Modern France
HIST 388-003
Syllabus

Prof. Sun-Young Park
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Virtual office hours by appointment

Spring 2022
TR 12-1:15pm
Krug Hall 210

Course overview

This course is a survey of French history of the past two centuries and an introduction to the multidisciplinary study of culture, politics, and society. We will begin with the 1789 French Revolution and cover the nation’s long and difficult transition to democracy, ending with discussions on enduring discourses of liberty, equality, and secularism in the contemporary political and social landscape. While covering major events such as revolutions, wars, and uprisings, we will also study the experiences of ordinary citizens, social practices, and cultural techniques. Our weekly topics will include industrialization and labor; class and the rise of the bourgeoisie; urbanization and urbanism; nationalism and imperialism; gender and feminism; developments in science, technology, and medicine; mass culture and consumption. The aim of the course is to gain a deeper understanding of the major issues and themes spanning French history, and how they have come to shape our understanding of modernity. Through readings and discussions of a variety of primary and secondary documents, we will also question how we use different kinds of sources to reconstruct the past, and think critically about ways of writing history.

Course requirements

Grade breakdown:

Class participation 20%
Primary source analysis 25%
Midterm 25%
Final exam 30%

1. Class participation: This course will be comprised of both lectures and discussions. You are expected to come to each class prepared with thoughts and questions on the day’s reading assignment. I may occasionally give unannounced reading quizzes to check that you are keeping up with the course material. There will also be 4 required Discussion Board posts (through Blackboard) over the course of the semester, on weeks 2, 5, 10, and 13.

2. Take-home midterm (due 5pm, Friday 3/11): The midterm will cover material from weeks 1 through 6. You will be asked to write 3 short essays (approximately 500-600 words each) in response to prompts that will be posted on Blackboard on Monday 3/7.

3. Primary source analysis: This paper will be a 1500-2000-word analysis of a primary source (text or artifact, such as an artwork) that relates to the topics and themes covered in our course. You will be expected to situate the document in its larger historical context to interpret and analyze its significance. I will provide a list of suggestions, but you are also welcome to make a different selection based on your interests. The deadline for this assignment is rolling. As a preliminary step, you will give a short presentation on your primary source on the day we study the related topic. Your paper will be due two weeks after that date.
4. *Take-home final exam* (due 5pm, Friday 5/13): The final exam will comprise two essays (approximately 1000 words each), in response to a selection of 3 questions that will be posted on Blackboard on Monday 5/9.

**Reading assignments**

The following textbook is available for purchase at the University bookstore:


Earlier editions of this textbook are fine to use, but please note that paginations may differ. This book will serve as the background reading for the course and you will be assigned approximately 20-40 pages each week to give you a broad overview of that week's topic. Additional reading assignments for each week, comprising both primary and secondary texts, will be made available online through Blackboard.

**Course policies**

- **Academic integrity:** The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity ([https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/)). Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or Chicago format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

- **Course communication:** Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.

- **Attendance and conduct:** You are expected to attend and participate in every class session. For justifiable absences (such as illness or other emergencies), you may be asked to provide official documentation. You should e-mail me in advance if you know of an upcoming conflict. Repeated absences will impact your participation grade. Please always be respectful of your classmates and professor in your speech and conduct.

- **Technology policy:** Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at [https://mygmu.mason.gmu.edu](https://mygmu.mason.gmu.edu). Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OS X 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher). Cell phones and other communicative devices must be switched off or put on silent (not vibrate) mode during class hours. Laptops/tablets may be used solely for note-taking purposes, and not for e-mailing, internet browsing, or using social media. I may occasionally check that you are complying with this policy.
and in the case that it is not respected, I reserve the right to prohibit laptop/tablet use for the remainder of the course.

- **Late assignments:** For all written work, lateness will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example, A to A-) for every 24-hour period beyond the deadline. Weekly response papers will not be accepted late. If you have extenuating circumstances, you should always get in touch with me directly.

- **Special accommodations:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Weekly schedule**

**Week 1 The Old Regime**

T 1/25 Introduction
R 1/27 The Old Regime
- Background: Popkin, ch.1-4
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, excerpt

**Week 2 The French Revolution**

T 2/1 Origins of the French Revolution
- Background: Popkin, ch.5-8
- Abbé Sieyès, "What is the Third Estate?" (1789)
R 2/3 The Revolution, continued

**Week 3 From Napoleon to the Congress of Vienna**

T 2/8 The Napoleonic Empire
- Background: Popkin, ch.9
R 2/10 The Restoration
- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), excerpt
- Alfred Musset, “Reflections,” in *Confession of a Child of the Century* (1836)

**Week 4 The Restoration and the July Monarchy**

T 2/15 The 1830 Revolution
- Background: Popkin, ch.10-11
R 2/17 Industrialization and social change
- Honoré de Balzac, *Father Goriot* (1835), ch.1-6
- Recommended: Popkin, ch.12

**Week 5 1848**

T 2/22 The Revolution of 1848
- Recommended: Popkin, ch.13
R 2/24  The Second Republic
   - Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852), ch.1 and 7

Week 6 The Second Empire and the Commune
T 3/1  Paris, capital of modernity
   - Recommended: Popkin, ch.14
R 3/3  War and Commune
   - Background: Popkin, ch.15-16
   - Karl Marx, “The Paris Commune,” in *The Civil War in France* (1871)

Week 7 Midterm (no class meetings this week, midterm available online from Monday)
F 3/11  Take-home midterm due (Blackboard)

Week 8 SPRING BREAK

Week 9 The Third Republic
T 3/22  The early Third Republic
   - Background: Popkin, ch.17-18
R 3/24  The fin de siècle

Week 10 France and the Great War
T 3/29  France and the European balance of power
   - Leonard V. Smith et al., “Mobilizing the Nation and the Civilians’ War,” in *France and the Great War 1914-1918* (2003), 42-75
R 3/31  The French experience of World War I
   - Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932), excerpt
   - Recommended: Popkin, ch.22-23

Week 11 Interwar France
T 4/5  Empire and anxiety
   - Recommended: Popkin, ch.24-25
R 4/7  Jazz Age in Paris

Week 12 The Second World War
T 4/12  The fall of France
   - Background: Popkin, ch.26-28
R 4/14  France and the Holocaust
  ▪ No reading assignment – we will watch part of *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) in class as the basis of our discussion

Week 13 France to 1968
T 4/19  Postwar France
  ▪ Background: Popkin, ch.30-31
R 4/21  The Algerian War
  ▪ Frantz Fanon, “Algeria Unveiled” in *A Dying Colonialism* (1959)

Week 14 1968 and after
T 4/26  1968
  ▪ Recommended: Popkin, ch.33
R 4/28  The Mitterrand era
  ▪ Background: Popkin, ch.34-35

Week 15 Contemporary issues
T 5/3  Grand Paris
R 5/5  Immigration, nationalism, and France today
  ▪ George Packer, "The Other France: Are the Suburbs of Paris Incubators of Terrorism?" *The New Yorker*, 31 Aug 2015
  ▪ Recommended: Popkin, ch.36