



IFE course syllabus

Course title

The Foundations of French Politics, Policies, and Institutions, Yesterday and Today

Course taught by

Pascal Cauchy is Professor of History at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris ("Sciences Po") and Visiting Professor at the State University of Moscow. Pascal also served Sciences Po as Dean of International Studies and is currently attached to that institution's Center for History both as researcher and administrator. Pascal joined Sciences Po after nine years of research and teaching in Moscow and is a specialist in the historiography of communism. He has published "A History of the IVth Republic" (Presses Universitaires de France) and is currently researching the work of Blandine Kriegel, a historian of communism.

Purpose of the course

The purpose of this course is to help students grasp fundamental notions of French society today by studying the roots and the development of the main institutions and concepts of French political life. This course in turn contributes to the overall purpose of the IFE preparatory session which is to equip students to participate as fully as possible in French professional life and social and political discussion. It should be seen as a companion course to "Structure, Transformation and Issues in French Society". The course aims at a thorough familiarity with the politically and institutionally constitutive elements of contemporary France by examining how history shaped institutions and outlooks which in turn shape France today.

Description of the course

The course is taught in two parts, or "modules", the first one focusing on the foundations and structures of the French State and the second on the French State in a European and international context from a historical perspective.

As a survey for non-specialists, the course adopts a hybrid chronological-thematic approach to looking at the major notions of the state and the nation, since the Revolution. Founding principles, the rapid institutional developments of the 19th century, the effects of 20th century upheavals, and other themes are treated in turn.

Course format

The format of this course has been designed for maximum pedagogical effectiveness in light of the constraints of a course offered intensively over a short period of time. Accordingly, the course comprises two types of sessions, with lecture/seminar meetings alternating with discussion sections. Students are expected to participate in both informal debate and discussion as well as formal presentations (oral exposés, press reviews, and the like).

Each course of the preparatory session also includes appropriate site visits.

This course meets approximately 48 hours, including mandatory site visits.

Course outline

I Introduction / Nation and State

The concept of the Nation was born of the French Revolution, but it took all of the 19th century to develop the habits and institutions of the French Nation-State and of citizenship (right to vote, political party membership, etc.). Revolts, international conflicts and difficult successions all helped forge these new institutions, while the State also played a role in forming a political identity.

II The French Revolution

This lesson is devoted to one of the founding events of French political and social life. An examination of the major moments of the Revolution and their importance as central political events on which have been founded a new legal system, complex institutions and a thoroughly renovated social organization.

III The Advent and Impact of the Modern Era

The transformations taking place at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century constituted the framework of a new society. A look at the main aspects of the legal and institutional inheritance from this period.

IV The France of the 19th Century

A panorama of French society as it traverses the 19th century.

V Paris in the 19th Century

Paris holds a unique place in the history of France but it was through enormous changes in the 19th century – when Paris was the biggest urban renewal project in Europe – that it became the city it is today. What have been the means and the consequences of this transformation?

VI Church and Religion

An examination of the ties between France and religious affairs, and in particular catholicism. The principal moments in the struggle – occasionally violent – between advocates of a secular society and those still attached to a society embodying religious principles.

VII Colonial Empire

France came late to the colonializing process. At the end of the 19th century, the nation began to be interested in overseas expansion, at first mostly in Asia and then Africa.

VIII The Great War

The First World War was a very trying experience for French society. A large number of workers, especially rural workers, were lost. A consequence of the war was a strong theme of pacifism in French politics.

IX World War II

France began WWII with a defeat, came out of war quickly, and found itself under enemy occupation for four years. The consequences were in particular political.

X Left and Right

Political life in France appears to be organized around two large formations ; the institutions of the Fifth Republic reinforce this two-party effect, which was not always the case in France. What is the genealogy of left-right relations?

XI The Gaullist Republic

In 1958, France adopted a new constitution and began the 5th Republic. In the sixty years since there have been a number of deep changes in the initial republican model sought by General DeGaulle, such as in 1992 with the transfer of certain powers to the European Union.

XII French Political Life Today

A look at current political events and trends, at the time that the course is held.

XIII France in the World

A major European power, France re-acquired an empire at the end of the 19th century. Why and how did this happen? Six decades later the empire disappeared in two wars and various emancipation movements. This lesson examines the relations between French society and empire.

Readings

- Historical essays:

Histoire des Institutions et des Régimes politiques de la France de 1789 à 1958; by Jean-Jacques - Chevallier, Armand Colin (10th Ed.) 2005

La France de 1914 à Nos Jours; by M. Agulhon, A. Nouchi, R Schor – Nathan, 2001

Dictionnaire de la politique et de l'administration, Guillaume Bernard, Jean-Pierre Deschodt, Michel Verpeaux, PUF, 2010

Dictionnaire historique et juridique de l'Europe, Jean-Paul Bled, Edmond Jouve, Christophe Reveillard, PUF, 2013

Dictionnaire des relations internationales, Dario Battistella, Franck Petiteville, Marie-Claude Smouts, Pascal Vennesson, Paris, Dalloz, 2012

Problèmes religieux contemporains, Alain Besançon, 2015,

L'invention de la France, Hervé Le Bras, Emmanuel Todd, 2012

Etre (ou ne pas être) républicain, Frédéric Rouillois, 2015

Nouvelle Histoire de la France Contemporaine, Seuil (any recent edition)

La Politique en France XIX-XX siècle. Régimes, institutions, élections, courants, partis, groupes de pression, médias, by H. Néant, Hachette, 1991

La France d'un Siècle à l'Autre, 1914-2000, René Rémond, Hachette, 1999

- Suggested reading:

Literature:

Le Colonel Chabert, by Honoré de Balzac

Souvenirs, Alexis de Tocqueville

Les dieux ont soif, Anatole France

Qu'est-ce qu'une nation ? Ernest Renan

Le Hussard sur le toit, Jean Giono

La gloire de mon père, Marcel Pagnol

Si le grain ne meurt, André Gide

Le Rivage des Syrtes, Julien Gracq

Le Blé en herbe, Colette

Uranus, Marcel Aymé

Candide, Voltaire

Le Contrat social, Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Pensées, Blaise Pascal

Theater:

La Ville dont le prince est un enfant, Henry de Montherlant

L'Aigle à deux têtes, Jean Cocteau

Antigone, Jean Anouilh

Les mains sales, Jean-Paul Sartre

Poetry:

Poésies, Arthur Rimbaud

Poèmes saturniens, Paul Verlaine

Les Yeux d'Elsa, Aragon

Grading

Student work is evaluated on the basis of a mid-term essay and a written examination at the end of the course, the grades for which are averaged with the participation grade based on oral presentations, press reviews and discussion participation.

Equivalent in American university course offerings

This course is pluridisciplinary by design. Nonetheless it roughly corresponds to a Political Science Department course in Comparative Politics or Politics and Government of France or French Political Institutions, or a History Department course such as Citizenship in France since 1789.