

# What's French\_ Prof. Danielle ...-Scouras Moves Us Beyond Paris

Tue, Nov 14, 2023 1:22PM 34:32

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

france, toulouse, french, music, students, paris, musicians, interesting, marseille, thought, local, sing, other words, problematic, ohio state university, political, cities, called, chanson, dancing

## SPEAKERS

David Staley, Danielle Marx-Scouras, Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Eva Dale

---

- E** Eva Dale 00:00

From the heart of the Ohio State University on the Oval, this is Voices of Excellence from the College of Arts and Sciences with your host, David Staley. Voices focuses on the innovative work being done by faculty and staff in the College of Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University. From departments as wide ranging as art, astronomy, chemistry and biochemistry, physics, emergent materials, mathematics, and languages, among many others, the college always has something great happening. Join us to find out what's new now.
- D** David Staley 00:32

Danielle Marx-Scouras is Professor of French at the Ohio State University College of the Arts and Sciences. Her research focuses on contemporary French and Francophone literatures, theory, intellectual history, and popular music, which we're going to hear a great deal about; and I'm pleased to welcome you to Voices.
- D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 00:50

Thank you David.
- D** David Staley 00:52

Your most recent book is titled "Le France de Zebda", "The France of Zebda"; first of all, tell us about this book and tell us who Zebda are.
- D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 01:01

Okay, so Zebda is a very famous rock group from France. Right, from Toulouse, France, not from Paris. The three singers are of Algerian-Kabyle descent, and the other musicians come from different backgrounds. Right now they're on hold, so they began performing locally in the late 80s, but more so in the 90s, took a break there for a while, came back again in 2012, and again are on pause because they're doing solo projects. And I called it "The France of Zebda" because I wanted to show that this rock group presents a different image of France. We always have, most of the time, from France, this image that comes from Paris. In other words, it's a question of always defining a city by the nation, and here, Paris and nation go together and that's the image many people have of France, people who are tourists, but also people learning French, let's say at the high school level. And, what is happening in cities like Toulouse and Marseille - and that's currently my book project, too, because I'm working on other groups - is we're getting another definition of France and Frenchness. And so here, the cities are defining the nation, the nation isn't defining the cities. Because what's happened in France is that you have Paris versus province, and one of the musicians from Toulouse says, the French language is one of the few languages to have a notion called province that defines everything that is not the capital, and obviously, that's problematic. So I wanted to use Zebda as a way of looking at France, beginning with the Mitterrand election, and then the rise of the Front National, or the right wing movement, and looking at France from an other point of view and looking at it through these musicians. But, they're not just musicians, they started out in a very interesting manner, which is the Associatif, which was a way of working in the local communities, in other words, the periphery, or what we call the banlieue, the ghettos in France. And they worked with locals that weren't exactly social workers, they were sort of social workers artists who pushed young people to do writing, music, videos. And so, these young people wanted to become the new "Saturday Night Fever", they were influenced by that film, and they thought, well, that's what we're going to do. Well, inevitably, that's what they actually did do, but they started out not as, you know, professional musicians, or people really trained in that. So there's that whole community local movement, then they become musicians, but then they also get involved in politics and local elections in France, and today are even very involved in the community. So, it's not just a music group, it's really a more of a constellation that we're looking at through them. And so, that was why I thought it was really interesting to have a new vision of France, the other France, you know, the France of immigration, but not just the France of immigration, the France of what we call, you know, the provinces, the other cities, that are really defining Frenchness in a new manner today.

D

David Staley 01:05

A rock group, okay. When you say they're involved in politics, what does that mean specifically?

D

Danielle Marx-Scouras 03:52

Well, the most important politics was the election, municipal election of 2001, where they ran for local city council.

D

David Staley 04:00

They ran, as politicians?

D Danielle Marx-Scouras 04:02

They, and a whole group, it was a whole ticket. And they were trying to run, not representing any particular groups. So, they didn't want to represent, you know, the immigrant community, they didn't want to represent the feminist, gay or Occitan community, they wanted to be French, but French with a very plural identity. And they did very well in the first round, but when it came to the second round and the realization that they might win, the right wing candidate who was former mayor of Toulouse, Douste-Blazy, started a really racist campaign saying "No Arabs at City Hall". So, you have the lead person on the ticket, which is the brother of these musicians, of two of the musicians, Salah Amokrane, who actually asked to appear on French television and say, my name is Salah Amokrane and I'm French. But the whole thing turned into a ridiculously horrible, you know, racist second round, and of course Douste-Blazy won and they didn't. And so yeah, that was a very important movement because you realized, it's interesting because in all the French newspapers, they didn't talk so much about Salah, who was actually the one running at the top of the ticket, they talked about the musicians. And what became really interesting is Zebda is not a rap group. They've always defined themselves as a rock group, okay? And during the election, one of the French journalists from Le Monde, who had worked with them over the years and knew who they were said, oh, the rappers are running for election. And that was a very problematic statement, not just musically, but politically, as though the only thing you can do if you have any sort of alternative identity, foreign identity, is rap. So you're getting sent back to, I'm sorry, the ghetto, or you can do, you know, raÅ , Algerian music. And you know, they had a unique rock sound, and he knew that, and it's interesting that that comes up, that kind of musical classification at a political moment like that.

D David Staley 05:54

The subtitle of the book, and I'll translate, is "Make Music, a Political Act."

D Danielle Marx-Scouras 06:00

Yes.

D David Staley 06:00

Does that mean the lyrics or does it mean just -

D Danielle Marx-Scouras 06:03

Everything.

D David Staley 06:03

The performance? So, what's involved in music as a political act?

D

Danielle Marx-Scouras 06:06

Well, I mean, French music has always been highly political. It's all three: it's lyrics, it's music, and it's performance. So starting with the music, it's interesting that at a certain point, it was for their third album, they worked with Nick Sansano, who is at the Tisch School for the Arts at NYU. He also worked with Public Enemy, so, Ice Cube, the rap group, IAM, Noir Desire, I mean, really famous groups. So I mean, that's obviously a very politicized, you know, artistic director and producer. Their music is a really, a mix of sounds, it has, you know, the French accordion that comes in there, in a very haunting and politicized manner. In other words, when they're critiquing being left out of society, the accordion comes in in this really strong fashion. It's not the typical, you know, DPF, and all that type of music sound, it's haunting. It says, whoa, you're trying to fit in, but you don't. So, there's a lot of work that was both, you know, North African Kabiye instruments, Middle Eastern instruments, African instruments, but also what we consider more to be European instruments. And Sansano said, they had a really unique sound, it was a mix, it was a medley. So it was, you know, not just your straight, French sound. So the music is very festive, Toulouse has very festive music, music you want to dance to. And there's a slogan in Toulouse that says, the person who dances, thinks, and if you look at the photos of my students, actually, the only time they seem happy, and not just sitting there, you know, listening to someone give a talk on the trip there that we did, they're smiling when they're dancing. I mean, there's a whole, you know, physical bodily connection, you know, to music that takes place. So in terms of performance, yeah, they started out at very local venues, they sing at political venues, like the annual federal L'Humanité, L'Humanité being the communist newspaper, that's a very famous music festival in France, that takes place usually in Paris. They sing in many, many different political venues. So it's the three, in terms of performance, I mean, I think that comes through mostly, for me, at least, the way I observed it, when we met up together with the students, there was something that took place that was truly unique there. Okay.

D

David Staley 06:51

And I suspect that's a political -

D

Danielle Marx-Scouras 06:52

Oh, yes. Yeah, and that's been criticized. So initially, it was very local, they wanted to be really meshed into the local community, because they came from the periphery of Toulouse; so, not the center of Toulouse, which is the middle class Toulouse, but from the periphery. And they initially started their career of working from that periphery, and so basically, their audience were the youth and the working class and, you know, people of immigrant descent in France, and eventually, you know, moved around and became known in other cities and countries. But one of the critiques that's been taking place, because they don't do rap, is that they tend to get more of a white audience. So, that's been a critique. I mean, they get a very strong Algerian, Tunisian, Moroccan audience, but they don't get a lot of the youth audience that listens to rap. And the problem there isn't so much their demeanor or their personality, it's because their lyrics are actually quite complex, they're very literary. In fact, Magyd Cherfi, who was the lyricist for the group, is now an author, he decided he always wanted to be a writer but he

couldn't do it before, he needed his posse to make it. And now, he's been on you know, French national television with a recent novel that he published and before that, two collections of short stories, so the lyrics are very complex. And what's interesting is the music is very festive. So, it's not you know, depressing at all, but the lyrics are very strong. They're against, you know, racism, inequality and issues like that in France, fundamentalism, terrorism, etc. It's a very festive rock sound.

D

David Staley 08:14

And I definitely want to get to that, because this is an interesting part of your research and teaching. So, based on that description, I probably already have a sense of this, but I wonder, who's the audience for Zebda's music, who listens to them? Act as well. You said that French music has always been highly political. What did you mean by that, in what ways?

D

Danielle Marx-Scouras 10:03

Well, I mean, you even look at someone like (unintelligible), turn of the century. I mean, it's about politics. And if you look at the notion of, you know... "chanson" mean song in France, but chanson is not just song, it's really Frenchness, it's really something that defines Frenchness. It's, you know, for example, the music of... I mean, you have Piaf, obviously, but Jacques Brel, Brassens was very political, FerrÃ© is very political. And then there's Gainsbourg, who's one of my favorites, even though a lot of my women's students have issues with him, who is really the iconoclast, but I mean, all that music is highly political.

D

David Staley 10:37

In what way, political in what way? I mean, obviously, a different kind of politics, maybe, than what Zebda are singing about?

D

Danielle Marx-Scouras 10:42

Right. Okay, because they're the initial singers of chanson. But what's very interesting, you think that it's just Frenchness there, but very recently, a French critic, (unintelligible) mentioned that from the onset, chanson is already problematic. In other words, even these initial performers are not "French French", in other words, Brassens comes from the south of France, which often is not considered, and his Italian background is not considered, you know, France. Gainsbourg was of a Russian Jewish background, FerrÃ© came from Monaco. Brel, in the beginning, was considered Belgian until he became a good singer, now he's considered one of the icons of Frenchness. So, it's interesting that already there, the notion of Frenchness is being deconstructed in music. And I mean, Brassens' songs are about sexuality, they're against capital punishment, the horrors of World War Two, the women, you know, whose heads were shaved during World War Two. And again, they're in very ballad, you know, festive type sounds. FerrÃ© is very, very political, he's very much of an anarchist in his music. And Gainsbourg is probably as far as you can go, in the sense that, for example, he did something like Jimi Hendrix with the Star Spangled Banner, he decided to do a reggae version of "La Marseillaise" and almost got killed for doing that at a performance in France, I mean...you don't touch "La

Marseillaise" and make it reggae. So you describe Zebda for us in exquisite detail. Tell us about the study, your book. What is it that you're studying about Zebda and how did you go about doing that? You mean the book that I already did?

D

David Staley 12:14

Yes, the book on Zebda.

D

Danielle Marx-Scouras 12:16

Okay, that actually has a very amusing beginning. So I've been dragging my feet and my mind with this project on Camus for a long time, and I'm still working - Yeah, Albert Camus, very difficult author. And my chair at the time, Diane Birckbichler - God bless her - said, you know, you're really struggling with this, you're never going to become full at the rate you're going, why don't you just write a book on Zebda? And I went, you gotta be kidding, I can't do that. She goes, sure you can. And it's something...yeah, I loved it. I was teaching Zebda in my classes, I started doing talks on Zebda, publishing articles. And I thought, wow. And it was just a lot of fun, not only because, you know, I worked on the archives, and, you know, did the usual kind of study you do for a book, a lot of journalism, but I got to hang out with these musicians, not interview them once, but interview them many times over the years and developed a really long term relationship. And it was really fabulous, it was another world, it was out of the boring, you know, academic world. And I've haven't been the same since and I refuse now to do straight academic research, I want to do something that is fun; that's fun for my students when I bring it to the classroom, and it's really my undergraduates who influenced me here. If something is going well in my undergraduate classroom, sure, I want to write about it, I want to have a good time with it. And so, I got the okay from the chair, I got promoted without an issue, and it was just a wonderful experience. So, there was archival research, interviews, but a lot of contact, personal contact. In other words, not just a one time interview, but being with them, you know, staying weeks in Toulouse, also talking to journalists, Nick Sansano in the States, and others, it was just wonderful.

D

David Staley 12:25

Albert Camus.

J

Janet Box-Steffensmeier 13:55

I'm Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Interim Executive Dean and Vice Provost for the Ohio State University College of Arts and Sciences. Did you know that 23 of our programs are nationally ranked as top 25 programs, with more than ten of them in the top ten? That's why we say the College of Arts and Sciences is the intellectual and academic core of the Ohio State University. Learn more about the college at [artsandsciences.osu.edu](http://artsandsciences.osu.edu).

D

David Staley 14:21

So the book is titled "The France of Zebda". So I take it then, that the book is so much about

So the book is titled "The France of Zebda". So I take it, then, that the book is as much about France or French society and French culture as it is about the band?

**D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 14:28

Yeah, it's as much of a critique of the France of the time and, you know, the way it was dealing or not dealing with issues of equality and racism. Basically, the whole binary problem in France, which is Republicanism, it's the French model, you don't recognize difference in France, and then that battling with what we in the States called multiculturalism, but the French have a very derogatory term for that. It's communitarian - that's not how you say that in English - so it's more of a ghettoization, it's something they don't recognize. And that's why working on Zebda - and I'm working on other groups also from Marseille, Toulouse - is exciting, because it's allowing me to break down that binary, in other words, there isn't an either, or. By working on cultures in the plural from Marseille and Toulouse, I can go back now to the 19th century divide, that's the time where colonization isn't just an external thing, it's an internal thing in France. In other words, they're not recognizing, well, this has been going on for centuries, even at the time of the French Revolution and way back even before then, they're not recognizing the other languages, the other cultures. I mean, it took till 2008 for the French constitution to recognize regional languages, Corsican, Basque, Occitan, Flemish, etc., Breton, as part of the French legacy; I mean, that long, that's really, you know, rather frightening. So what's interesting about these cities is I can look at the dual colonization, which was both internal and external, and it allows me to sort of get rid of that binary and say, okay, we're not just looking at, you know, what you call "Français de souche", a real French person coming from the stump, as it so called, or those of you know, immigrant descend, that continually called immigrants even though they've been there for three or four generations. So, by looking at this divide that already existed internally in the 19th century and continued through the 20th century and recognizing the importance of those other cultures - like Occitan culture in the South has become very strong in the music after '68, but even more so today - I sort of can break down that divide and see colonization within France, too. So that's already in the Zebda project, but coming out more so my recent work that I'm working on now, because I want to include other types of music, and other cities like Marseille.

**D** David Staley 16:41

So you've made a couple of references to your students, to your undergraduates, and I know that your relationship with Zebda's influenced your teaching. Tell us how this has happened?

**D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 16:52

Well, I've done a number of things. I've started out with a video conference I did with Syria, Sabra Webber, who used to be in comp studies and NELC was in Syria at the time, and I was teaching a course on North African literature. And we decided to do a video conference, and it was amazing. So, my students were very nervous, they thought, well, we better take a sort of post-colonial slam because we decided to discuss a short story by Camus, "The Guest", and my students were nervous thinking, oh, we're going to do the post-colonial, obviously, if we're dealing with Syrian students. Well, the interesting thing is the Syrian students discuss the notion of hospitality in the story, and it became this amazing exchange, I had never thought that a gathering of that nature, you know, through technology could be so intimate and so life

changing. I mean, three of my students decided to do Arabic and go study in Damascus at the time. And so when they had the teaching, teaching technology grants came, I thought, oh, I gotta do something interesting. And I thought, why don't I try doing a video concert, because nobody's doing that, at least in the area of French studies. And it seems so obvious, and I'm thinking, why isn't anybody doing this? So I spoke to Sujan, you know, Manandhar, here of the Hagerty technology, and he said sure, just make sure they don't have, you know, too many instruments because that can create problems with sound and freezing, you know, the image and sound. And so I did that, and it was amazing because you could interact, you know, with the musicians, in other words, my students sang with them, they danced with them, even though they're on a screen, right, and talk to them. And it was really phenomenal because, you know, a lot of the students can't afford to go to France, and I certainly can't bring all these musicians here without a lot of money, so this was a very inexpensive kind of thing. And it's interesting because the question then became, you know, technology, not for technology's sake, but what do we have here? We have this moment, this local experience, and where are we? I mean, it's not exactly that, you know, French culture, is French culture coming to us, or are we going to France? And I love that ambivalent moment that was just so rich and the focusing on the moment and a moment that wasn't just, you know, intellectual discourse but actually singing, dancing. So I did that obviously with Zebda later, but also with a feminist duo last spring, Les Femmouzes from Toulouse, but it just created a very different, you know, kind of experience and a very privileged experience because the beauty here, too, with Zebda, is they're very peripheral. They come from Toulouse, and every time they go on stage, they say, we are Zebda, Zebda demeans actually butter and Arabic, but it's a play on the word "beur", B,E,U,R, which is back slang for Arab in France, and so that's more of a Parisian term. So they're actually playing with that and then bringing it back to Arabic and bringing Arabic back, you know, into their identity. So every time they go on stage, they say, we are Zebda from Toulouse. So there's that peripheral element, and here are my students at Ohio State, it is a peripheral location, right? We're in the Midwest, we're in a state institution, we're not in New York or L.A., we're not in an Ivy privilege context; my students are getting something that these individuals from other cities and other privileged institutions are not getting, because they have a very traditional curriculum still in the Ivy's, and something the French aren't getting. I mean, how many French people have this transatlantic encounter with Zebda or another musical group, and then also, you know, I took students to France to meet them; how many actually have a couscous evening, dancing and singing and eating with them? So it was really cool, yeah.

D

David Staley 20:26

Singing and eating with them: describe what that was like,

D

Danielle Marx-Scouras 20:29

Oh, it was wonderful. So I started that in 2012, I took the IA Scholars - I think they're International Affairs Scholars from the Scholars Program - first years to France for a week, we had a course for this called "Ex-centric France", which, obviously, was not in Paris, right? And then we had a trip to Marseille and Toulouse, and I was told, though, by the dean that I also needed to include Paris at the end, of course. One of the things that always bothers me about Paris is, I do this trip where I show them another side of France - whether it's the 2012 trip or the Ratner Award trip, "France Beyond Borders" - and then we get to Paris, and there's that



darn Eiffel Tower, and they're just drooling still over the Eiffel Tower - I can't get rid of that. But what was wonderful about the encounters with musicians, both in Marseille Toulouse in 2012, and more recently in 2017, this wasn't a concert where, you know, and I don't even the video concerts, I don't want them in a big venue, because people have said, oh, why don't use a big auditorium? No, no, I want an intimate experience where my students feel special and whereas Zebda has the occasion to interact with a small group of people and not just perform. So, these dinners were amazing because you eat; when you eat with people, things change, when you talk to them, when you dance, when you sing with them. And also because they didn't cook the traditional food of Toulouse, which is cassoulet, they cooked couscous. And they have a song where they say, not everyone's plate is cassoulet in Toulouse. So it was wonderful, I mean, the students had this amazing experience getting to know them on a really personal level.

**D** David Staley 20:33

The...? Well, I'm really interested in this idea of having your students sing because I know you conducted, as far as I know, the first cabaret here in Hagerty Hall, where we record these. So, tell us about the "Tout Finit" cabaret, "Everything Ends".

**D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 22:16

Okay, "Tout Finit Par Des Chansons" is actually a quote from Beaumarchais' "The Marriage of Figaro", and it means "everything ends in a song". And it's not just a song in terms of music, it refers to the perennial fallibility of the French. So it's very much a political statement. But I decided to use it, in any case, here from both musical and political reasons. So it was interesting, it's perhaps not the first Crane Cafe performance, I think other language departments have also done them, but it was the first for French and Italian. And what was interesting, I decided to tell my students, if you want to earn some extra credit, you can go sing, first in our class, try it out in someone else's class in French, and then eventually in Crane.

**D** David Staley 22:54

I should say, Crane Cafe is here in the building, in fact it's just around the corner from where we are right now. And it's a fairly public location, you get, you know, a cup of coffee and a scone, but it's a very public location.

**D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 23:04

Yeah. And, you know, I know that FRIT Radio does a lot there, too, and - well the radio, that's just with French and Italian without the other languages. And yeah, there's a lot of background noise, and people are listening, not listening. But it's really interesting, because initially, only one group was interested in doing it, but was fascinating is the following: so "Me Too" has obviously impacted, you know, the way we deal with a lot of things, including some more problematic musicians, like Serge Gainsbourg, who was one of my favorite musicians, still today, but you know, he's problematic. He's raunchy, he's, you know, done some things that were censored by many countries. And, you know, initially we were doing it in class and a number of my female students were, you know, obviously influenced by the "Me Too"

movement saying, oh, this guy, and were somewhat uncomfortable criticizing his music, and I went, okay, so we had great discussions. And what's interesting that two of the performing groups there, out of four, sang really raunchy music. So you've got four women, they're singing Brassens' "Fernande", which is a very raunchy song. And they're doing it, not in the Brassens version, but in the Cara Bruni version, you know, the First Lady, the former First Lady of France. That's right, Sarkozy's wife.

D David Staley 24:16

Yeah, yes. And she did a version that was even raunchier, as a woman, singing this song. And so, they picked that song, I did not ask them to sing that song, and I'm thinking, why are you so critical of it when we're having an intellectual discussion, but so eager to imitate Cara Bruni - they're all dressed in, you know, black dresses like Cara Bruni, they looked so elegant, they sang with the elegance that she has. And then, there's an even more controversial song called "Les Sucettes", or "The Lollipops", by Serge Gainsbourg, which was also sung by France Gall. And two of the women who were highly critical of Gainsbourg sang that with two of the men. And I'm thinking, what's happening here? And I thought, this is really interesting that you know something, and I guess that's sort of ties in to with the new working group on campus, you know, performances pedagogy, that you can treat maybe more problematic subjects through performance. Because, what was problematic in a discussion or in, you know, listening, reading contexts, here in performers, they're actually enjoying themselves. So it was it was really amazing, it's really amazing. There was really obviously very much of a political slant to all that, yeah. Why is it you're comfortable now doing this, right? Well, and this cabaret was part of a course you were teaching: what was, what was the name of the course?

D Danielle Marx-Scouras 25:32

The name of the course was "Minor Art", which is a concept from Serge Gainsbourg. He doesn't believe that music is a serious art but, I mean, he's always playing with what he's saying. "'Minor Art' from Gainsbourg to Stromae"; Stromae has a lot of success these days, and also in United States.

D David Staley 25:48

And that's...?

D Danielle Marx-Scouras 25:49

Oh, Stromae is a Belgian performer of... his mother is Flemish-Belgian, but his father was from Rwanda. And he has been one of the most successful artists of French expression in the United States, all the young people know who he is. And so it's from, you know, "'Minor Art' from Gainsbourg to Stromae", or "Music as a Political Act", popular music as a political act.

D David Staley 26:11

Well and, you obviously have an interest in music and popular music, in the politics of music:

well and, you obviously have an interest in music and popular music, in the politics of music; why, what drew you in this direction?

**D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 26:19

I mean, I'm not trained at all in music, and I've always loved music. I've always incorporated music in courses, I think, because it brings another dimension that... you know, literature obviously brings in very important dimension, film. But music brings in an interesting dimension, because it's really part, maybe more so a part of pop culture. In particular, what I love about French music is - well, maybe not so much with rap - but, for example, the great artists are appreciated by any age group, you know, whether it's people my age or older, or young students, I mean, they're there as very important representatives. And also because chansons does the same thing that Francophone literature does. So I became interested in Francophone literature in the late 70s when I was in Paris, and Francophone literature, we have to say really saved French departments. There was a time where, you know, the enrollments were terrible, and suddenly, the fact that you could study literatures in French expression from other countries, such as Quebec, or all the countries from Africa or even from Vietnam, became really exciting and brought a dimension that was going beyond, you know, the hexagon of France. Well, I feel that music, even if it was internal, and within France was also doing that, as I mentioned earlier, these musicians were not, you know, pure French, as the people pushing for Frenchness through chanson, thought they were. So there was already that sort of Francophone element within this "minor art". And minor is also a term used by theoreticians like Deleuze and Guattari, who'd talk about the minor within the major. So, I mean, that's... I'm not a musician, but I know that also has musical connotations. I'm looking more at the theoretical, you know, political connotations. So, yeah, it was the fact that I could look at Frenchness, even internally, through music only from France and have the same kind of thing taking place, almost as you have in Francophone, which is questioning, obviously, you know, Frenchness from elsewhere, and still using the French language, of course. And it's fascinating that this French language then becomes so rich and so varied, and it goes way beyond the notion of having the proper Parisian accent, right, because these musicians from the South have very different accents, too. Yeah.

**D** David Staley 28:33


So I mentioned in the introduction The Ratner Distinguished Teaching Award that you won, and that award helped to facilitate a study abroad course that you mentioned, "France Beyond Borders: Redefining French and European Identity";, please tell us about the course.


**D** Danielle Marx-Scouras 28:48

Okay, so when I got the award, I thought, oh, wow, now I have to do something even more exciting, what am I going to do? And I decided, I've made all these contacts over the years, and what's very important for me is that my teaching, research, service, study abroad, needs to be seamless, it needs to all come together. So I thought, what can I do that's exciting? I thought, well, why don't I just, you know, use all the contacts I've made over the years and give that back to my students. And I didn't want to limit myself just to France as I'd done in 2012, I wanted to go beyond France to again, you know, question Frenchness through multiple languages, multiple regions and places. So we started at Marseille and then we went to two

local cities, Toulouse, but then we also went to San Sebastian in Basque, Spain, because they really, at least, are dealing more with the question of the Basque language, Basque culture, the Basque represented at the International, you know, San Sebastian Film Festival that takes place every September - they're doing a better job than the French have been doing with regional languages. And from there, we went to Pamplona, obviously, you know, to rediscover Hemingway, but also to do a one day walk on the Camino. So, we walked the Camino, the pilgrimage, right, from Pamplona to (unintelligible) and then eventually went to Brussels, Leuven, and ended in Paris. And we had all sorts of activities, so activities with musicians, presentations of what it was to work in the dockyards outside Marseille, artists, poets, film directors, soap makers. The soap making was rather interesting, I mean, Marseille soap is very important. It's linked to colonialism and the import of, you know, the original oils there from Africa, but it's also caught up in issues of globalization. So it's a way of... I mean, yes, it's linked to colonial history, but it's also something that's pushing against globalization, so we went to see how soap is made. And it was a rather interesting experience because the fumes are pretty toxic, so everybody in the clip, I think their eyes are running because of the toxicity. It was interesting also to see how different individuals do what's important, what's local, because for me, the local is very important. There's a really wonderful TED Talk by the Ghanaian writer, Taiye Selasi, who says, don't ask me where I'm from, ask me where I'm a local. In other words, all experience is local, and all identity is experience. So I find that really important in everything that I do, so I really wanted that also on the trip. And then yeah, we did the pilgrimage, we looked at other languages in Belgium, in other words, Flemish. I wanted again to break down that whole binary between, you know, Republicanism and multiculturalism and see if we can do something else with that, focusing very much on the local, so they got to meet all kinds of fascinating individuals. And one of the really important things too was, I had to go to Paris, I was told again, okay, you have to do Paris and you're not gonna be happy. So yes, after two wonderful weeks of being exposed to the pluralism of France, here we are in Paris, and everybody's drooling in front of the Eiffel Tower. And one of my students who spent, you know - he drank a lot, he spent his evenings drinking - actually gets up at 7am to go to the Louvre, and I thought, wow, there is something calling you if you want to see the Mona Lisa, in Europe, in line at 7am, to get in early to the Louvre in Paris. But I did something alternative in Paris; my editor has opened her own, you know, series now, and bookstore, and publishing company. And she published a book that's really fascinating, by a woman who lived and lives in the neighborhood where they had all the terrorist attacks from Charlie Hebdo, to the musical venue of the Bataclan, it's the same area, the same arrondissement, the same neighborhood. And she wrote a book about memory where she traces a day to day, it's sort of like a diary day to day of what's going on in her neighborhood and how people are commemorating. And I thought, this is the Paris I want to do. So that's how we ended the trip, she took us around and showed us where things took place, and what happened there, and the way there's been commemoration both by the locals, and of course, the state obviously has to come in and put plaques and things. And one of the things that was really... struck us all, is at one point, she showed us a simple little hole in the building of (unintelligible), this tiny bullet hole. And she said, it's not like 9/11 where everything was destroyed here, you can barely see the signs of what took place, and she pointed to this small indentation. And it was really a very moving moment because, okay, maybe the whole area wasn't destroyed physically, but all those lives were lost. So I was really happy that I could end Paris like that. And at one point one of the locals came out and said, what are all these people doing in the neighborhood, because he was very uncomfortable about, you know, the fact. Then I explained it, and I said, well, you know, it's like, if you come visit what's left of the memories of 9/11 and he went, oh, okay. So I think it was very important for the students to see Paris that way and to see how people continue with their daily lives despite terrorism in France. Yeah, it was really it was quite moving, yeah.

 David Staley 34:11  
Danielle Marx-Scouras. Thank you.

 Danielle Marx-Scouras 34:14  
Well, thank you so much, Dave. It's been a pleasure.

 Eva Dale 34:16  
Voices from the Arts and Sciences is produced and recorded at The Ohio State University College of Arts and Sciences Technology Services Studio. Sound engineering by Paul Kotheimer, produced by Doug Dangler. I'm Eva Dale.