



IFE course syllabus

Course title

Structure, Transformation and Crises in French Society

Course taught by

Sophie Enos-Attali

Teacher/researcher in Political Science, International Relations and Contemporary History, Sophie Enos-Attali holds a doctorate in Political Science from the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris ("Sciences Po") as well as an ABD in International Relations from the University of Paris and an ABD in History from the same institution. An associate professor of Political Science at the Institut Catholique de Paris, where she is the director of Master's theses in the social sciences, Sophie also has nearly two decades of experience teaching French politics and society to American students in education abroad programs in Paris. Her research activities include work as a member of the Research Unit "Religion, Culture and Society" as well as of the Thucydides Center for International Research, both of the University of Paris.

Purpose of the course

The purpose of this course is to provide students the necessary keys for deciphering the structure of contemporary French society as well as the issues that divide it. Students gain knowledge of what issues and values bring French society together and what forces pull it apart. A multi-part focus on demographic and economic data, on social systems, on social issues and problems, and on the societal importance of culture provides students – as much as is possible – with an insider's perspective on and knowledge of French society. Students also come to grasp the importance of culture – and cultural policy – in French life including political life. Students become familiar with the mainstays of French academic literature on these subjects.

Description of the course

The course relies not only on material presented by the professor but also on exchange and debate with and by students. Students are encouraged to share their observations and perceptions of how French society functions, including by comparison with specific aspects of American society. A certain number of class meetings will be devoted to a debate on certain public policy choices made by French society. This course meets approximately 48 hours, including mandatory site visits.

Outcomes

1. In addition to the fundamental outcomes relative to the course subject matter per se, as listed in the rubric "Purpose of the Course" above, this course is designed to enable students to develop the following "applied outcomes":
 - identify the various groups making up French society
 - become familiar with the social institutions that structure everyday life for a local citizen
 - recognize the major actors of French society and culture (intellectuals, labor unions, cultural figures)
 - acquire an informed-citizen's understanding of current social and societal issues and their roots (e.g. the "yellow vest" movement, anti-islamophobia activism and reaction, the eco-politics of civil society...)
 - when making a new acquaintance, have a general idea of "where they are coming from"
 - develop skills of inter-cultural analysis: identifying and contextualizing values and value differences for comparative purposes (home/host culture)
 - acquire French vocabulary in socio-cultural subjects
 - become familiar with French news media
 - develop oral skills of presentation, debate and exchange, in French
 - master the use of French for the specific purpose of being able to engage professionally with the issues of the day and to produce useful texts in a work setting
 - learn the use of European methodology for structuring argumentation and marshaling relevant information.

2. Contribution to outcomes of an integrated program of study

The IFE semester is a fully integrated whole, academically. An important set of outcomes of this and every course comprising an IFE preparatory session is the repertory of skills and knowledge acquired in order to succeed in the next phase of the semester. Students as they enter the internship phase will know how – in French – to make oral presentations, write dissertations, organize material according to a standard methodology, comprehend oral material, take notes in a meeting, discuss the issues of the day, understand the work of their host organization in its societal context, and so forth. The result is a student-intern's readiness to take fuller advantage of the field experience opportunity including as a research terrain thus enhancing the final academic exercise, the 30-page guided independent field research paper (qv), the keystone of the IFE integrated semester.

3. Outcomes in the context of a program of experiential learning

Outcomes are essentially seized learning opportunities. Experiential learning outcomes result from the opportunity to study a subject both *in situ* as well as in words and in theory. At IFE, cultural and linguistic otherness enhances both factors of the experiential education equation, yielding the final, fundamental intended outcomes of comparative knowledge strengthening a student's grasp on a particular subject and discipline, along with robust language skills, and the knowledge of the world and of oneself that comes from having learned to operate effectively with and in otherness.

Pedagogical methods

- 1.** Lecture-seminars whereby each two-hour class meeting is devoted to a specific theme, including lecture presentation of new material reinforced by in-class tools such as powerpoints, videos and readings (including some materials to be reviewed by students in preparation for class). As noted in the rubric Description of the Course, above, small class size allows for questions and the discussions that the material typically engenders.
- 2.** Discussion or "workshop" sessions (*travaux pratiques*, a standard part of European university pedagogy), designed to assist students in assimilating the information and knowledge transmitted during the lecture-seminar sessions and applying it to current events and issues. Typical exercises include:
 - a review of national press on specific subjects linking course material with current events
 - short student oral presentations on selected subjects
 - ethnographic exercise in the field; students prepare for and conduct active observation in a social space (metro, café, public park), taking notes and presenting an analysis in class.
- 3.** Site visits, encounters with civil society actors, and other activities; these may include, for example:
 - meeting and discussion with activists from an anti-discrimination organization
 - guided visit of one of the city's dynamic socially-mixed quarters
 - a cinema projection of a current documentary film linked to course themes.

Participation in these course-related visits and activities is mandatory. These activities are prepared in advance and debriefed and commented afterwards, in workshop sessions. Material presented during these activities is part of the body of material on which students may be tested.

Course outline

- I** From the traditional family to "Marriage for Everyone"
- II** The French social safety net, a source of pride and worry
- III** French children in school
- IV** Being a university student in France; advantages and disadvantages
- V** France at work
- VI** French society in the face of the Crisis
- VII** A fragmented society
- VIII** Immigration into France

- IX** Policies for equal opportunity
- X** Laïcité: the French model for religious tolerance
- XI** France, between republicanism and multiculturalism
- XII** Culture: a political matter
- XIII** Cultural philanthropy in question
- XIV** French society's cultural practices
- XV** The goal of "Culture for Everyone": is it attainable?

Readings

- Cassely, Jean-Laurent et Jérôme Fourquet. *La France sous nos yeux*. Paris, Seuil, 2021
- Crozet, Yves, Dominique Bolliet, Jean Fleury. *Les Grandes Questions de la société française*. Paris, Armand Colin, 2005
- Fassin, Didier. *Les Nouvelles Frontières de la société française*. Paris, La Découverte, 20012
- Fourquet, Jérôme. *L'Archipel français*. Paris, Le Seuil, 2020
- Galland, Olivier et Yannick Lemel (dir.). *La Société française : un bilan sociologique des évolutions depuis l'après-guerre*. Paris, Armand Colin, 2011
- INSEE. *France, portrait social. 2018*, disponible à l'adresse <http://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/3646226>
- Morrison, Donald. *Que reste-t-il de la culture française ?*, suivi de Antoine Compagnon, *Le Souci de la grandeur*. Paris, Denoël, 2008
- Noiriel, Gérard. *Gens d'ici, venus d'ailleurs, la France de l'immigration de 1900 à nos jours*, Paris, Ed. du Chêne 2004
- Poirrier, Philippe. *L'Etat et la culture en France au XXe siècle*, Paris, Livre de Poche, 2000
- Weil, Patrick, *De la laïcité en France*. Paris, Grasset, 2021
- Site Internet d'Eurostat epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu
- Site du musée de l'Histoire de l'immigration <http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/ressources>
- Site de l'Observatoire des inégalités: <https://www.inegalites>

Grading methods

There are two in-class written examinations:

- a one-hour examination mid-way through the preparatory session comprising multiple-choice and short-answer questions (20% of the final grade)
- a two-hour final examination taking the form of a *dissertation*, or long essay in which the student – on the subject given for the examination – first constructs a specific question to be examined and then proceeds to do so in a formal, well-structured manner, drawing on and thereby demonstrating a certain master of course material (30% of final grade).

A sample examination subject for this course: *One of the French ideals for society is "equality"; has this goal been achieved?*

Class preparation and participation in the lecture-seminar sessions are taken into account in assessing the grade for this part of the course. Grades for the various exercises of the workshop section, taking into account active participation in all class sessions and course-related visits and activities, are averaged to assess a grade for these aspects of the course (50% of the final grade).

A note on grading – IFE teachers use a standard grading system based on a scale of 20. The final grade is also transposed into an American letter grade according to a scale of equivalence, and both grades are displayed.

The grade assessed for written work reflects the degree of acquisition of the information and knowledge presented during the course as well as how well the extent to which the methodology is followed. Since the language of instruction and examination is not the student's own language, the quality of the written expression only enters into account in cases of noteworthy progress or, on the contrary, repeated and avoidable errors and carelessness.

Those who grade IFE students' work are guided by the principle that this course – in its several parts – is not intended to train specialists in French sociology. Therefore, evaluation of student work pays particular attention to knowledge gained during the five weeks of the preparatory session, demonstrated curiosity and a student's motivation to apply this knowledge to their experience and to gaining new perspectives, including on their home culture and society.

Grading scale

A+	18 - 20/20	B+	14/20	C+	10/20
A	16 - 17/20	B	13/20	C	9/20
A-	15/20	B-	11 - 12/20	C-	8/20

Equivalent in american university course offerings

This course is pluridisciplinary by design. Nonetheless it could be considered as comparable to a course in French Sociology, Comparative Sociology, Modern French Society, or even French Public Policy.