Senior Seminar Research

All Muskingum language majors complete a senior seminar capstone research project in which they apply skills they have gained through classes and study abroad to a problem or question they have chosen to investigate. They use the critical theory and research tools of their discipline to conduct research.

French Senior Seminar students make a bilingual public presentation of their findings in addition to submitting a research paper, written in French.

The French Senior Seminar was taught by Dr. Jean Morris, Associate Professor of French.
Flaubert: The Expansion of the Expression and Signification of Language in *A Simple Heart*
Caitlin Lewis

Flaubert’s *Trois Contes*, his shortest and last completed literary work, presents qualities distinct from his earlier works. Israel-Pelletier writes in *Flaubert’s Straight and Suspect Saints* that these stories represent “a dramatic change of attitude on the part of Flaubert toward his characters and toward the status of fiction and illusion in life and in art” (1). At the time he wrote these tales, the long-accepted ideas of the stability of the self as a reference point and the sufficiency of language to describe the intricacies of human emotion were being questioned (4). Because of this, Flaubert sought to “expand the expression potential of language through ‘style,’ by focusing on the possibilities of prose through narrative and stylistic techniques” (6). He saw his work as art, and that art was the meaning and beauty which the words evoked. He turned to the possibilities of applying the language of poetry to his prose works, thus invoking a more suggestive and subtle form of expression, one open to interpretation (9). Flaubert’s work is often misunderstood because it insists the reader take an active role in interpreting the message. This seminar paper explores the modernity of the language Flaubert uses within *Un Coeur simple* and the poetic aspects of his prose writing that expand the meanings of his words.
The primary aim of this seminar paper is to examine the implications of the character of Julien’s enactment of the Oedipal myth in *Légende de Saint Julien l’Hospitalier*. In fulfillment of a prophecy, Julien kills his father and mother, without knowledge of their identities at the time of the killing. The transgression is followed by the expiation and apotheosis of Julien. Oedipal and non-Oedipal elements are woven into the tale of *Saint Julien*. Given the premise that Julien’s actions were influenced by a subconscious desire to murder his father, one could ask from where this desire would have come. Philosophical concepts formulated by Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are brought to bear on this question. In addition, the Oedipal myth and Freudian psychology are used to gain an understanding of the character of Julien and his motivations.
Stendhal writes: *La politique dans une oeuvre littéraire, c'est un coup de pistolet au milieu d'un concert.* If Flaubert respected the convention that a novel must focus on the universal rather than the particular and did not let his politics ring out like a pistol shot at a concert in his prose, he still did not entirely exclude political messages from his works. The writing of Gustave Flaubert, while not overtly ideological, was influenced by his political ideologies. He endured many personal and political hardships in his life, which influenced his writing. France’s defeat in the war against the Prussian army affected his style of writing and the themes he addressed. Flaubert’s anxieties regarding “Barbarian” attacks on the citadel of French civilization are reflected in the tales *La Légende de Saint Julien l'hospitalier* and *Hérodias* and in the novel *Salammbô*, as well as other writings such as his correspondence and travel journals. This seminar project examines Flaubert’s political and social ideas, and how they are encoded in these historical works.
The Interpretation of Symbols in Flaubert’s
*Three Tales* and *Madame Bovary*
Allison Wagner

This seminar addresses Flaubert’s use of symbolism in his trilogy of stories, the *Trois Contes*, and in his novel *Madame Bovary*, both in descriptions of central characters, and in the setting of the narrative. Semiotics or the “science of signs,” as well as Jungian archetypes are used to illuminate Flaubert’s use of symbol, metaphor, and other literary devices. Flaubert uses three types of signs: iconic, symbolic, and indexical. His symbols include animals, which represent the characters and their conflicts; and signifying objects, which portray both the world in which the story takes place and the characters who inhabit it. The technique is effective because it creates a sense of the personality of the characters, and of what has transpired before the story takes place. The use symbols in these works reflects a dynamic relationship between the characters and their environment.