

## Paris: Capital of Cultural Theory and Postmodernism

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Paris is most astounding in the early morning, when the daily clamor sleeps and one is left alone with the city's monumental architecture and relentlessly inspiring occidental design. It is at these moments when you are left gaping at the most stunning testimony of the fatter portion of modern civilization's aesthetic achievements. As the bakers knead away and the markets prop their first tents, you can seamlessly recall all the pre-war homage to the *City of Lights*: Hemmingway's *A Movable Feast*, Orwell's *Down and Out*, or Stein's salon utopias. Words no longer seem necessary, for it all seems to make sense on a proto-linguistic level, which appropriately enough was one of the artistic visions of that particular time. There were countless times when I had this early morning to myself, and they remain beyond worth. However, if this is the Paris you expect and desire when you go there to study, you will be disappointed. Because although Paris is most astounding in the early morning—especially for those curious travelers who despise the constant chatter of snap shots and wailing tour guides—it is only “morning” for so long. The rest of the day is quite different.

For so long Paris has been a destination to consume culture and history. After all, the Parisians play their roles well if it means that they can take advantage of eager travelers and study-abroad students. But much of the city, if approached in this manner, will dishearten, and furthermore consume the countless visitors it receives daily. Nevertheless, this is exactly what makes the city such a great destination in which to study, and strengthen a more accurate view on global culture in general. But enough proud expertise aside...

I went to Paris purely to learn the language, for most of my studies in Comparative Literature and Cultural Theory are based in French. However, as my time in the city unfolded and my agitations with it's culture augmented, I realized that much of the content found in contemporary French thinking is firmly based in Paris as a physical and geographical reality. This is because the city, along with many other global centers, is latent with contradictions: strong minority presence, yet indisputable racism...relentless nationalism and tradition, yet hugely international, political sway...inflexible linguistic and cultural arrogance, yet inevitable planetary tastemaker...historically captured and kept, yet fading cultural integrity. In essence, Paris is a city firmly rooted in what lies beyond itself, with the Other. The Other as the rising political and cultural capitals that emerge around it, and the Other as past triumphs in the face of slightly shot attempts to show its face and value (yet not face value) to the global world that rapidly races forward.

Much of this, no matter how implicit it may seem in any study abroad handbook, would not have come to my attention if I hadn't chosen to study with the CIEE Critical Studies program. The program's greatest achievement is that it allows the student be consumed by the city's glory and senseless, yet historically plotted tensions. Independent living is imperative, and no matter what one's command of French is, he or she is let loose to choose and attend courses at almost any Parisian university, including La Sorbonne Nouvelle, which remains iconic in contemporary cultural pedagogy. In addition, the program has its own educational center, which offers compelling courses and endless opportunities to improve one's French. It is ideal for any student interested in French, literature, film and new media studies, and continental philosophy.

For some, Paris and CIEE's Critical Studies program is a perfect opportunity to achieve a fulfilling study-abroad experience. It will give you that priceless opportunity to see Paris in the early morning, when one may consume and experience in a way that transcends language and satiates, if not paralyzes, desire, and thereby renders one speechless. But more importantly, it will reveal and explore how one is frequently consumed and fragmented by what lies without, by the Other. Again rendering one speechless. However, in this regard, one typically walks off hopelessly worsted yet unremittingly searching for words and thoughts that may possibly explain the rest of the day that follows the idyllic, early morning Paris.



D' inconscient.

1<sup>ère</sup> D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture.

1/ D' inconscient sans répression. L'écriture - que signifie l'écriture? - moins de répression; et la répression. L'écriture réprime la répression: jette la répression...

2/ D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

3/ D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

4<sup>ème</sup> D' inconscient et répression.

1/ D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

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5<sup>ème</sup> D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

6<sup>ème</sup> D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

7<sup>ème</sup> D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

8<sup>ème</sup> D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

9<sup>ème</sup> D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

10<sup>ème</sup> D' inconscient et répression. L'écriture - répression éprouvée de l'écriture - l'effort spirituel.

Michel Foucault, handwritten notes on “l'inconscient” for agrégation examination.



Foucault in his Paris apartment, 1983, from *Michel Foucault*, by Didier Eribon

CIEE Paris Program: [www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)