

France: State, Institutions and Society

Instructor: James Anderson

Course overview

This course is an introduction to French politics, history, society, and culture, focusing on the multifaceted development of France from the Ancien Régime to the present. Students will examine the evolution of French political institutions, analyzing key events such as the French Revolution, the establishment of the Republics, and the impact of republicanism, colonialism and global conflicts on France's political, social and cultural landscapes. The course also delves into the contributions of influential historical figures, including monarchs, revolutionaries, intellectuals, political leaders and cultural icons to understand their roles in shaping modern France.

In addition, the course will explore French society by analyzing social structures, institutions, class dynamics, and demographic shifts over time. Special attention will be paid to the role of religion and secularism (laïcité), the challenges and opportunities of immigration, and the rise of multiculturalism. Contemporary issues will also be discussed, providing students with a nuanced understanding of contemporary French society and culture.

Assignments

- 1- Culture corner (25%)
- 2- Attendance & class participation (10%)
- 3- Mid-term exam (25%)
- 4- Final exam (40%)

Culture corner –Students will give a ten-minute presentation on an aspect of French culture in which they are interested. We will discuss possible topics in the introductory class.

Attendance & participation – Attendance is mandatory and students are expected to come to class prepared and to actively participate.

Mid-term exam – There will be a multiple choice mid-term exam to assess students' assimilation of the material covered in class.

The final exam – Organized outside the course at the end of the semester, it consists of two sections:

- (1) An MCQ evaluation of the students' theoretical and factual knowledge
- (2) Short answer questions.

Outline

- 1- Introduction to the course: France, its geography, administrative regions and people
- 2- Political system (Fifth Republic)
- 3- The French Revolution of 1789
- 4- 19th Century Revolutions
- 5- Colonialism
- 6- World Wars and France
- 7- Mid-term exam (MCQ only)
- 8- Foreign policy - A case study
- 9- Immigration and multiculturalism
- 10- May, 1968
- 11- Educational system
- 12- Wrap up

Recommended TV-Radio Channels and their websites

FRANCE 24 (linked to the FRANCE 24 TV channel) provides round the clock news on French and International Politics in English: <http://www.france24.com/en/tag/french-politics/>

Radio France International (RFI), especially French News: <http://www.english.rfi.fr/france>