

FRENCH 225 A: Dealing with Death in Francophone Literature and Media



Instructor: Dr. Maya Angela Smith
Spring 2021 - Asynchronous Online Course

The thief and vagabond François Villon, a French Medieval poet, became famous for his writings on death. Ousmane Sembène, a twentieth-century Senegalese writer, recounts the story of a poor man who rides the bus to the cemetery, carrying his dead child. The Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé creates the portrait of an outsider whose life and death are told by a series of different visitors who attend his wake. In this course, we will consider a broad range of literary, cultural, and filmic texts by French and Francophone authors from the Middle Ages to the late 20th century whose primary concern is death. In addition to analyzing French texts in translation, we will also look at a few English-language texts to provide a comparative perspective. In doing so, we investigate how these authors and their characters understand, approach, rationalize, engage with, and are emotionally involved with the topic of death. Because we are currently in a pandemic, we will also connect the themes of these texts with our experiences living during COVID times. All readings and lectures are in ENGLISH. Course is asynchronous with an optional class meeting on Wednesdays at 1:30-2:30pm on Zoom.