

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- www.unine.ch/lettres

Sém. Ang. II/TG: The Art of the Journal (2AN2101)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5
Pilier secondaire M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Automne

Equipe enseignante

Prof. Patrick Vincent

Objectifs

The aims of this course are the following:

- To pursue in more depth the study of a literary genre within a specific historical and national context.
- To develop students' close reading skills.
- To learn how to combine those skills with literary criticism in order to better appreciate and analyze a text.
- To improve research-paper writing skills, notably by learning how to do archival research and to work with unpublished manuscripts.
- To generate ideas in view of preparing a mémoire project.

Contenu

'Not a day without a line'
Pliny the Elder

The diary, as defined by Samuel Johnson, is 'an account of the transactions, accidents, and observations of everyday.' Because of its apparent lack of premeditation (in theory, it is not written for publication) and its aura of spontaneity that borders on the ephemeral, the diary is a medium that has long resisted aesthetic formalization and hence also canonization. On the other hand, scholars have relied on the contents of diaries as an important historical source. With renewed academic interest in life writing, in book history and in material culture, it might be worthwhile to reconsider the diary not only as a rich archival source, but also as a literary artefact in its own right, with its own generic history and conventions.

Why people keep a diary remains a mystery. While it suggests the desire for posterity (Boswell writes of 'leaving himself embalmed'), diaries and journals also attest to writers' desire to make order out of chaos, or simply to their curiosity for the surrounding world. From Marcus Aurelius' 2nd century AD Meditations to Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl, diaries and journals have arguably played an important role as spiritual biographies or portrait painting in the development of the notion of an inner self (can the same be said, however, for the The Diary of a Wimpy Kid or online diaries?) With the advent of modernity and massculture, they have also contributed to what Michel de Certeau has called the 'practice of everyday life' by allowing writers to individualize their lives. Many if not most novelists, poets, and artists, moreover, have kept diaries, suggesting their important creative function.

In this seminar, we will try to better understand and theorize the reasons behind diary writing. We will read a wide sample of published diary and journal extracts organized by century and by topic, starting with John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys in the 17th century and ending with three early 20th century women writers, Katherine Mansfield, Anais Nin, and Virginia Woolf. Some topics we will discuss include travel, natural history, gender and sexuality, life at court, in the city, and in the country, as well creativity and the writing life more generally. The aim will be to analyze and compare these texts both formally and thematically in order to come up with our own 'genre theory.' In their written work, students will be allowed to write about some of the texts discussed in class, but they also will be encouraged to work with manuscript diaries and journals, notably online.

Forme de l'évaluation

A daily personal diary (not read by the instructor) and final self-evaluation (20%), one longer critical essay (12-15 pages) (80%)

Documentation

All reading will be placed on Moodle

Pré-requis

None

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Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar