French 352
Modern French Cultures
Spring 2015
Professor Peggy Kamuf
Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00-3:20

This course is called “Modern French Cultures” because there has never been just one French Culture in the singular. This fact became especially evident in 1789, when the French Revolution began. Ever since then, French-speaking peoples have contested the norms of a single culture, sometimes through another revolution in the streets (as in 1830, 1848, 1871, or 1968), sometimes through defiance of artistic norms and state censorship, and sometimes through civil disobedience against other laws. In this course, we will study a few of these hotly contested moments of the past two hundred years. We will read some classic nineteenth-century novels by Stendhal and Flaubert as well as some more contemporary works; we’ll also watch several films, including Le Chagrin et la pitié, Marcel Ophuls’ great documentary about the German Occupation of France (1940-44), which was one of the most divisive periods of French history. We’ll also study other such sharply divisive events—the obscenity trial of Madame Bovary, the Dreyfus Affair, episodes of the Algerian war, May ’68—most often through works of fiction or testimony that transcend their occasion.