

Histories of Paris
Research paper/Field Project

- Preliminary outline and bibliography due **October 18**
- Papers (7-10pp) due **November 28**.

This should not be a paper you could have written sitting in front of the internet back in the US.
Merely copying from web sites or “popular guidebooks” is not acceptable.

Use our library and any other library you can get into. Scour the bibliographies in the books at UC for inspiration. Use the articles in the old reader as sources. Consult several books (remember not to look for “the book” that covers the whole topic, a research paper is not the same thing as a book report). Consult at least one scholarly journal and one newspaper. At least one of your sources must be in the French language (even a newspaper article is ok). Use literary sources, art history sources. Make connections between genres!

Footnotes and bibliography required.

Please, please, talk to me if you feel stuck or think you might have a topic but don’t know where to start.

In Paris, no single site or place or monument should be considered neutral or static. Embodied in iron, brick or stone, successive layers of history call out to be read by the passerby. Every corner of Paris has meanings that continue to be contested and to evolve. Your task is to bring to light one of these histories which lie just underneath the surface of Paris.

You are going to find “your place” in Paris and explain why it is so important to know about it.

A few possible topics:*

- Statues: of kings such as the one of Henry IV (on the Pont Neuf); of Joan of Arc; of Dreyfus.
- The French Revolution and its aftermath: The Picpus Cemetery and/or the Chapelle Expiatoire;
The Grand Véfour (Café de Chartres); The Statue of General Ney; Place Vendôme; Conciergerie.
- In the context of Haussmannization: The Tour Saint-Jacques; The Bon Marché; The Boulevard du Crime;
The Catacombs; The photographs of Nadar; the Church of Saint Augustin.
- The great parks of Paris. The zoo. The Chateau de Vincennes. A train station. A marketplace. A fountain.
- The Grand Mosque. L’Institut du monde arabe. The Memorial of the Shoah.
- a bookstore; a cemetery; a café. The Invalides. An arcade.
- The Elysée; the Palais de Luxembourg (senate). An embassy.
- The Vel’ d’Hiv (World War II); plaques relating to the liberation of Paris.
- The Comédie Française. The Opera Bastille. The theaters de l’Oeuvre, du Guignol...
- A street name (especially one recently changed); a bridge; a prison. A church. A school.
- A neighborhood (the Goutte d’Or, Chinatown). The street where you live.
- A structure that no longer exists anymore. (When was it demolished, How, why, who...and why do people still know it was there? What is there now?)

*Those registered for the museum class may not do a museum. Those not taking the museum class may only choose a museum not on the museum class’s syllabus. Of course, you MAY NOT pick one of the monuments we will be visiting together!

Part of your research entails spending time at your chosen site. Look up and down the street it’s on and consider the environment it relates to. Sit there and watch the people go by and gauge their reactions. Talk to the person sitting next to you. Think about what “your place in Paris” might mean to French people and others. If your object is a plaque on a building, interview the *gardien*. Take pictures. Be creative!

Some aspects to consider:

Why this thing? Why at this location? Who erected it and was the process smooth or full of conflict?
(Alternatively, how did this place come to be considered important, what does it represent?) To whom was it addressed? Has it remained untouched over time? Has the meaning/message of this Parisian site changed over time? If a statue, do you find the monument worthy of its subject? What is left unsaid?

In other words, keep asking yourself and your sources: What? Where? Who? When? How? WHY? Why this thing? Why here? Why then? Why now? Why in Paris?