

Dear All,

Several of you have told me that, for various reasons other than your satisfaction with the course, you will unfortunately not be able to attend our final session on May 7. Right now, we seem to be looking at only *one* confirmed attendee plus maybe two possibles. I have checked with Kathy and Susan, who agree that the most sensible course is simply to CANCEL this last offering.

I had not yet prepared the materials for the class, but let me tell you where it was headed, so that at least you could get some mental closure. The French, as you know, have always made extraordinary attempts to preserve the purity of their culture, through the *Académie Française* and other means. The theme of this last class, "The Firewalls Fall," would have been the collapse of this cultural protectionism. I would focus primarily on how American culture has spread in France, often as a powerful undertow flowing eastwards, even as on the surface the export of French high-culture continues its westward flow. Here are some of the specifics I might have developed:

1. JAZZ. Right from the beginning of the 20th century, American jazz found a receptive home in France. Part (but not all) of this has to do with Black artists finding greater acceptance over there than in their own country.
2. ART. The mid-20th century also saw a decisive shift from Paris to New York as the acknowledged capital of Western art. Though I am not sure of the extent to which American values truly penetrated the French scene; it took Paris a long time to admit that *it* was no longer the center of the art world.
3. FILM. There is no question that mid-century Hollywood movies affected the French cinema. We touched on that this week, but I might develop it further, for example by examining the curious fact of Jerry Lewis becoming a French icon!
4. LANGUAGE. I mentioned this in the first class, but I would have developed it further: how American words and phrases have embedded themselves into the hitherto-pure French language, especially among younger people.
5. COMMERCE. This aspect featured in the images I posted on the website: the degree to which brands like McDonald's and Coca-Cola have established themselves as fixtures even in this center of fine food and wine.
6. DANCE. I would probably have included a clip or two from the current Sherman-Palladino television series *ÉTOILE*, in which the main ballet companies in Paris and New York exchange three or four top stars for a year. At the very least, it makes great television!

While the main focus would be on the invasion of American culture into France, I might also observe that some firewalls have also fallen that previously prevented White French culture from acknowledging the contributions of its Black citizens, for example from the former French colonies in North Africa. This is by no means universal—and the French far right under Marine Le Pen has risen to prominence by opposing it—but it has been an invigorating force wherever it has happened. Actually, I think that was a very interesting class in the making. I'm sorry I won't be able to give it.

Have a great summer. You can always reach me at rogerbrunyate@gmail.com.

As ever, Roger.