CAS PO 240 Paris Politique

Credits: 4

Professor: Olivier Rozenberg (rozen@bu.edu)

Schedule: 16 two-and-a-half-hour sessions over 7.5 weeks
(Monday & Wednesday – 9:30 to 12pm + 2 additional sessions)

Office hours: Monday 12-12:30, and by appointment

Course visits (examples):
- Walking tour of Parisian political sites and institutions
- Visit to the Charles de Gaulle exhibition at the Musée de l’Armée
- Attendance at a political rally (when applicable)

Course material:
- Course pack with all required and suggested readings to be purchased by the student.
- Websites to read regularly:
  - www.vie-publique.fr
  - www.ladocfrancaise.fr

I. COURSE PRESENTATION AND OUTCOMES

This course allows students to discover and deepen their understanding of the primary elements of institutional and political life in contemporary France, with a special focus on the state of French democracy today. Specifically, we will examine the notion of a much-cited “crisis of democracy.” To what extent are French political institutions dysfunctional? Is there a growing divide between the French government and the French people? In this context, how do we understand the great difficulties experienced by the last two Presidents, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande?

The course, including seminars and visits, is conducted entirely in French.

Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have developed:

- a thorough knowledge of the French political system: the major stages of constitutional history since 1789, the specificities of a constitutional system, certain striking aspects of political life (parties, elections, voters) and contemporary issues (women, police, xenophobia);
- an understanding of French political current events and their implications and familiarity with French political press, through regular oral press reviews discussed in class.
- the ability to analyze the advantages and limitations of French democracy and to evaluate the state of democracy through a comparative approach;
- a multidisciplinary insight of political science, combining history, constitutional law, electoral sociology, political elite sociology and political anthropology; the ability to compare American, European and French systems in their political function and in the ideals of democracy they promote, thus the capacity to view the American political system under a new light;
• the ability to read, understand and critically analyze political science academic texts written in French and in English;
• the ability to formally present a thorough critical and structured analysis of a political issue, be it written or oral, based on sources and concepts requiring basic research.

II. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Oral presentation: 20%
Each student will prepare a 10-15 minute presentation responding to a given question on a current political reality of contemporary France. This assignment aims to relate the theoretical themes of the class to current events.

Essay: 20%
The essay will build on the topic studied for the oral presentation, developing a critical analysis on a specific focus and complementary research, determined with the professor’s guidance, in a 600-word paper to be handed in one week after the oral presentation. The essay also allows students to develop their written French in an academic context.

Midterm exam: 20%

Final exam: 30%

Participation and preparedness: 10%
Included in this grade is weekly homework, which involves following current news and events in Paris and France and participating in discussions on current events in each class session. This grade also takes into account the quality of a student’s presence in class, energy, relevance of comments, effort and progress in language proficiency, and attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Policy
1 absence (class session or activity) = -1 point on the overall grade
4 or more unexcused absences = grade of F for the course
Missed assignment or test = grade of 0 for the assignment
Plagiarism on an assignment = grade of 0 for the assignment

NB: Excused absences must be justified by a doctor’s note or a scheduled internship interview.

Plagiarism (BU Policy)
All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on the examinations or for plagiarism may be ‘expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean.’ Read the full Academic Conduct Code online at http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/.
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<th>PART ONE</th>
<th>DEMOCRACY AND REPUBLIC IN FRANCE</th>
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<td><strong>Session 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Visit:</strong> Guided walking tour of Parisian political institutions and important sites</td>
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| **Session 2** | What is democracy?  
- Varying definitions  
- Democracy in France  
- Constitutional history of France |
| **Session 3** | Values of the French Republic  
- Does a republican model exist?  
- Republic and nation  
- Liberté, égalité, fraternité  
**Required reading:**  
**Suggested reading:**  
| **Assignments and Activities** | - Group activity: analysis of the Constitution  
- Current events (group 1) |

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<th>PART TWO</th>
<th>DEMOCRACY, AN INSTITUTIONALIZED REGIME</th>
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| **Session 4** | The Fifth Republic  
- Major phases of the Fifth Republic  
- Presidential power  
- The five-year term  
**Required reading:**  
**Suggested reading:**  
| **Session 5** | Visit (TBD) |
| **Session 6** | Weakness of opposing powers  
- Parliament: weakness and resurrection  
- Judicial nomination  
- Europe: limits and opportunities  
**Required reading:**  
**Suggested reading:**  
| **Assignments and Activities** | - Group activity: analysis of municipal campaign posters and official presidential portraits  
- Current events (group 2)  
- Current events (group 1) |
| Session 7 | The law in France  
- Legal domain  
**Suggested reading:** Samir Hammal, « Comment est organisée la procédure législative en France? », dans *Les institutions de la France en questions...*, pp. 177-198. | - Current events (group 2) |
|---|---|---|
| **PART THREE** | **ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL LIFE** | **MIDTERM EXAM**  
- Oral presentations briefing  
**Session 8** | Political notions of the left and right in France | - Oral presentation #1: Is *Le Front national* becoming normalized?  
- Current events (group 1) |
| **Session 9** | The party system  
- Introduction to political parties in France  
- Party politics in the Fifth Republic  
- From polarization to bipartisanship?  
- Current events (group 2) |
| **Session 10** | The French vote  
- Voting and abstention in France  
- Voting and social groups  
- Electoral geography  
- Current events (group 1) |
| **Session 11** | New forms of political participation  
- The referendum and participatory democracy  
- Electronic democracy  
- The crisis of representative democracy  
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<th>Session 12</th>
<th>Internal security</th>
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<td><strong>Guest lecturer:</strong> Cédric Moreau de Bellaing, PhD, Lecturer at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, will speak about political violence in France, specifically regarding the 2005 riots in the Parisian suburbs, and the political reaction to such events and behaviors.</td>
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**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**

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| - Women’s suffrage: a belated right to vote  
- Difficulties in accessing power  
- Parity and republican universalism |

**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**

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<th>Session 14</th>
<th>French values</th>
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| - Resistance to globalization  
- Decline in authoritarian values  
- The crisis of confidence |

**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**
Etienne Schweisguth, « Valeurs et attitudes politiques en Europe », dans Pascal Perrineau et Luc Rouban (dir.), *La politique en France et en Europe...,*, pp. 35-60.

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<th>Session 15</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
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<td>- Synthesis and review for Final Exam</td>
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<th>Session 16</th>
<th>Visit (TBD)</th>
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<th>Last Friday</th>
<th>FINAL EXAM</th>
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IV. ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Textbook

Les institutions de la France, Paris, La Documentation française, 4\textsuperscript{ème} éd., 2013.

Websites

www.vie-publique.fr
www.ladocfrancaise.fr

Additional readings


Les Cahiers français, numéro consacré à : « La V\textsuperscript{e} République, évolutions et débats », n° 332, mai-juin 2006.

MENY Y., Le système politique français, Paris, Montchrestien, 5\textsuperscript{ème} éd., 2006.