Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your interest in our NEH Summer Scholar Seminar for College and University Teachers, “France’s Haunting Past: Debating Twentieth-Century History and French National Identity since 1990.” The purpose of the seminar is to explore and discuss four historical controversies that erupted during the 1990s and that shaped, and continue to shape French perspectives on the nation’s troubled twentieth-century past, even today. These controversies focused on World War I and its legacies of violence and political extremism, Vichy and French complicity in the Holocaust, decolonization and the Algerian War, and Communism and its crimes in Europe and around the world. Our seminar will also explore representative recent literary and cinematic treatments of the historical events that provoked these controversies, and visit monuments and museums in and around Paris that recall these traumatic events and commemorate the victims. Our seminar will conclude with a discussion of French efforts to come to terms and reconcile the nation with its troubled past, including especially the passage from the early 1990s up to the present of the so-called “Memorial Laws.” These laws continue to spark sharp debate among historians, politicians, and legal specialists.

The Seminar will take place in Paris from June 5 to July 5, 2012. Meetings will occur twice a week, with one meeting per week occurring at the Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP) and one meeting per week at the Centre International de Séjour de Paris, the recommended residence for participants during the period of the seminar. Summer Scholars will also take field trips at the end of the first week to Historial at Perone, the national museum of World War I, located a few hours by bus from Paris. They will also visit the Mont Valerien on the outskirts of Paris, as well as other monuments commemorating the French experience during World War II. Below you will find a detailed description of the seminar, its rationale and guest speakers and activities, as well as a discussion of logistical matters including especially lodging and meals. But first, let us introduce the Seminar Directors and the Guest Speakers:

**PROJECT CO-DIRECTORS**

**Richard J. Golsan** is University Distinguished Professor, Distinguished Professor of French, and Director of the Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research at Texas A&M University. He is author of four monographs, and numerous articles and book chapters, and has edited several volumes. The works related to the topic of the Seminar include two monographs, *Vichy’s Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* (Nebraska, 2000) and *French Writers and the Politics of Complicity: Crises of Democracy in the 1940s and 1990s* (Johns Hopkins, 2006). He is at work on a third volume related to French debates over history and memory, *Corruptions of Memory*, under contract with Northwestern University Press. His edited volumes include *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture* (UPNE, 1992), *Gender and Fascism in France* (Dartmouth/UPNE, 1997), and *Fascism’s Return: Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980* (Nebraska, 1998). He has also edited two volumes on the crimes against humanity cases in France: *Memory, the Holocaust, and French Justice: The Bousquet and Touvier Affairs* (Dartmouth/UPNE, 1996) and *The Papon Affair: History and Memory on Trial* (Routledge, 2000). In 2001 he was Visiting professor of French literature and culture at Université Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle. He has co-directed nine previous NEH seminars and institutes with Nathan Bracher.

**Henry Rousso** is Director of Research at the Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent, which he co-founded in 1981 and which he directed from 1994 to 2005. He is also Professor of History at the Université Paris-Ouest Nanterre-La Défense. Between 1990 and 2000 he was the Secretary General of the International Committee for the History of the Second World War. He has been a Visiting Scholar at numerous universities and research institutes in Europe, the United States, and Israel. His publications include *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, originally published in France as *Le Syndrome de Vichy* in 1987. He is also the author, with Eric Conan, of *Vichy: An Everpresent Past*, originally published in France in 1994 as *Vichy. Un passé qui ne passe pas*. Rousseau is also author of *La Hantise du passé* (1998); *Vichy L’Événement, la mémoire, l’histoire* (2001), and numerous other works.

**GUEST SPEAKERS**

**Annette Becker** is one of France’s leading authorities on the history and memory of World War I in France. She is a Professor of History at University of Paris-Nanterre, and is Co-Director with Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau of the Historial of the Great War Museum and Research Center at Peronne.

**Nathan Bracher** is Professor of French at Texas A&M University, and has co-directed nine NEH Summer Seminars.
and Institutes to date. He is the author of numerous articles on the history and memory of Vichy in French politics, commemorative practices, and literature. His book on Irene Nemirovsky’s *Suite Française*, *After the Fall*, was published in 2010.

**Pascal Bruckner** is one of France’s leading public intellectuals, and is the author of more than a dozen books translated into ten languages. He is a specialist of the problem of history and memory in modern France, and is the author of *The Tyranny of Penitence*. He teaches at the Institute for Politics (*Sciences politiques*) in Paris.

**Marc Dambre** is Distinguished Professor of French Literature and Civilization Emeritus at the *Université Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle*. He is a specialist of twentieth-century French literature, specializing in the politics of the novel and the fictional representation of historical traumas including World War II and the Algerian War.

**Malika Rahal** is a Research Faculty Member at *the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent*. She specializes in the modern political history of Algeria and debates and controversies in France over France’s colonial past in North Africa.

**Nicholas Werth** is France’s leading historian of the Soviet Union and Director of Research at the *CNRS*. He is the author of numerous works on the Soviet Union and the history and Memory of Communism.

**SEMINAR RATIONALE**

By many accounts, France lives its past more intensely than any other European nation. Strong evidence in support of this claim can be found in the frequency, range, and intensity of debates, scandals, and controversies occurring since the early 1990s that focused on French and European history in the twentieth century. These events have played themselves out in an extraordinary range of contexts and circumstances. For example, a major political scandal erupted following 1994 revelations concerning then-president François Mitterrand’s service and loyalty to the Vichy regime during World War II. More recently, in Fall 2010, Mitterrand’s memory and legacy were further tainted by revelations concerning his involvement in the summary executions of almost fifty Algerian insurgents while serving as Minister of Justice in the late 1950s. Political controversy also erupted in 1998, this time in relation to a different moment in twentieth-century French history, World War I or *La Grande Guerre*. The controversy occurred when Prime Minister Lionel Jospin sought to commemorate the Armistice of November 1918 ending World War I by celebrating not primarily those soldiers who fought and died in the trenches but those soldiers who rejected what they viewed as a meaningless butchery and mutinied at the *Chemin des Dames* and elsewhere.

Debate over France’s traumatic twentieth century also surrounded the widely publicized trials of Vichy functionaries Paul Touvier in 1993 and Maurice Papon in 1997-98. Both men were charged with crimes against humanity for their involvement in the implementation of the Nazi Final Solution in France. Papon’s trial lasted six months and is the longest trial in modern French history.

The publication of important works of history as well as frank and occasionally shocking political memoirs also generated prolonged and heated debate. In Fall 1997 the publication of the massive co-authored *Black Book of Communism*, some of whose contributors compared Communism’s crimes to Nazi crimes, and to the Holocaust in particular, stoked intense historical, legal, and moral controversy in a country many of whose most influential postwar intellectual leaders had been staunch supporters of the ideologies and practices of Stalinism, Maoism, and the Khmer Rouge, among other brutal Communist regimes. In 2001 former French army officer Paul Aussaresses published a memoir, *Services Spéciaux: Algérie 1955-1957*, which offered a detailed account of his involvement in the torture and even murder of native insurgents during the Algerian War. The memoir provoked considerable public outrage.

Commemorative events including the construction of controversial monuments have also been subject to intense debate. For example, monuments erected recently to some of the victims of the Algerian War raised the ire of those who opposed them in that conflict. The latter see themselves as the real victims and the commemorated “victims” as the perpetrators. In addition, the passage of so-called “memorial laws” legislating, in some instances, the “correct” interpretation of French (and European) history, and, in others, criminalizing the deliberate denial of historical crimes like the Holocaust has also generated controversy. Statutes passed since 2000 have retroactively declared the Turkish genocide of the Armenians during World War I and Western (but not global) slavery and slave trading from
earlier centuries to be “crimes against humanity.” The original “memorial law,” the so-called Gayssot Law, passed in 1990, determined the denial of the Holocaust to be a crime punishable by penal sanctions under French law. Such has been the opposition in principle to the majority of these laws and the limits they impose on objective and unfettered historical research that in 2005 a group of historians joined together under the name Liberté pour l’Histoire to underscore these dangers and call for a moratorium on the passage of any future “memorial laws.” A government commission has recently recommended that no more such laws should be passed in France.

Finally, the publication or release of controversial novels and films evoking and purporting to analyze historically the traumas of France and Europe’s twentieth century has set off debates in the media as well as in the universities. The publication in 2006 of the American Jonathan Litell’s massive novel Les Bienveillantes offering a portrait of an unrepentant Nazi henchman who insists that all humans are capable of committing crimes like those of the Nazis shocked many and was even condemned as obscene in some quarters. Just the same, the novel was a bestseller in France and also earned the American author and his novel the prestigious Goncourt Prize for the best novel of the year. In 2010 Jan Karski, a novel by Yannick Haenel, also became a cause célèbre. Haenel’s novel presented not only a highly controversial and, some argued, false portrait of the real life Polish resistance hero Jan Karski, but a damning and indeed defamatory portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt, portrayed as entirely indifferent to the fate of Europe’s Jews under the Nazis. In the cinema, the 2006 release of Rachid Bouchareb’s Indigènes (Days of Glory), which follows the lives of four North Africans who volunteer to fight in the French army to liberate Europe from the Nazi yoke, was greeted with acclaim, and also controversy. Although inaccurate in a number of historical details, the film helped secure full pension rights for French army veterans from the former colonies.

Why have the conflicts and traumas of the recent past become so controversial in contemporary France, especially over the last two decades? Why do they play such a central role in French political and cultural life? What do they tell us about French national identity at the present time? Do the controversies, scandals, and debates generated by the events of the recent past contribute to a better understanding of the historical realities of the periods in question, or, conversely, do they distort public perceptions of those realities in problematic and even dangerous ways? Is France’s apparent obsession with the “memories” of recent conflicts and traumas, and especially the nation’s complicity in terrible crimes associated with Nazism and decolonization, ultimately unhealthy? Is it the mark of the tyranny in France (and Europe) of a debilitating sense of historical guilt that paralyzes the French nation and prevents it from playing a constructive role in the global affairs of the present? Has the so-called “criminalization” of the nation’s recent past been exploited or “instrumentalized” to use the French expression, to influence or shape the present, or to forward or justify specific political agendas? If so, by whom, and to what ends? Finally, what can the French experience tell us about the complicated relationship between “History” and “Memory” in a ways that helps us understand these issues in France as well as other countries, in Europe and elsewhere? During our Seminar we will address these questions, as well as others the Seminar discussions may raise.

LOCATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE SEMINAR
As noted, our Seminar will be hosted by the Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent and will take place jointly at the Institut and the Centre International de Séjour de Paris. The IHTP is France’s most prestigious institute for the study of modern and contemporary history and is recognized as such internationally. Its archives for the study of modern and contemporary history are among the richest in the world. Participants will have access to these archives for their own research projects, and will be provided work spaces, including some with computers and internet, as needed. The majority of our guest speakers are researchers at the IHTP, and will be available for meetings with our participants on an ad hoc basis.

WEEK-BY-WEEK SCHEDULE
The first four weeks of the Seminar will be devoted to each of the four historical events and debates discussed above. The seminar will generally meet two days per week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays (morning and afternoon sessions on Tuesdays) except for field trips to be conducted at the end of Week I. Also, during the first week, each seminar participant will meet with the Directors to discuss his or her individual research project. It is expected that each participant will be prepared to do the work of the seminar while also working on a related research topic that will not only enhance that individual’s research program, but enrich the seminar’s discussions, formal and informal, of the group as a whole.

The first meeting each week will be given over to presentation and discussions (in English) of the assigned readings.
with Directors Golsan and Rousso. During Thursday’s meeting the Seminar will welcome the authors of most of the assigned texts (in the case of the week devoted to Vichy, the directors Rousso and Golsan) to answer questions and continue the discussions. In all cases, the authors of the Seminar’s texts are distinguished historians, and because of their expertise, several have “weighed in” as “expert witnesses,” so to speak, in the many of the debates and controversies that France’s efforts to deal with its history in the Twentieth Century have provoked.

The order of treatment of the four historical moments under discussion will be chronological.

**Week I** will therefore be devoted to the history and memory of World War I, or *la Grande Guerre*, as the French often refer to it. Although controversy surrounding World War I since 1990 has not been as intense or prolonged as that surrounding the Vichy past or Algeria and decolonization, France’s experience of devastating destruction during the conflict set the stage for the political, social, and cultural crises of the interwar years, and the military and political collapse of May-June 1940. In human terms alone France lost some 1.4 million men in the war, approximately ten percent of the working male population and 3.5 percent of the population as a whole. It is estimated that nine hundred French soldiers died each day. While France’s victory was widely celebrated and commemorated in the years after World War I, few in France were deluded enough to believe in a rapid recovery in human and material terms (if recovery was possible at all) or, more urgently, the nation’s ability to wage another war. The pessimism, cynicism and loss of faith in the nation’s future created a fragmented and acrimonious political, social, and cultural landscape whose dangers few could ignore. At the same time, however, the suffering and heroism of those fighting at the front was acknowledged by most French at the time.

But with the return to *la Grande Guerre* in the late 1990s, what was emphasized was not the heroism of those who fought, but the courage of those who refused the horrific and senseless destruction of a highly mechanized conflict. According to Annette Becker, the French army mutineers had become “the new heroes” and the conflict itself had been de-historicized to the extent that it had come to be viewed as “the laboratory and matrix of a century of violence and suffering.” In this context, what had once been understood to be heroic (if suicidal) assaults—like the 1917 “Nivelle Offensive”—now came to be characterized in some quarters as “the first crime against humanity,” to quote the mayor of the town of Craonne. If nothing else, the controversy clearly demonstrates how views on war, nationalism, and patriotism have changed in the new century.

These issues and others have been dealt with at length in Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker’s *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, published in French in 2000. As this book puts both traditional understandings of the war as well as current perspectives in context, *14-18* will serve as our principal text, to be supplemented by others.

**Week II** will be devoted to the scandals and controversies surrounding Vichy and the so-called *années noires* in the 1990s. As Henry Rousso has demonstrated in his classic study *The Vichy Syndrome*, originally published in 1987, the memory of the Vichy past has passed through several stages or “phases,” and the last three decades have been marked by the ebb and flow of what Rousso has labeled the “Obsessions Phase.” Since 1990 this phase has been marked by major political scandals, two trials for crimes against humanity for the complicity of Vichy officials in the implementation of the Nazi Final Solution, and the appearance of controversial works of art, many of which have sought to revise our understanding of the period, often in troubling ways. Using Rousso’s and Eric Conan’s *Vichy: An Everpresent Past* and Golsan’s *Vichy’s Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* as our main texts, we will focus on the key events and debates concerning the Vichy past and French complicity in the Holocaust since 1990. These events include the scandal following revelations that President Mitterrand had deliberately understated the length and duration of his service to the Vichy regime. They also include the trial on charges of crimes against humanity of the former militia man Paul Touvier, accused, among other crimes, of murdering seven Jewish hostages near Lyon in the summer of 1944. We will also discuss the 1997-98 trial of Maurice Papon in Bordeaux on similar charges. While serving as a sub-prefect in Bordeaux during the Occupation, Papon was directly implicated in the deportations of several trainloads of Jews, mostly to their deaths, between 1942 and 1944. Both trials raised vexing legal and historical questions that we will discuss in detail in the seminar.

Apart from its political and legal repercussions, the memory of Vichy and the Dark Years also inspired a large number of powerful novels and films in the 1990s and up to the present. Two very recent novels and one film are discussed above, but the list of such novels and films is extraordinarily long, and it is to be hoped that some of the participants will pursue independent projects on these works. Given the constraints of time, our seminar will focus
on one highly representative work, Patrick Modiano’s 1997 “novel” *Dora Bruder*.

Toward the beginning of Papon’s trial in Fall 1997, public attention and controversy shifted to another troubled past, that of Communism, and this will be the focus of Week III. As noted, the controversy was sparked by the publication of *The Black Book of Communism*. A collective enterprise involving France’s most distinguished historians of Communism, *The Black Book* examined in horrifying detail the crimes and genocides of Communist regimes world-wide, and the political and ideological nightmares that brought them about. The controversy over *The Black Book* also rekindled old debates over totalitarianism as well as the legitimacy—and political uses and abuses—of the term. Less than ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it also stirred controversial memories of the tacit acceptance and complicity of the once-powerful French Communist Party with Stalinism and its crimes. Most controversially, some of its contributors pointed to an equivalency between the crimes of Communism and those of the Nazis, including the Holocaust itself.

In discussing the history and crimes of Communism as a troubled moment in France and Europe’s past, we will welcome to the Seminar Nicholas Werth, France’s leading historian of the Soviet Union and the author of the chapters on its crimes in the *Black Book*. At the time of the publication of *The Black Book*, Werth strongly and publicly disagreed with the comparisons made between Communism and Nazism by some of his co-authors.

**Week IV** of the Seminar will be devoted to the history and memory of the Algerian War, and especially recent controversies that have cast very troubling aspects of that past into sharp relief. We will examine the controversy that erupted following the publication of General Paul Aussaresse’s *Services Spéciaux* in 2001 as well as the more recent controversy over President Mitterrand’s role as Minister of Justice in the execution of Algerian insurgents in the late 1950s, discussed in François Maly’s and Benjamin Stora’s recent book *François Mitterrand et la guerre d’Algérie* (2010). We will also view the film *Indigènes* and the problem it raises of popular films promoting dubious and sometimes false interpretations of history. We will conclude with a discussion of a watershed moment from October 1961, when a massive but peaceful protest in the streets of Paris of Algerian workers was brutally and murderously repressed by French police on orders of then Prefect of Paris Police Maurice Papon. The episode has remained in public view thanks to novels and films dealing with the event and its legacy. In the seminar we will view and discuss Michael Haneke’s 2005 film *Caché* (“Hidden”), a work of great interest to American French and film scholars. To discuss these and other issues related to the troubled legacy of the Algerian War, we will welcome the IHTP historian and specialist Malika Rahal to the Seminar.

**Week V** will be devoted to a “summing up,” so to speak, of the work of the seminar. In addressing the questions raised in the Rationale provided earlier, we will be in a position to better evaluate the historical, political, cultural, and moral implications of France’s ongoing preoccupation with its troubled Twentieth Century. We will also attempt to assess the impact of that preoccupation in attempts to “legislate” the past in the passage of the highly controversial “memorial laws” mentioned at the outset here. For our reading we will examine the content of the laws, the commentaries of the *Liberté pour l’Histoire* group, as well as the final report of the Accoyer commission which despite its status as government report, is a fascinating historical and legal exploration as well. (All of these are available on the web.)

In summing up we will also want to discuss what motivates France’s obsession with its past, and especially its fixation on its most controversial and criminal moments. To what degree do fictional and cinematic representations of these moments encourage that obsession? What impact does this have on the French nation’s ability to navigate the present and prepare confidently for the future? To help us address these issues, we will welcome the literary specialist Marc Dambre and the philosopher Pascal Bruckner to the seminar for a final “round table” discussion. Bruckner will also discuss his 2006 essay, *The Tyranny of Guilt*, with the group. Bruckner’s essay will be the final seminar assignment.

**SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS**

We anticipate that our Seminar will be of interest to a very wide range of college and university teachers, from the community college level to research university professors. We anticipate that the seminar will be of interest to specialists of French as well as European history, the Holocaust, Communism, colonialism, and the Francophone world, especially North Africa. It should also interest historians of human rights, professors of literature and film, as well as political science and cultural studies. Participants will need to have a working knowledge of French
in order to function in Paris and to read at least some of the readings assigned in the Seminar. Seminar discussions will be in English, with the exception of occasional commentaries in French by some of the guest lecturers.

HOUSING
Housing for our group of Summer Scholars will be at the Centre International de Séjour de Paris (CISP) a dormitory residence run by the city of Paris and located near the Vincennes Park. As noted above, one meeting per week of the Seminar will occur there, and the bus taking us on our field trips will also pick us up at the CISP. Each Summer Scholar will have a single room equipped with a small, private bathroom and television. There is limited space for spouses and partners at an additional cost available on a first come, first served basis. As is common in France, there is no air conditioning. The weather in Paris can be delightful in early summer, but wide temperature swings do occur. From time to time, we have experienced daytime temperatures as low as the fifties and as high as the nineties in June. Rooms for Summer Scholars have been reserved from the night of June 4 through the night of July 5. There is a Wi-Fi connection in the spacious lobby. Housing includes breakfast each day and seven additional meals per week, lunch or dinner, as the participant wishes. There are two days when participants do not have the option of lunch or dinner. A picnic lunch will be served on June 9, the day of the visit to the Somme, and on June 12, there will be a group dinner. Regular meals will be served in the cafeteria of the CISP, which has a pleasant outdoor terrace for fair days. The Group Dinner will be served in the CISP’s restaurant. In addition to the park, the primarily residential neighborhood includes the Museum of the History of Immigration. There is a public swimming pool and tennis courts located directly behind the CISP. Two metro stops, Porte de Vincennes and Bel Air, are in easy walking distance (10 to 15 minutes) as are many basic conveniences—there are cafés, épiceries, and a pharmacy, Laundromat, and post office in close proximity to the CISP.

STIPEND
The stipend for seminar participants is $3,900 and will cover a considerable portion of the costs. The projected cost of housing at the CISP with the meals described above and some transportation (busses for field trips and some metro tickets) is $2,850. A double occupancy room with two beds will for those bringing spouses or partners will incur an additional cost of $960. This cost includes breakfast but no additional meals or transportation. (Additional meals for spouses or partners can be arranged. Transportation costs for Summer Scholars are for seminar activities, and by NEH rule these are not open to spouses or partners) his amount will be subtracted ahead of time from each participant’s stipend.

SEMINAR PROJECTS
Each Summer Scholar will be expected to pursue a research project related to the subject of the seminar. This may be a conference paper to be given subsequently or an article or book chapter. Summer Scholars may also choose to develop a website or course materials. The topics of these projects will of course vary according to the interests of the individual Summer Scholar, and may include for example, historical problems or work on films or fictional works dealing with problems of the history and memory of the historical traumas with which we will be dealing. Resources in Paris for these possible projects are bountiful, and include the Bibliothèque Nationale, the National Archives, among others. Most importantly, Summer Scholars will have ready access to the rich resources of the IHTP, where they will have access to the library and reading room as well as computers. The resource people at the IHTP are also very generous with their time and most helpful.

NEH DISCLAIMER
ANY VIEWS, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, OR RECOMMENDATIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS SEMINAR DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THOSE OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT OF THE HUMANITIES.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS
http://glasscock.tamu.edu/NEHSS2012/application.html