



## Course title

### French Society: Problems and prospects

## Course taught by

Jean Zoungrana

Holding a doctorate in Philosophy as well as a degree in Social Sciences from the University of Strasbourg, Jean Zoungrana is Associate Professor in Social Science Research at the University of Strasbourg in the program "Social Practices and Development". His research focuses on the sociology of knowledge as well as on social work, where he is currently conducting research on social policies and social intervention. He is also interested in forms of citizen participation. At IFE Jean teaches a course on issues and perspectives in contemporary French society.

## Purpose of the course

The key to understanding contemporary French society lies in grasping the paradox between the democratic and égalitarian ideal that is at the foundation of all the institutions of modern, post-revolutionary France on one hand and, on the other, the current crisis of those institutions – and even of deep societal values – which is provoked by the pressures of global economic liberalism and the transformations taking place in Europe and in its Union. While the former has fostered an institutionalization of a citizen's relationship with culture, work, education, social affairs etc, the latter have shaken the institutional foundations of French society and even to some extent the commonly held values of its citizens.

Through this course students become familiar with the effects these pressures are having on the specific institutionalized relations that exist between French citizens and culture, work, education, immigration, and other facets of life and society.

## Description of the course

This course takes a close look at contemporary French society and its social policies beginning with a brief, historico-critical look at the emergence of the welfare state and the safety-net state. Next, four fundamental areas of society are explored: social action and the critical role of the not-for-profit sector; the educational system and its effects on social standing; the problem of the ring of disadvantaged zones around French cities as emblematic of the French *malaise*; and the values held by French and European youth. Finally, a comparative look at the American model will provide an opportunity to analyze the prospects and issues facing French society.

## 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 32 hours, including mandatory site visits.

## Course outline

### Introduction

#### I From Welfare State to Social Protection

##### A. The welfare State and the protector State

- Europe as the cradle of social security and the welfare State
- Historically, two systems of social protection: the Bismark system and the Beveridge system
- The French system as hybrid of the two
- The American system: from Welfare to Workfare; elements of the Obama reform

(Why the French system?)

B. Problems of social solidarity in the 19th century

- Solidarity according to Auguste Comte, Pierre Leroux, Emile Durkheim - Mutualism et solidarism (Léon Bourgeois)

C. Solidarity in the 20th century - Solidarity in practice

- It's effects on social protection

D. Crisis in the welfare State

- Protection deficits

- What type of solidarity?

- The free-market solution?

## **II Social Action and the Not-for-profit Sector**

A. The state of social action today

B. The not-for-profit sector as a major player

C. Commodification of social action

D. The French model of integration

## **III The Educational System in France**

A. The weight of the past

B. The question of *laïcité*: public school versus confessional school

C. Description of the French model

D. Elements of comparison with the USA

## **IV The Question of the French *Banlieues***

Film: *Les Misérables* (2019), directed by Ladj Ly

A documentary-style approach to the French banlieue through the eyes of a police officer. Distancing itself from stereotypes and fantasies, the film demonstrates that no one is completely at fault nor completely free of blame.

## **V The Values Held by French and European Youth**

A. The role of cultural protest and social criticism

B. Emergence of a new form of individualization: autonomy and proximity

C. Towards a return of religion

D. Elements of comparison with the USA

## **Overall conclusion**

## **Suggested bibliography**

Jean-Louis Auduc, *Le système éducatif français*, 6e édition, CNDP, 2008.

Robert Castel, *L'insécurité sociale. Qu'est-ce qu'être protégé ?*, Seuil, 2003.

Olivier Galland, *Culture et valeurs des jeunes*, La Découverte, 2007.

Olivier Galland & B. Roudet, *Les jeunes européens et leurs valeurs*, La Découverte, 2005.

Jean-Marc Stébé, *La crise des banlieues : sociologie des quartiers sensibles*, PUF, 2007.

Eurobaromètre : Cf. site Commission européenne, Opinion publique.

François Ewald, *L'Etat providence*, Grasset, 1986.

D. Lamiot, P.J. Lancry, *La protection sociale. Les enjeux de la solidarité*, Nathan, 19

*Baromètre sur la Jeunesse*

## **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**

The Sociology of France, Modern French Society (French Studies)