



FACULTY-LED  
STUDY ABROAD

## KIIS Paris II Program, Summer 2026

### FREN 323 French Civilization and Culture - Graphic Novels

**Instructor:** Jeorg Ellen Sauer

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**Instructor's office hours:** on site and by appointment

*Syllabus subject to change*

#### 1. Course Description:

It is easy to recognize images and representations that are quintessentially “American”. The golden arches, sneakers, a baseball cap, and Superman (Truth, justice and the American way). These visual concepts are ingrained in our daily understanding of “ourselves”. But how is another culture imagined visually or represented? Specifically, what do comics and graphic novels have to do with illustrating, teaching, redefining, and/or questioning a national identity? If Superman can be defined as the ultimate “comics” expression of America, what does the French comic book character Astérix say about the French? And what happens when you leave the comics world of the superhero and encounter explorers, or representations of everyday people?

During the summer, we will examine and analyze how comics and graphic novels function on a narrative level visually as well as textually to shape understanding a culture. In particular, we will examine how different comics and graphic novels answer or don’t answer the question of what is French? The adventures of Asterix and Obelix, Olympia, and others will guide us through our inquiry into illustrations of (a) French identity.

We will read a wide variety of graphic novels and comics, examine distinctive features of comics and graphic novels, use the vocabulary associated within the style to analyze how the visual and written narratives can be used to represent a culture. We will make comparisons and apply what we have learned about the text to comics and graphic novels from our own culture. Active learning is the first priority in any of classroom setting. I expect an active class.

#### 2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

##### KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

##### Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

### **3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:**

- to use the appropriate vocabulary to discuss and analyze comics/graphic novels;
- to examine how the medium can reflect a culture;
- to illustrate an identity;
- to compare styles and forms with American comics.

### **4. Major Topics covered in the Course:** Paris, Art History, French History, Literary Theory

### **5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement:**

### **6. Required Readings and Materials:**

- *Astérix and the Banquet* by Goscinny
- *But I really wanted to be an anthropologist* by Motin
- *The Extraordinary Adventures of Adèle Blanc-Sec* by Tardi
- *The Museum Vaults* by Mathieu (Jeorg's copy)
- *Moderne Olympia* by Meurisse
- *The Sky over the Louvre* by Yslaire and Carrière
- Pencils and Erasers;
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers, pens, watercolors, chalks, magazines, etc. The medium of your choice for inking and coloring your finished page

### **7. Graded Assignments:**

- Participation: 30%
- Analysis: 25%
- Comic/Graphic Paper: 25%
- Journal: 20%

*Participation.* I expect you to read the assignments, to think, to ask questions, to talk, to use your brain, to play, to be active, to have fun. This class is a group effort and without your full participation, this will be the longest class in the history of KIIS. To participate, you will need your book(s), art supplies, and metro/bus pass. You will spend time in each class drawing and writing—including when we are in museums.

*Journals.* You will be asked to do journal entries for each class. Your journal will be your personal reflection about the readings. Specifically, you will illustrate your identity framed by the question and readings in the format of a comic. This exercise is two-fold. First, it will allow you to actively reflect on the readings in a personal way. This will give you the opportunity to express how you think about the readings and how this shapes or is informed by your experiences. Second, this will give you a real and practical understanding of how comics are made. In essence, you will better appreciate (I hope)

the care, thought, and process that artists and authors go through in order to make a finished product. I do not expect professional artistry or authorship. But I do expect ideas, creativity, thought, and an active mind which can all be reflected in your journal.

*Analysis.* You will be asked to write a one page analysis of the *mise-en-page* of a comic. You will discuss how the page functions overall, how it is accomplishing that, etc. Class discussions and your journal entries will help you prepare for this. The analysis will be due Thursday, July \_\_\_\_\_. It is to be typed, single spaced, Times New Roman 12, and emailed as a PDF to Jeorg by 11:59pm.

*Comic/Graphic Paper.* At the end of the summer, you will be asked to write a "Comic/graphic paper". This will be a full, 20 page story comic book. You are expected to include Paris in your comic and represent it from the time period and or storied perspective that you take. You will have creative license over colors, story, and images.

Work will be graded on this scale:

90 – 100 A

80 – 89 B

70 – 79 C

60 – 69 D

Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KIIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.)

## **8. Generative AI Policy:**

### **Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.**

Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can "hallucinate" (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

#### **Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:**

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.
- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.
- With Instructor Approval: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors when permitted by the instructor.

#### **You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:**

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

**Metacognitive Reflection.** In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

“I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.]”

## **9. Attendance Policy:**

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student’s final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

## **10. Disability Accommodation:**

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, [maria.canning@wku.edu](mailto:maria.canning@wku.edu), to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto:haley.mctaggart@wku.edu), if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus’ disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

## **11. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:**

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to

supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/eeo/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.