

Course number LF299E  
**Approaches to Contemporary French Society and Culture**

**Boston University in Grenoble**

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"A fish discovers its need for water only when it is not in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish. We live and breathe through it. What one culture may regard as essential – a certain level of material wealth for example – may not be so vital to other cultures." -- Fons Trompenaars, 2012

**Course Instructors:**

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**Total number of contact hours: 12**

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**Total number of Contact hours: 21**

**Location and Meeting Times**

Lectures: Fridays 9.45 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., classroom **B 212** in the DLST building

**Course Overview:**

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach from the social sciences, particularly cultural anthropology, to explore intercultural issues and cultural theory in the contemporary context of globalization. With the larger goal of dealing with culture and its elusive definitions, this class will introduce students to the study of culture through the work of anthropologists, cultural historians, philosophers, economists, psychologists, and contemporary popular culture. It hopes to provide students with an appreciation for the diversity of the human experience, particularly in the French-American comparative context.

The course aims to develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences in general, with emphasis on the Trans-Atlantic context and the French culture in particular. Students will become familiarized through practice with fundamental tools of anthropologists and sociologists, namely ethnography, native informant interviews, and participant observation in order to examine and analyze the impact of culture in everyday life and the ways in which societal values impact cultural practices. Through practical field exercises, numerous readings, field trips, field journal writing, and seminar debates, students shall gain an overview of French lifestyles, customs, values and practices with a focus on recent societal trends in France. The end of the course opens up to a broader discourse on globalization, its relation to students' study abroad experience and the acculturation process, and the implications it holds for their own identity and values.

The diversity of approaches will be reflected by the variety of assignments, which will include written assignments, presentations, quiz, and personal reflection expressed by journal writing.

### **(Hub) Areas and Learning Outcomes:**

#### *Area: Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy (1 unit):*

Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different languages, cultures, religions, political systems, or societies.

To fulfill this HUB Outcome, upon completion of the course, students will be able to....

- Use relevant analytical tools (cultural models and theory, such as Hall, Hofstede, and Trompenaars) to compare and contrast the different cultures students experience at home, at school/university and during their study abroad program (and any international experience they may have had) ;
- Compare and connect their various experiences, before and during the study abroad program – for example, how does their individual experience of family life and rituals compare with their host family's and other students' host families?
- Identify how cultural norms and values shape societies – for example, how are health care systems shaped by, and therefore reflect, certain cultural norms and values?
- Develop greater self-awareness (emotional and cultural intelligence) through the acculturation process experienced during the program. In particular, students will reflect on how their individual choices are significantly shaped by their cultural environments (family, friends, school, etc).
- Value diversity, while recognizing the challenges it poses at individual and collective levels;

#### *Area: Social Inquiry (1 unit):*

Students will identify and apply major concepts used in the social sciences to explain individual and collective human behaviour including, for example, the workings of social groups, institutions, networks, and the role of the individual in them.

To fulfill this HUB Outcome, upon completion of the course, students will be able to....

- Apply cultural models and theory (such as anthropological models, ethnographic observation, and economic evaluation) to analyze, understand and manage different cultural environments; experiment with their French host families and fellow students; and structure these experiences through the set assignments and in class exercises and discussions;
- Through French language classes and other languages some students may speak, analyze how language expresses and transfers cultural norms and values;
- Recognize how cultural norms and values inform how societies address universal issues (such as violence, health, education) through political systems and public policies;
- Conduct ethnographic observation and recognize the impact of our cultural lens on our perceptions.
- Reflect in a more informed and pluralistic manner on the complexity and long-term impact of globalization and the current challenges this process is now facing.

### **Assignments & Grading:**

<b>Due</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Assignment Title</b>	<b>Hub Area</b>	<b>Description</b>
Continuous	10	Attendance & participation	Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy Social Inquiry	Attendance, Participation & Pertinence includes homework completion, active and informed participation in seminar discussions, taking the lead and initiatives in all class activities, and attitude.

Continuous	20	Pair presentations of Chapters of <i>Sixty Million or The Bonjour Effect</i>	Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy	Students will leverage course reading materials to compare reported experiences with their own, in order to help transfer theory into everyday life. Presentations are used as a way to share experiences and understanding between the students, to illustrate the models discussed in class, and to contribute to a deeper understanding of different cultural environments.
Continuous	10	Individual news presentations	Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy Social Inquiry	Students are asked to prepare an individual 5-minute presentation on a current event in France, and report on how they received the reporting of the event as well as the event itself. This assignment is designed to help students be in touch with the issues currently seen as important in France: are they different, similar to the ones in the US? In what way do they reflect French culture and the challenges brought by globalization? And what does the fact that the event is in the news say about the French society and what is seen as issues or concerns? This to help students to go beyond the actual facts into ethnographic observation.
Week 7	20	Health Care typologies	Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy Social Inquiry	This assignment is a 45-minute quiz, completed in pairs. It is specifically designed for a group of students who intend to pursue a career in various areas of healthcare.  This assignment is designed to assess 1) how students have integrated the key notions of Healthcare System Typologies and Economic Evaluations of these systems; and 2) how they understand the influence of cultural values and norms in the structure of American and French health systems, and 3) how they reflect these societies.
Week 8	10	Ethnographic Field Journal (EFJ) Mid-term report	Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy Social Inquiry	<b>Ethnographic Field Journal &amp; Assigned Observations:</b> 18 entries total due, minimum of 2 entries (required) per week, on separate days + weekly discussions of critical incidents, of observations, etc. When turning in the EFJ and report, the individual journal must have a total of 18 entries minimum.  <b>Mid Term Report:</b> 3-page report on your current status in the acculturation process and working knowledge of French culture, summarized in the findings and observations contained in individual ethnographic field journals. Typed, double-spaced, min. 3 pages max 4 pages, 10 to 12-point font (Times New Roman).  This assignment is designed to help students compare and contrast the different cultures they are exposed to, by making and documenting structured observations. It also aims at developing greater self-awareness by structuring self-reflexion around their own cultural identity and what shapes it.
Week 10	10	Group Presentations on 2 films: <i>Brio</i> & <i>La Haine</i>		The students are asked to watch both movies before the class assignment. The students will be split in two groups. Each group will present one movie with observations, questions, issues, commentaries, comparisons to similar situations (in the

			Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy	USA or somewhere else); comparison to other American movies can also be relevant. The students will analyze how the language used in both films diverges from “standard French” to create and express a different cultural environment. This assignment is designed to illustrate the way language expresses and transfers cultural norms and values.
Week 13	20	Final Paper	Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy  Social Inquiry	This paper is based on <i>French Native Informant Interview</i> , on a given aspect of French culture/expertise (topic chosen is subject to approval by professor). 5 pages min.; 6 pages max, double-spaced, 10- to 12-point font (Arial or Times New Roman), use of citations and references, plus a bibliography (or ‘Works Cited’ list) at end.  Since no one lives in a cultural vacuum, students are asked to look closely at how their own culture has shaped their view of France, motivated their interest in the subject, and affected their own perspective. <i>What are their cultural biases, stereotypes, or natural prejudices</i> that have influenced how they view this subject and the French in general? What are the experiences they have had since arriving in Grenoble which have impacted them the most in taking interest in this topic? Of course, for this section students may refer to the Trompenaars, Hofstede, or Hall cultural models as reference points, or any other theoretical framework on culture. Students are also asked to revisit their journals, in order to assess how their view of France and the French culture has evolved over the past four months, and therefore document the acculturation process they have experienced.

### Primary Course Activities:

- **Readings, Group Discussions** based on readings from book and packet
- **Presentations** of one chapter from *Sixty Million Frenchmen can't be wrong* or *The Bonjour Effect*
- **Current news in France:** Individual oral presentations at the start of each course session 3-5 minutes
- **Ethnographic Field Journal & Assigned Observations (EFJ)**. 18 entries total due, minimum 2 entries (required) per week, on separate days + weekly discussions of critical incidents, of observations, etc. By the time you turn in the EFJ and report on **October 19<sup>th</sup>**, you should have accumulated a total of 18 entries minimum. Please read ‘Notes on the Ethnographic Method’ further in packet for more information on ethnography and observation.
- **Midterm:** EFJ summary of progress to date. **Due October 19<sup>th</sup>**. 3-page report on your current status in the acculturation process and working knowledge of French culture, summarized in the findings and observations contained in your ethnographic field journals. Typed, double-spaced, min. 3 pages max 4 pages, 10 to 12-point font (TNR).
- **In class assignments with Prof Sanders & Prof Azzouz-Gaudin**
- **French Native Informant Interview**
- **Final Paper due Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018.** Paper based on *French Native Informant Interview*, on a given aspect of French culture/expertise (topic chosen is subject to approval by professor). 5 pages min.; 6 pages max, double-spaced, 10 to 12-point font (Arial or TNR), use of citations and references, plus bibliography (or ‘Works Cited’ list) at end (please see instructions page further in packet).

## **Bibliography:**

Books and Articles consulted:

- Asselin, Gilles and Ruth Mastron. *Au Contraire! Figuring Out the French* (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2001).
- Brafman, Ori and Rom Brafman. *Sway: The Irresistible Pull of Irrational Behavior* (New York: Broadway Books, 2009).
- Bryson, Bill. *I'm a Stranger Here Myself. Notes on returning to America after 20 years away* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999).
- Diamond, Jared, *The World Until Yesterday* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).
- Gladwell, Malcolm, *Outliers, The story of success* (New York, Hachette group, 2008).
- Nadeau, Jean-Benoît and Julie Barlow, *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong* (Naperville: Sourcebooks Inc., 2003).
- **Nadeau, Jean-Benoît and Julie Barlow, *The Bonjour Effect* (London; Duckworth Overlook, 2016).**
- Rabinow, Paul. "Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology" in *Writing Culture* Ed. James Clifford. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
- Trompenaars, Fons and Charles Hampden-Turner. *Riding the Waves of Culture, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* (New York, MacGraw Hill, 2012).

## **Websites**

For additional resources on Health Care systems:

*Describing and Evaluating Health Systems*, Nolte, McKee and Wait

[http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCYQFjAAahUKEwj944TNvNPHAhXBuxQKHcceDfE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fqmplus.qmul.ac.uk%2Fpluginfile.php%2F159303%2Fmod\\_forum%2Fpost%2F3896%2FNolte%2520%2520McKee%2520describing%2520health%2520systems.pdf&ei=11zkVb2cBsH3Use9tlgP&usg=AFQjCNGjOpVK3svvHfrkqBOEYfgPjLKHtg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCYQFjAAahUKEwj944TNvNPHAhXBuxQKHcceDfE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fqmplus.qmul.ac.uk%2Fpluginfile.php%2F159303%2Fmod_forum%2Fpost%2F3896%2FNolte%2520%2520McKee%2520describing%2520health%2520systems.pdf&ei=11zkVb2cBsH3Use9tlgP&usg=AFQjCNGjOpVK3svvHfrkqBOEYfgPjLKHtg)

*The WHO World Health Systems Report – 2000.* (WHO)

[http://www.who.int/whr/2000/en/whr00\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/whr/2000/en/whr00_en.pdf?ua=1)

*The Health Care System Under French National Health Insurance: Lessons for Health Reform in the United States;* Rodwin

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447687/pdf/0930031.pdf>

A comparison of HAS & NICE guidelines for the economic evaluation of health technologies in the context of their respective national health care systems and cultural environments.

<http://www.jmahp.net/index.php/jmahp/article/view/24966>

*Health Economic Evaluations to become compulsory in France from 2013;*

<http://abacusint.com/health-economic-evaluations-to-become-compulsory-in-france-from-october-2013/>

*French EE Guidelines and Frameworks;* <http://www.ispor.org/peguidelines/countrydet.asp?c=8&t=1>

Course book:

- **Nadeau, Jean-Benoît and Julie Barlow, *The Bonjour Effect* (London; Duckworth Overlook, 2016).**

**Seminars:**

Week #	Theme	Learning outcomes
1	<p><i>Introduction, description of assignments</i></p> <p>What is culture?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting the scene.</li> <li>Framing the students' experience by defining what is a cultural context and the specific challenges posed by living in an unfamiliar culture – cultural shock, negotiable/non-negotiable aspects of a culture.</li> </ol>
2,3,4	<p><i>Cultural models, where they come from, how they operate.</i></p> <p>Understanding levels of cultural awareness and the impact of deep-seated values and behaviors on contemporary society.</p> <p>These sessions are intended to build a solid frame of reference to explore more deeply the French culture.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn about and understand relevant analytical tools (cultural models and theory – Hall, Hofstede, Trompenaars) to compare and contrast the different cultures students experience, leveraging their time in France to put these models to the test.</li> <li>The three directed observations, namely “observing table behaviors in France”, “classroom behaviors in France” and “Norms of politeness (“la politesse”) and proper behaviour in France (“la bienséance”) in France, are specifically designed to encourage these comparisons by providing a frame to the students.</li> </ol>
5,6,7	<p><i>Health care systems typologies, their evolution and the factors that impact them. Comparing the US and French systems.</i></p> <p>These sessions will introduce and analyze the cultural and socio-economic impacts on the evolutions and framing of Health System Typologies within countries and how these determine the Health Systems which countries adopt and adapt. Special focus will be drawn towards the US and France, including lessons which each can learn from the other.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn how health systems are structured, what rationale is at play. Comparing the two health systems will give the students a broader perspective on the US one. It is an opportunity to see diversity in action: health care systems are usually experienced in isolation, and it is difficult to imagine that there are alternative options. This in-depth analysis will also be an important element in recognizing the underlying cultural norms and values expressed in the choices made by political systems to provide health care to their citizens.</li> </ol>
8	<p><i>Education in France</i></p> <p>How the system is structured; the challenges it faces today; the responses the French government has implemented; and the reactions these reforms have triggered from students, parents and the professors</p>	<p>The students of this course are immersed in an educational environment they find difficult to cope with. This session has therefore two main learning outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gain an understanding of the day-to-day differences they have noticed since they started their course of study in France.</li> <li>Have insights into the strengths and limitations of this system, how it compares with the American education system, how it reflects some fundamental values of the French society and how these values are being questioned as education becomes a truly global “product.”</li> </ol>
9 & 10	<p><i>The long tail of colonial memories and their impact on contemporary France</i></p> <p>The first session will be focusing on a brief review of the history of French Colonization and the trauma created during the period of decolonization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the claims of those French “with foreign origins”?</li> </ul>	<p>To understand the impact of history on contemporary societies, via an example which is both time remote and relevant to their own society.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These sessions will give the students key elements of background to the current difficulties French society faces.</li> <li>They will also shed light on past and present individual and collective experiences and challenges (e.g. current ongoing dialogues in the US on slavery, civil rights, Vietnam, Iraq).</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can France better integrate the sons/daughters of its former Colonies?</li> <li>• What are the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?</li> </ul> <p>The second session will focus on integration, immigration and racism: how does France deal with these issues?</p>	
11 & 12	<p><i>Culture and language in France: the unique role of culture and language in the French society</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the “French Cultural Exception” an effective answer to the Globalization of culture or to the domination of American culture?</li> <li>• What can be the role of the French language community in a fast changing world?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gain some understanding on the impact of globalization on a society, what challenges it creates and what are the choices available to these societies.</li> <li>2. Through the French example, gain a perspective on how the American influence can be perceived, and how globalization and Americanization can be perceived as the same, and seen as a threat to national identity.</li> </ol>
13 & 14	<p><i>Conclusion and close: France, globalization and its discontents</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The changing status of France on the world scene: reconciling a glorious past with an uncertain future.</li> <li>• Wrapping up on the experience of the past semester: key learnings</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess in what ways this experience has changed individual world views.</li> <li>2. In what way dealing at a very practical level as well as learning models and theories will change individual and collective views on diversity at home (in the U.S.)?</li> </ol>

## Course policies

### Plagiarism

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 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."

### Participation & Preparation

Active oral participation and homework preparation is evaluated and factored into the final grade (more details below).

Attendance is **obligatory for all classes and fieldwork assignments**. Students **must** prepare all assignments before coming to class. Arriving late will not be tolerated. If you are repeatedly late, your instructor may turn you away or count you absent.

Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for

Disability Services (ODS) at (617) 353-3658 or [access@bu.edu](mailto:access@bu.edu) to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests.

**Absences:** If you are absent, you are responsible for contacting the teacher before class and submitting your work on time. **All absences must be justified in writing by a doctor's note before class or notified to the professor ahead of time for specific religious holidays. Unjustified absences will result in the reduction of your final participation grade by 25%.**