

Woody **Allen** (1935– , *American filmmaker*), Guillaume **Apollinaire** (Wilhelm Apolinary Kostrowicki, 1880–1918, *Polish-French poet*), Sidney **Bechet** (1897–1959, *American saxophonist*), Louis **Daguère** (1787–1851, *French photographer*), Denis **Diderot** (1713–87, *French encyclopedist*), Theodore **Dreiser** (1871–1945, *American novelist*), Alexandre **Dumas, fils** (1824–95, *French writer*), George **Gershwin** (1898–1937, *American composer*), Henri **Gervex** (1852–1929, *French painter*), William **Glackens** (1870–1938, *American painter*), Baron Georges-Eugène **Hausmann** (1809–91, *French city planner*), Jean-Baptiste **Lully** (1632–87, *French composer*), Auguste and Louis **Lumière** (1862–1954 and 1864–1938, *French cinematographers*), **Molière** (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, 1622–73, *French playwright*), Claude **Monet** (1840–1926, *French painter*), Alfred de **Musset** (1810–57, *French writer*), Jean **Nocret** (1615–72, *French painter*), Jacques **Offenbach** (1819–80, *German-French composer*), **Pérotin** (c.1160–1240, *French composer*), Camille **Pissarro** (1830–1903, *French painter*), Pierre-Auguste **Renoir** (1841–1919, *French painter*), Henri de **Toulouse-Lautrec** (1864–1901, *French painter*), Eric **Whitacre** (1970– , *American composer*)

A Sense of Place



<http://www.brunyate.com/SenseOfPlace>
rogerbrunyate@gmail.com

9. Paris: Bridges, Light & Love

May 4, 2026

9. Paris: Bridges, Light & Love

THE CITY OF LIGHT, THE CITY OF LOVE. How did Paris come by these nicknames, and how do they affect the way we experience the city today? The first, *la ville lumière*, is what Paris calls itself, and has done so since the 18th-century Enlightenment at least. You might think that the love moniker arose similarly through the city's key role in the Romantic movement in the 19th Century, but it has negative connotations as well, and it is only fairly recently that Paris has embraced its value as a hook for American visitors. After a brief prologue cruising down the Seine under its many bridges, we devote one hour of the class to each of these aspects: Light and Love.

The list below includes only videos, and omits still images. *rb.*

A. Sous les ponts de Paris

The oldest bridge in Paris is paradoxically *Le pont neuf*, or “new bridge,” dating back to 1607. The newest is the undulating footbridge the *Passerelle Simone-de-Beauvoir*, opened in 2006. Between them, they offer a fascinating summary of the city's history.

Video: *Know Paris by its Bridges* (Elaine Sciolino)

Edith Piaf: *Sous le ciel de Paris* (cover by Pomplamousse)

B. City of Light

While the term “City of Light” principally refers to the role of Paris in the Enlightenment, the term might equally apply to the magic of medieval stained glass, the beautification projects of Louis XIV, the creation of the Boulevards under Baron Haussmann, the invention of the camera, Impressionist painting, or simple *joie de vivre*. We look at them all.

Eric Whitacre: *Sainte-Chapelle* (Paris Choral Society)

Pérotin: *Beata viscera* (Sarah Le Van)

Gérard Corbiau: *Le roi danse* (2000), *Bourgeois gentilhomme* scene

Lully: *Te Deum* (1677), opening with Louis XIV buildings

Video: *Musée d'histoire naturelle*

Lumière Brothers: *Loie Fuller's Serpentine Dance* (1896, hand-tinted)

Joe Dassin: *Aux Champs-Élysées* (cover by Pomplamousse)

C. City of Love

Paris now uses the phrase “City of Love” in English-language videos by its Chamber of Commerce, but it was not always so. The bittersweet poetry of the early 19th-century Romantics was offset by the city's reputation for moral laxity and *risqué* entertainment. It took the film industry from the 1950s onwards to build an alternative image that began as *cliché* but was soon accepted as fact.

YouTube short: *Why is Paris called “The City of Love”?*

Video: *A Romantic Walk in Paris* (Paris Chamber of Commerce)

Video: *Make a Date with Paris* (Paris Chamber of Commerce)

Alfred de Musset: *Rappelle-toi* (published 1850), Auguste Vertu

Mauro Bolognini: *La dame aux camélias* (1981, with Isabelle Huppert)

John Huston: *Moulin Rouge* (1952), can-can scene

Guillaume Apollinaire reads from *Le Pont Mirabeau* (1913)

Louisa Bey: *Le Pont Mirabeau* (2014, with Nico Morelli, *piano*)

Stanley Donen: *Funny Face* (1957), “Bonjour Paris” (Fred Astaire, Audrey Hepburn, Kay Thompson; music by Gershwin)

Woody Allen: *Midnight in Paris* (2011, opening; saxophone solo by Sidney Bechet)