiel, Qu’est-ce 25).

25The Birmingham School for Contemporary Cultural Studies, founded in 1964, had its roots in the 1950s.

The fact that reality might only be accessible through language in no way permits us to affirm that we only need to study language” (124–25). “Suffice it to admit that categories are only agreed-upon conventions [. . .] with respect to the problems that need resolution” (164).

See also Paul Veyne’s notion of “histoire conceptialisante.”

Ungar explains, “De Certeau’s point [. . .] is not to discredit claims to understanding made in the name of historical science. Instead he wants to show the impossibility of doing away with elements of language, rhetoric, and representation integral to what he calls the fiction of science.” Working through the distinction between the necessity (and risks) of ongoing revisions to history and the specter of revisionism, Ungar shows de Certeau’s (and others’) “attempt to rethink the articulation of the writing of history and ethics” (“Against Forgetting”) 68.

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See Foster’s discussion of “critical history” through de Certeau’s Hétérologies, with respect to Foucault’s concept of the history of the present, Frankfurt school critical theory, and a post-structuralist understanding of the subject (“Question” 100–03). For Foster, that history is realized in de Certeau’s Practice of Everyday Life (101), which is in effect an ethnography. But the agency at work in these practices distinguishes de Certeau from the post-structuralists (95).

Its first, 1980 editorial heralded, “The Debate. Because in France there isn’t any” (Editorial [Le débat]).

Founded “au rendez-vous d’Orwell,” the journal stated in its 1984 “birth certificate,” “What do we want? To create a review of the contemporary” (“Déclaration” 3), largely of cultural history, but privileging the political and the ideological (4).

Whether by “contemporary” is understood the entire postrevolutionary period, the period starting in the 1880s, or the period at the turn of the century.

See Cahiers de médiologie (1996– ), whose first issues were devoted to the notions of spectacle, road, network, bicycle. See, further, Debray’s Manifestes médiologiques.

For its institutional and intellectual history, including roots in Marc Bloch’s and the Annales’ thinking, see Noiriel, Qu’est-ce 22–27.

Contributors to the fall 1998 colloquium, Les années 68, included journalists and cultural historians of the arts (such as theater and painting).

Historical research must respond to social demands” and must provide “a forum for reflection open to all those who possess a political competence, notably journalists and decision-making individuals” (Notiel, Qu’est-ce 183). Historians of the present have thus been increasingly solicited by the private and public sectors as experts and consultants.
52Historians associated with the histoire conceptuelle du politique have played an important role in the creation of the Fondation Saint-Simon, to assist politicians in their task (Noiriel, Qu’est-ce 183). These historians’ political views are sometimes expressed in their scholarly work (example: Rosanvallon on the question of citizenship and local voting rights for foreigners; see Noiriel 174).

53I thank Matthieu Dalle for working with me on this convergence.

54Considered out of bounds by Todorov are excision (427), human sacrifice (427), torture, and totalitarianism (429). For Kristeva, “The respect due to the immigrants should not erase the recognition due to the host [country]” (Lettre 31). Harlem Désir, to whom the letter is addressed, is the founder of the antiracist, multiculturalist movement SOS Racisme, today led by Fodé Sylla.

55“The mastery of at least one culture is indispensable to the blossoming of any individual; acculturation is possible, and often beneficial; deculturation is a danger” (Todorov, Nous 425). “[C]ulture is not necessarily national [. . .]; it is proper first to a region, or even to smaller geographical entities; it can also belong to one layer of the population to the exclusion of other groups of the same country; it can, finally, include a group of countries” (424–25).

56I dream of a lay public space in France which, while remaining faithful to the defense of the ‘general spirit’ dear to Montesquieu, would not erase the strangeness of each of the components of the French mosaic, but would federate them by respecting and unifying them” (Contre 78). Kristeva favors voting rights for foreigners (Lettre 32) and automatic access to citizenship (Contre 75), but not a total open-door immigration policy (Contre 57). Among France’s customs Kristeva includes “all its religious history (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim)” (Lettre 29).

57A particularly aggressive Right-wing nationalistic and racist party of the 1980s.

58Made up of scholars, individuals, and group representatives ranging across the political, social, and ethnic spectrum.

59A rich document for French culture studies as well as, generally, the Collection des rapports officiels (see France, Haut Conseil).

60I paraphrase the elusive prose of Lefebvre, who theorized the quotidian of philosophy and social sciences (195–96).

61A particularly aggressive Right-wing nationalistic and racist party of the 1980s.

62I paraphrase the elusive prose of Lefebvre, who theorized the quotidian of philosophy and social sciences (195–96).

63This consists of governmental, municipal, and associative initiatives attempting to redress the social, economic, and cultural problems of disadvantaged populations, especially the youth. See Chaline.

64The twenty Parisian arrondissements (administrative divisions) have their own municipalities, which are sometimes in opposition to the city’s mayor.

65Fourny was deploring the fact that new research was still too traditional.

66My thanks to Monique Oyallon and Adam Leff for their help with the bibliography for this section.

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Goudy (all cd 5%): Text: 9.5/11; Extracts: 8/10; Running Heads: 9 IT; Notes, Works Cited Heads: 12 BD, Text: 8/10

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Panelists will work together with the audience to try to identify literary, linguistic, and cultural items that are indispensable for graduate education in Spanish. For the roundtable on January 7, 2012, in Seattle, panelists Randolph D. Pope, Emily C. Francomano, Roberta Johnson, Sheri Spaine Long, and I each delivered a brief presentation, followed by comments and queries by other panelists. The last portion of the session was reserved for responses from audience members. The audience of about fifty ranged in experience from graduate students to department chairs and deans.