Spaces of French Migration, Culture, and Politics in the 20th Century Americas

February 10-12, 2012

Sponsored By:

Georgia State University and the South Atlantic Center of the Institute of the Americas
Workshop and Collaborative Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
**SCHEDULE OF PRESENTERS**

**FRIDAY February 10, 2012, Troy Moore Library, 939 General Classroom Bldg.**

4 PM  Registration
5 PM  Inauguration of the South Atlantic Center of the Institute of the Americas
5:30 PM  Opening Keynote Speaker:
Martin Munro, Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Florida State University, “The French Atlantic and the Creoles of Trinidad.”

**SATURDAY February 11, 2012, Loudermilk Center, 40 Courtland Street N.E.**

8:30 – 10:15 AM  Session A – Politics – Charles Hankla
Aude Jehan, PhD candidate, EHESS, Paris; Visiting Scholar: Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, “Questioning the Cultural Impact on Politics and Migration in the 20th Century U.S.”
Yohann Brultey, South Atlantic Coordinator for the Institute of the Americas, University of Versailles, Visiting Scholar: Georgia State University, “Freedom Fries and Francophobia: On the Current Status of Franco-American Relationships”
Marguerite Moritz, Professor and UNESCO Chair, University of Colorado, Boulder, “French Stereotypes Meet American Politics: Bush, Kerry and the Campaign Rhetoric of 2004”

10:30 AM – 12:30 PM  Session B – Arts – Maria Gindhart
Glenn T. Eskew, Professor, Department of History, Georgia State University, “Johnny Mercer and the Postwar Migration of French Songs to America’s Hit Parade”
Stephen Fuller, Assistant Professor, Middle Georgia College, “Surrealism and the Southern Writer Eudora Welty (1909-2001)”
Michelle Bright, Graduate Student, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, “Selling Belle Reve: The Loss of Beautiful Dreams in A Streetcar Named Desire”
Holly York, Senior Lecturer, Emory University, “Truffaut, Godard and American Film: A Break in the Wave”

Lunch

1:45 – 3:45 PM  Session C – Culture – Paul Grandvohl
Paula Garrett-Rucks, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University, Department of Modern and Classical Languages, “Deconstructing U.S. Learners’ Impressions of French People and French Culture in a Post-9/11 Era”
Nayana P. Abeysinghe, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities, Tulane University, “Transcolonial Insurgencies: Migrations in ‘Maroon’ Spaces in the Creation of Caribbean Identity”

4:15 – 6 PM  Session D – Migrations – Tom McHaney

Jacques Pothier, Professor, Department of English, University of Versailles. “Maurice Edgar Coindreau: A Transcultural Agent for American Modernists”

Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, Associate Professor, Chair of the LEA Department, University of Cergy-Pontoise. “French Family and Cultural Heritage in Southern California”

Mathilde Köstler, Johannes-Gutenberg Universität, Department of English and Linguistics and American Studies, “Migrating Literature: Conte cajun by Zachary Richard (1999)”

6:30 - 7:30 PM  Institut des Amériques Reception, Rialto Mezzanine

8 PM  The Music of Johnny Mercer & Friends, Rialto Center for the Arts

SUNDAY February 12, 2012, Loudermilk Center, 40 Courtland Street N.E.

10 – 11:30 AM  Session E – Edouard Levé – Brennan Collins

Jan Steyn, Translator and Graduate Student, Emory University, Comparative Literature; “Edouard Levé 1”

Amin Erfani, Visiting Assistant Professor, Emory University; “Edouard Levé 2”

Andy Rogers, Assistant Professor of Humanities, Georgia Perimeter College, “Edouard Levé 3”

Lunch

12:30 – 1:30 PM  Final Session

Brennan Collins, Ph.D., Academic Professional, Georgia State University

Maria Gindhart, Associate Professor, Ernest G. Welsh School of Art and Design, Georgia State University

Paul Gradvohl, Professor, Department of History / Department of Central European Studies, University of Nancy, France

Charles Hankla, Associate Professor, Department of Political Sciences, Georgia State University

Tom McHaney, Kenneth M. England Professor of Southern Literature, Emeritus, Georgia State University

2 – 3 PM  Closing Keynote Speaker:

Annie Cohen-Solal, Cultural Counselor to the French Embassy in the US (1989-1992); Professeur des Universités, Université de Caen, and Visiting Scholar, Johns Hopkins University, “Marcel Duchamp, Alfred Barr, Leo Castelli and Others: The Creation of a New Ecology for the Visual Arts in the U.S.”
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Martin Munro, Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Florida State University

“The French Atlantic and the Creoles of Trinidad”

The French presence in the Americas began with Jacques Cartier’s voyage up the Saint Lawrence River in 1534 and continues to the present day. Following a “French Atlantic” model of inquiry, I propose that Frenchness be thought of not as a fixed, immobile category, but as a traveling, diasporic phenomenon that has evolved over time and deposited varying degrees of French influence throughout the Americas. This point is illustrated in the close study of the history of a particular, relatively obscure French-speaking group: the French Creole group that formed the dominant social class in the island of Trinidad in the 19th century, and which had a significant impact on elite and vernacular culture there.

Annie Cohen-Solal, Cultural Counselor to the French Embassy in the US (1989-1992); Professeur des Universités, Université de Caen, and Visiting Scholar, Johns Hopkins University

“Marcel Duchamp, Alfred Barr, Leo Castelli and Others: The Creation of a New Ecology for the Visual Arts in the U. S.”

The cultural historian Neil Harris formulated the idea that the art world functions as an allegory of social order, in which two categories of agents interact: the “manifest agents” (the artists) who produce the art and the “dynamic agents” (the patrons, trustees, museum directors and curators, gallerists, critics, professors) who lay out the conditions of production for the artists. Since the Renaissance, the art world has also been the arena of multiple transfers, so much so that one can argue that the art world of visual has become the epitome of the intercultural space. In order to chart the creation of a new ecology of the visual arts in the United States, I analyze how some elements from the French model migrated to the US throughout the 20th century, especially by focusing on essential personalities such as Marcel Duchamp, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and Leo Castelli who helped revolutionize the status of the American artist.
Nayana P. Abeysinghe, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities, Tulane University

“Transcolonial Insurgencies: Migrations in ‘Maroon’ Spaces in the Creation of Caribbean Identity”

Most scholars and thinkers of the Caribbean present the vector of identity in the region—creolization—as a phenomenon that occurred within the closed environment of the Plantation. In *Eloge de la créolité* (1989), Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant proclaim Caribbeanness to be the synthesis of the various linguistic, cultural, and racial elements that were forced into the insular space of the plantation, creating what Edouard Glissant has called a “chaos monde” of syncretic languages, cultures, and skin colors. Developing his notion of antillanité articulated in *Le Discours antillais* (1981), Glissant identifies a process of continuous creolization (créolisation continue), still occurring within the space of the plantation and island, at the heart of le vecu antillais—the languages, religious practices, and other cultural traditions that mark the manière d’être of the Caribbean—in his notion of Relation expounded in *Poétique de la Relation* (1990).

In her novel *La Migration des coeurs*, Maryse Condé presents Caribbeanness as not merely the result of mixings forced on people isolated within one plantation and one island, but rather as the consequence of transcolonial contact between the various Caribbean islands. This expansion of the process of creolization to non-plantation sites of contact makes Condé’s thinking closer to that of Antonio Benitez-Rojo, whose analysis of creolization in *The Repeating Island* presents it as a phenomenon that occurred/occurs more remarkably and more dynamically in “maroon” spaces such as contraband trade, piracy, and vodun. Reading *La Migration des coeurs* from the theoretical perspective of Benitez-Rojo, this paper will explore certain alternate sites of identity creation in the Caribbean, in which the phenomenon of creolization occurred not as an inevitable result of confinement in slavery, island, and the Plantation, but as a subversive process occurring in freedom.

Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, Associate Professor, Chair of the LEA Department, University of Cergy-Pontoise

“French Family and Cultural Heritage in Southern California”

French immigration into Southern California since the mid-nineteenth century has been remarkable to French standards and has clearly influenced (and still does) communities economically, socially, and culturally. Statistics obviously indicate that French presence in California is not as large as other European groups’ such as the English, the Germans, the Swedes, and the Swiss. Yet economic activities, names of communities, and cultural events show that early French settlement has shaped (and still does) California’s life. My current research (which is at an early stage) focuses on the larger groups of French established in Southern California, namely men and women from the Basque Country and Bearn in
the Pyrenees and from the Southern Alps and Alsace. These French groups, all originating from borderlands in France, formed communities in California (and still do) as a result of networks of migration, mutual assistance mechanisms, and intermarriages which have prevailed within and between groups. Many became American early or late in their lives, yet they maintained some of their family and cultural practices at least for the first two generations and sometimes more.

In 2009-2010, during my stay in Southern California as a Fulbright recipient, I collected a huge amount of primary sources on the French. For the purpose of this paper, I will analyze the Naturalization applications which I collected in several counties. As a test ground, I will focus on the French who settled in the Country of Bakersfield in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century and who filed for US citizenship in 1880 onward until 1970. The computerization of the information derived from the naturalization applications will allow me to analyze their marriage patterns (did they intermarry?), their family practices (did they maintain their French family practices and language?), and their networks (family and friends who vouched for them). The idea is to determine the extent of their cultural adaptation (a gradual or rapid process) and of the French heritage in California over time. In the end, the applications will allow me to answer the following questions: what economic, social, cultural, and linguistic heritage did French men and women bring with them, to what extent did this heritage prevail overtime and how did it influence Southern California and the people living there? My hypothesis is that French heritage has prevailed longer than anticipated (mainly because of the French women) and influenced California’s communities more than people think. Why do so many still today claim their French heritage?

Michelle Bright, Graduate Student, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi

“Selling Belle Reve: The Loss of Beautiful Dreams in A Streetcar Named Desire”

How does Blanche DuBois’ anxiety over her French heritage represent a broader post-World War II American anxiety over racial and sexual otherness in Tennessee Williams’ play A Streetcar Named Desire? Influences from the late 19th-century French Decadent movement can be traced through the work of early 20th-century American writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and American dramatist Tennessee Williams. Other scholarship on Williams’ French connections compares him with French dramatist and filmmaker Jean Cocteau who directed a controversial version of Streetcar in Paris in 1949 and French playwright René Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, known as one of the first playwrights to use melodrama. Williams’ idea of a plastic theater is also derived from the French Symbolists theater which emphasized more dream-like qualities to get at the heart of realism with what he called a stylized or psychological realism. Scholars have also addressed Williams’ use of ethnic characters to denote outsider status, but none have yet focused on Blanche’s French heritage as a symbol of otherness.
The loss of Belle Reve, Blanche and Stella’s Mississippi plantation home, represents white anxiety over losing the beautiful dream of a failed aristocracy in the American South. Blanche’s aristocratic ideas of heritage and race and class are challenged when her reputation as a sexual deviant (or sexual other in a society that values chaste white women) forces her to move in with her married sister in a one-bedroom apartment in the New Orleans French Quarter.

This paper will also explore how Williams juxtaposed characters with French and Polish ethnic backgrounds, to undermine the American associations of Poles as simple-minded working-class people in contrast with the accepted notion of the French as culturally superior. Ironically, despite Blanche’s feelings of superiority toward Stanley, she finds she is once again an outsider in the Vieux Carré with its multi-ethnic working-class population. I will analyze Blanche’s apprehensions in connection with the phenomenon of a post-World War II American white panic that was most often illustrated through the American South’s agrarian-based society who were constantly fighting the forces of modernity that threatened their existence.

Yohann Brultey, South Atlantic Coordinator for the Institute of the Americas, University of Versailles, Georgia State University


From March 2003 to August 2006, one could not enjoy a plate of French fries on Capitol Hill. Republican Representative Robert Ney, as head of a committee having authority over the House cafeterias, took the decision to rebrand the potato tidbits as “liberty fries” following France’s refusal to commit troops to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. For Ney, “this action [was] a small, but symbolic effort to show the strong displeasure of many on Capitol Hill with the actions of our so-called ally, France.” But Ney wasn’t the first to implement such a name-change in order to express his discontent; it had also been done a few weeks before by “a North Carolina restaurant whose owner said he got the idea from similar protest action against Germany during World War I, when sauerkraut was renamed liberty cabbage and frankfurters became hot dogs.” Suddenly, France, the historical ally and friend of the United States, became a “so-called ally,” and even an “enemy,” through the comparison to the German Empire of the 1910s.

Even though fries eventually became French again in 2006, the whole liberty fries conundrum put forward the complicated relationship uniting France and the United-States, summed up by journalist Michael Hirsh as “a couple of centuries in bed […] an off-and-on relationship that waxes and wanes depending on the crisis and the time.” France and the United States would hence be passionate lovers, truly caring about each other; but constantly bickering. The aim of this presentation is, through a reflection on the freedom fries crisis and its consequences, to explore and ask questions about the complicated relationship of France and the U.S., and what it says about these two countries we love—and about us.”
Southern songwriter Johnny Mercer crafted English lyrics for three of the most popular French songs to find play over the airwaves in the United States. The most famous, “Autumn Leaves” or “Les Feuilles Mortes,” sat for weeks in the top ten on Your Hit Parade, while the other two, “Once Upon a Summertime” or “La Valse des Lilas,” and “When the World Was Young (Ah, the Apple Trees)” or “Le Chevalier de Paris (Les Pommiers Doux),” enjoyed successful runs on the popular music charts. All three remain staples in the repertoires of jazz musicians and art song singers. As a diaspora entertainer who left his native Savannah to seek his fame and fortune in New York City, John Herndon Mercer (1909-76) joined other jazz musicians in pushing the region’s distinctive sounds to the center of American popular culture. Over the course of his career, Mercer mastered jazz interpenetrated popular song, wrote several Broadway shows, and won four Oscars for his efforts in Hollywood. Seeking inspiration in the new sounds coming out of Europe after World War II, he joined an international community of songwriters crafting transnational music that transformed several French chansons into American hit tunes.

By nature transnational, music has never known fixed boundaries, as the strains of a song or the sentiments of a lyric make borders irrelevant. This paper analyzes the histories of these three songs, following their migration out of the original French into English. The Hungarian composer Joseph Kosma wrote the music to which poetry by Jacques Prevert comprised the lyrics of the text that Mercer turned into “Autumn Leaves.” The French lyricist Angele Vannier crafted the words for the waltz tune by composer M. Philippe-Gerard for the song that became “When the World Was Young.” A French collaborator of Mercer’s named Michel Legrand composed with Eddie Barclay the music that Eddie Marnay set with words and that Mercer transformed into “Once Upon a Summertime.”

The migration of these three examples from France to America demonstrates what Homi K. Bhabha implies in The Location of Culture, that the opening up of such “third spaces” where transnational music can be created underscores the hybridity of culture. When considering “Autumn Leaves,” “When the World Was Young,” and “Once upon a Summertime,” music critic Edward Habib noted, “Mercer wrote English passports for three of the most popular French songs ever to cross the Atlantic.”
from Nazi barbarism. There, they transformed American art and energized publications like Charles Henri Ford's View, a mixed media periodical, combining avant-garde literary and graphic works. While the story of surrealism's impact on American painting is well-known, scholars have not fully examined the role it played in changing the course of American letters. My book, Eudora Welty and Surrealism (forthcoming in October 2012 from the University Press of Mississippi), addresses this theory by outlining how surrealism's visual exports shaped this Southern writer's literature, primarily as a result of her familiarity with New York's centers for the dissemination of modern art, places such as the newly founded Museum of Modern Art as well as the galleries of Julien Levy and Pierre Matisse. Closely reading Welty's fiction reveals that the substance and style of surrealism produced a consonant point of view in her literature, narratives deeply suspicious of received knowledge of all kinds, but particularly knowledge about the place accorded to women.

In the early forties, Welty received letters of solicitation and admiration from two recognized American surrealists, Ford, often described as America's first surrealist poet and founder of View, and the American surrealist artist Joseph Cornell. Such letters seem to confirm her admittance into this diverse artistic family and reflect the way ideas conceived in Paris migrated to New York and then to Jackson, Mississippi, from where Welty largely wrote.

What other writers of the Americas register the influence of this French cultural export? How indebted to surrealism are writers of the Americas who have since been defined as postmodern?

Paula Garrett-Rucks, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University, Department of Modern and Classical Languages

"Deconstructing U.S. Learners’ Impressions of French People and French Culture in a Post-9/11 Era"

Several studies have spoken to how France is viewed in the U.S. as the land of food, fashion, romance and intellectualism (Gopnik, 2000; Kinginger, 2004; Platt, 2000). However, Nadeau and Barlow (2003), authors of Sixty Million Frenchmen Can’t Be Wrong, reported a tension that exists between the American negative stereotype of French people and positive stereotype of French culture stating on their book cover, “Why we love France but not the French.” Increasing tensions between the French and Americans culminated in the immediate post-9/11 era as personified in the creation of the infamous “freedom fries.”

This paper presents findings from a recent investigation of the positive and negative stereotypes, or fixed mental images, Americans hold of the French in a post-9/11 era. The participants in this study, nine volunteer students enrolled in a beginning French course at a small Midwestern college, completed a questionnaire soliciting their positive and negative impressions of French people and French culture at the beginning and end of a 16 week-semester during which they participated in weekly online classroom discussions.
centering on French cultural practices. An analysis of the learners’ pre-and post-semester questionnaires and the transcripts of the online discussions identified the learners’ positive and negative stereotypes. Personal interviews with the participants provided further insight into the socio-cultural influences on the formation of these learners’ impressions of French people and French culture. Pedagogical practices found effective to help learners’ overcome their stereotypes of the French will be briefly discussed.

Aude Jehan, PhD candidate, EHESS, Paris; Visiting Scholar: Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University

“Questioning the Cultural Impact on Politics and Migration in the 20th Century U.S.”

The word “culture” has been vested with multiple meanings evolving with history. Since the industrial revolution, culture has been used and abused to become a major political tool: especially during the Cold War. Rather than establishing a definition of culture the objective here is to use it as an analytic concept to analyze, through both historical and political approaches, how people/communities/State mobilize it for political means. This paper aims to determine what the U.S. understood as constituting culture and the role it was given in their Foreign Policies at the 20th Century. If we are to consider, in parallel, the evolution of culture and history, we realize that the former was understood as much in terms of artistic production and external practices as it was as a set of ways of thinking, sentiments, perceptions and ways of being - all deeply internalized creators of identity. The identity issue is present at every stage of society: at the personal stage but also at the community level, raising anew not only questions regarding the role of culture but also criteria inherent to these societies’ identity and perception.

The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, brought about a radical change in the approach to culture. The concept of culture was expanded to encompass that of “identity” itself. In effect the cultural and identity questions became of crucial importance to social reflection on such important issues as migration, minorities integration, heritage and self-perception. This paper will focus on each of these issues in order to question the political effects of Culture in the 20th century.

[Louise McKinney, Assistant Professor, Georgia Perimeter College, Unable to Attend]

“Long-term Consequences of the Louisiana Constitutional Revision of 1921” – “Are French ‘Things’ and Language Becoming More of Touristic Magnets Than Actual Living, Breathing, and Shared Local Culture?”

Insofar as CODOFIL (Council for the Development of French in Louisiana) has, since 1968, “[done] any and all things necessary to accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found in Louisiana for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of the state,” I will argue that it has, indeed, successfully met the goals of its mission. Unfortunately, emissaries of commercialization, such as chambers of commerce and local and state tourism boards have reduced the effectiveness of this
much-needed organization. They have acted as forces of commercialization, resulting in a travesty of the true French culture that CODOFIL would seek to enhance. This is the case not only in traditionally Cajun areas of south Louisiana—“Acadiana”—but in relation to the hub of all Louisiana’s tourism: New Orleans. I will draw heavily on portions of my book that are devoted to this subject (particularly Chapter 9, “Cajun Country”). On the heels of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, in 2006, British publisher Signal Books and Oxford University USA co-published my elegiac cultural history, simply titled New Orleans (one in the Cities of the Imagination series).

Mathilde Köstler, Johannes-Gutenberg Universität, Department of English and Linguistics and American Studies

“Migrating Literature: Un Conte cajun by Zachary Richard (1999)”

Two characteristics determine the Cajuns’ lives today: the memory of their deportation and the self-assertion in a dominant society which is markedly different. In reconstructing their past, the Cajuns have created their own foundational myth which sets itself apart from the American foundational myth. With the expression of “migrating literature” I would like to call attention to two central aspects of this paper: the allegorical significance of the adventure story Conte cajun by Cajun singer-songwriter Zachary Richard and the work’s genesis and subsequent publication in Montréal, Canada. The illustrated tale addresses children and adults alike and can be considered as philosophical tale, a genre which originated in Voltaire’s 18th-century France. Thus, on a meta-textual level, this genre “migrated” from Europe to the North American continent.

Why was the tale, written in French in 1983, published in Montréal, Canada, and not in Louisiana? Arguably precisely because it was written in French. The tale shows reverence to the past and incorporates a panoply of historical and cross-cultural references. Through a twist of fate Telesphore, a turtle, and ‘Tit Edvard, a crawfish who has lost one of his claws during a hurricane, set out on a quest for the lost claw. On their long journey they are joined by other curious characters – four frogs, two grasshoppers, and a toad – who will join forces to find the claw. This is the first panel of a triptych – the other two tales being L’histoire de Telesphore et ‘Tit Edvard dans le grand Nord and Les aventures de Telesphore et ‘Tit Edvard au Vieux Pays. It has allegorical features referring to the Acadians’ hardships as well as to traditional values such as strong communal ties still present in today’s Cajun society. This paper explores the quest motif, which is omnipresent in the Cajuns’ history, and seeks to situate Zachary Richard’s work – which crosses boundaries in multiple ways – in the literary productions of francophone Louisiana.

[Paul B. Miller, Professor, Department of French and Italian, Vanderbilt University, Unable to Attend]

“Ideological Migrations: The Appeal of the Cuban Revolution on the Haitian Intelligentsia”

In my presentation I will discuss the migration of people and ideas between Haiti and
Cuba in the twentieth-century, and I will also include preliminary comments about 19th-century antecedents to Haitian-Cuban migration. In the wake of the Haitian Revolution, there was a veritable exodus of planters, petits blancs and their slaves across the 50-mile body of water that separates the Oriente province of Cuba and Haiti. The Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier represents this historical event in his novel *El reino de este mundo*, but also discusses the seismic cultural impact this migration had on the development of Cuban music in his less well-known *La música en Cuba*. These preliminary comments will lead me to a discussion of the reverse effect of another revolution, 150 years later: If the Haitian Revolution emitted a feared contagion of liberty to surrounding nations like Cuba, the Cuban Revolution of 1959 served as a magnet for radical members of the Haitian intelligentsia.

I will discuss its magnetic appeal for two Haitian writers, René Depestre and Jacques-Stéphen Alexis. The latter launched his ill-fated infiltration of Duvalier’s Haiti from Cuban shores. But Depestre, especially, emigrated to Cuba for ideological reason and remained there for twenty years. Cuba, as Depestre himself told me, represented in his mind what he would have liked Haiti to be. I will discuss Depestre’s evolving engagement with the Cuban Revolution throughout the 1970s and 1980s, his subsequent disenchantment, and comment briefly on the use of the Guantánamo naval base to process Haitian refugees in the 1990s, the regular deployment of Cuban medical and development workers to Haiti, as well Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s visit to Cuba in 2001 at Castro’s behest— all phenomena that attest to the persistent linkage of Cuba and Haiti in each Caribbean nation’s respective historical unfolding.

Marguerite Moritz, Professor and UNESCO Chair, University of Colorado, Boulder

“*French Stereotypes Meet American Politics: Bush, Kerry and the Campaign Rhetoric of 2004*”

When the United States and France started trading insults over the proposed invasion of Iraq, it was not at all certain that their discourse of derision would become an important element in the 2004 presidential campaign. Indeed, the French position on any U.S. policy is unlikely to matter when Americans go to the polls. While France (and most of the rest of the world) pays close attention to superpower politics, the reverse is rarely the case. Coming from a country with a deep sense of ethnocentrism, American citizens typically put America first. During four decades of the Cold War, foreign policy issues were largely discussed in terms of East-West oppositions. In the post-Soviet years, the focus of many presidential elections has been on economic issues such as jobs and taxes and on social issues like abortion and gay rights. But in 2004, notions of “the French” which had emerged a year earlier became one of the more unusual and unexpected subtexts of the presidential campaign, damaging for the challenger and powerfully useful for the incumbent.

Disintegrating relations between France and America became part of the campaign trail, with President George W. Bush seizing any and every opportunity to transfer the negative valence of France - by then a ubiquitous feature in the US media - onto his
opponent. From his looks to his ancestry, John Kerry became le cible facile of everything French. Meantime, a deterioration in the image of the US abroad, particularly in France where the media was far from shy in depictions of Mr. Bush as an inelegant, trigger-happy Texan, was apparent.

The paper examines the 2004 US presidential campaign rhetoric for what it reveals about the invocation, appropriation and circulation of French stereotypes in American politics, news media and popular discourse.

Jacques Pothier, Professor, Department of English, University of Versailles

“Maurice Edgar Coindreau: A Transcultural Agent for American Modernists”

Maurice Edgar Coindreau, trained as a Spanish teacher, began his career at the French Lycée in Madrid and went on to teach French at Princeton from 1922 to 1961. He was instrumental in introducing the major writers of American modernism by translating their major works for Gallimard, but also by writing reviews in Spanish that introduced them to the Latin-American world. I want to address the position of the translator as what it is, literally: an agent of cultural transfer between cultures. Through such agents I will examine how cultural identity will coalesce both in the home and host countries.

Josephine Shea, Curator of the Edsel & Eleanor Ford Museum

“Walter Dorwin Teague and Migration of the Modern: Cross-Atlantic Transfer and Transformation of the Residential Interior at Edsel Ford’s Residence”

Viewing interiors designed and installed in the 1930s by Walter Dorwin Teague for Edsel Ford and his family in their Grosse Pointe Shores residence, one is struck by the echoes of varied strands of cutting-edge residential design seen in early 20th-century France and displayed at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes.

Using Walter Dorwin Teague’s career and designs for Edsel Ford’s residence, one has a lens through which to examine the arrival, interpretation and installation based in French precedents for relatively rare domestic interiors. The exterior of the auto president’s home and many of the interiors were based in traditional English precedents and furnishings include antique French furniture. However, Edsel Ford was a design aficionado and essentially gave Teague the role of an ensembler to create four complete rooms—a games room, two bedrooms, an adjacent study. It was Teague’s 1925 visit to Paris that transformed his style, and the results were seen in his industrial designs and commercial work for clients.

Interestingly, the bedrooms and adjacent lounge redone in the home were for the Fords’ three sons; their only daughter’s bedroom was untouched. For Americans, in addition to use of the streamlined style for public spaces, was modern French design associated with the masculine? This perception seems to run counter to the displays created for the
PRESENTERS
Nayana P. Abeysinghe, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities, Tulane University
“Transcolonial Insurgencies: Migrations in ‘Maroon’ Spaces in the Creation of Caribbean Identity”

Most scholars and thinkers of the Caribbean present the vector of identity in the region—creolization—as a phenomenon that occurred within the closed environment of the Plantation. In Eloge de la créolité (1989), Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confi  ant proclaim Caribbeanness to be the synthesis of the various linguistic, cultural and racial elements that were fused in the ‘chaos monde’ of syncretic languages, cultures and skin colors. Developing his notion of antillanité articulated in Le Discours antillais (1981), Glissant identifies a process of continuous creolization (créolisation continue), still occurring within the space of the Caribbean and other cultural traditions that mark the manière d’être of the Caribbean—in his notion of Relation expounded in Poétique de la Relation (1990).

In her novel La Migration des coeurs, Maryse Condé presents Caribbeanness as not merely the result of mixings forced on people isolated within one plantation and one island, but rather as the result of many people moving more remarkably and more dynamically in “maroon” spaces such as contraband trade, piracy and vodun. Reading La Migration des coeurs from the theoretical perspective of Benitez-Rojo, this paper will explore certain alternate sites of identity creation in the Caribbean, in which the result of confinement in slavery, island and the Plantation, but as a subversive process occurring in freedom.

Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, Associate Professor, Chair of the LEA Department, University of Cergy-Pontoise
“French Family and Cultural Heritage in Southern California”

French immigration into Southern California since the mid-nineteenth century has been remarkable to French standards and has clearly influenced (and still does) communities economically, socially, and culturally. This has been achieved through the larger groups of French established in Southern California, namely men and women from the Basque Country and Bearn in addition to French families from around the world. The Provençal exhibition of 1925 Exposition which showed the progressive style for both masculine and feminine spaces of the domestic interior and public and private spaces of a residence. Finally, the production of these rooms bares examination. While the work is both custom and expensive, a cursory examination reveals—there is simply no comparison with the superb workmanship seen in workshops of France. Although the use of built-in furniture offered practical advantages in the face of declining household staff, acceptance of this streamlined style for residential spaces was relatively rare, never achieving the widespread adoption of the Bauhaus-based interiors that would spread from design centers like Cranbrook Academy of Art through designs by Charles and Ray Eames and Harry Bertoia throughout the suburbs to the progressive households of the mid-50s.

Holly York, Senior Lecturer, Emory University
“Truffaut, Godard and American Film: a Break in the Wave”

When asked, in Ralph Thanhauser’s 1970 documentary Godard in America, “What do you think of the movies you’ve seen in the U.S.” Jean-Luc Godard replies, “What do you think of this ashtray?” This comment and those Godard made three years later after having walked out in the middle of Truffaut’s Oscar-winning La nuit américaine, combine to suggest that the experience of American film was a catalyst for the rupture of the friendship between the two of the New Wave’s enfants terribles. Various references to the Lennon and McCartney, the Castor and Pollux, the Cain and Abel, of the movement, Godard and Truffaut had become acquainted in 1950 when the two were dating the same young woman. Their friendship came to fruition as both became iconoclastic critics of the French film establishment in Cahiers du cinema, then turned to filmmaking with the early successes of Les 400 coups and À bout de souffle.

Emmanuel Laurent’s 2010 film Deux dans la vague documents the unraveling of this relationship, beginning with a 1968 interview from Cannes where Godard accuses the top young French filmmakers, including himself and Truffaut, also present, of making films that were “irrelevant.” Thus his turn toward the political, the polemical, while Truffaut would later insist, “For right or wrong, I believe there is no art without paradox. In the political film, there is no paradox because it is already decided in the script who is good and who is bad.”

Godard’s accusation that in filming La nuit américaine, Truffaut had sold out and that his loving tribute to the art of film was “a lie” and a sellout caused the final rupture. In the same message he asked Truffaut to finance a film where he proposed to undo the wrong of La nuit Américaine. Truffaut replied in a 20-page letter in which he unleashed years of frustration that had built up during his association with Godard, accusing him, among other things, of political posturing. Eleven years later, Truffaut’s death at age 52 would preclude all possibility of reconciliation.
While Truffaut had declared that he would find it difficult to make films in the U. S. for esthetic reasons, American films had in a sense been part of a surrogate family, to be respected, or not, on their own merits. Godard’s out of hand rejection of American film as a capitalist enterprise took on the character of an attack on a loved cousin, albeit a cousin with whom one does not always agree. Thus ended the friendship between the neglected gamin de Paris, whose education took place more in the movie theater than in the classroom and the rebellious son of the Swiss bourgeoisie in search of perpetual self-reinvention.

SPECIAL PANEL: EDOUARD LEVÉ

Jan Steyn, Translator and Graduate Student, Emory University, Comparative Literature
Amin Erfani, Visiting Assistant Professor, Emory University
Andy Rogers, Assistant Professor of Humanities, Georgia Perimeter College

Three scholars offer a panel focusing on the work and life of Edouard Levé (1965-2007). Levé was a French photographer and the author of four works of fiction: Oeuvres, Journal, Autoportrait and Suicide. Suicide appeared in English translation this year and Autoportrait should appear next year; both from The Dalkey Archive Press.

While Levé, and autofiction more generally, is starting to have an impact on America, it is clear that America had an impact on Levé, as is evident in, for example, his photographic series, Ameriqué.

RESPONDENTS

Brennan Collins, Ph.D., Academic Professional, Georgia State University
Maria Gindhart, Associate Professor, Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design, Georgia State University
Paul Gradwohl, Professor, Department of History / Department of Central European Studies, University of Nancy, France
Charles Hankla, Associate Professor, Department of Political Sciences, Georgia State University
Tom McHaney, Kenneth M. England Professor of Southern Literature Emeritus, Georgia State University
SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Institut des Amériques

GSU Office of Institutional Research

GSU Foundation: Kenneth M. England Professorship of Southern Literature and English Enrichment Fund/Eudora Welty Review

Institute des Amériques

Consulate General of France in Atlanta

GSU Department of Communications

Peg and Bill Balzer

College of Arts and Sciences International Programs

Rialto Center for the Arts

Department of Modern Classical Languages

Yohann Brultey, South Atlantic Coordinator for the Institute of the Americas

Pearl McHaney, Associate Dean for the Fine Arts, GSU

Emily Schulten, Ph.D. candidate, Poetry, GSU

4 PM   Registration
5 PM   Inauguration of the South Atlantic Center of the Institute of the Americas
5:30 PM   Opening Keynote Speaker: Martin Munro, Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Florida State University, “The French Atlantic and the Creoles of Trinidad.”

SATURDAY February 11, 2012, Loudermilk Center, 40 Courtland Street N.E.

8:30 – 10:15 AM  Session A – Politics – Charles Hankla
Aude Jehan, PhD candidate, EHESS, Paris; Visiting Scholar: Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, “Questioning the Cultural Impact on Politics and Migration in the 20th Century U.S.”
Yoann Brultey, PhD candidate, Louisiana State University, “Freedom Fries and Francophobia: On the Current Status of Franco-American Relationships.”
Marguerite Moritz, Professor and UNESCO Chair, University of Colorado, Boulder, “French Stereotypes Meet American Politics: Bush, Kerry and the Campaign Rhetoric of 2004.”

10:30 AM – 12:30 PM Session B – Arts – Maria Gindhart
Glenn T. Eskew, Professor, Department of History, Georgia State University. “Johnny Mercer and the Postwar Migration of French Songs to America’s Hit Parade.”
Stephen Fuller, Assistant Professor, Middle Georgia College, “Surrealism and the Southern Writer Eudora Welty (1909-2001).”
Michelle Bright, Graduate Student, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi. “Selling Belle Reve: The Loss of Beautiful Dreams in A Streetcar Named Desire.”
Holly York, Senior Lecturer, Emory University, “Truffaut, Godard and American Film: A Break in the Wave.”

Lunch

1:45 – 3:45 PM  Session C – Culture – Paul Grandvohl
Paula Garrett-Rucks, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University, Department of Modern and Classical Languages. “Deconstructing U.S. Learners’ Impressions of French People and French Culture in a Post-9/11 Era.”
Nayana P. Abeysinghe, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities, Tulane University, “Transcolonial Insurgencies: Migrations in ‘Maroon’ Spaces in the Creation of Caribbean Identity.”