



Course title

French Society: Problems and prospects

Course taught by

This course is taught by **Jean Zoungrana**, who holds a doctorate in Philosophy as well as 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.

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 constraints of a course offered intensively over a short period of time. Accordingly, the course comprises two types of sessions. The morning session is given over to a largely lecture format (although the Small size of the group makes it possible for students to ask questions and for teachers to engage students). The lecture session also reflects a European approach to university education whereby lecture material is as important or more so than reading. In the afternoon, a shorter session adopts a workshop format, with the emphasis on assimilating lecture material through discussion, debate, reading of the press and other students’ participatory exercises. Student participation is both informal (debate and discussion) and more structured methodologically (oral exposés, press reviews, and other presentations).”

Course outline

Introduction

1 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

- 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?

2 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

3 The Educational System in France

- A. The question of *laïcité*: public school versus confessional school
- B. Description of the French model
- C. Elements of comparison with the USA

4 The Question of the French *banlieues*

- A. Film: *La Haine* (1995) by Mathieu Kassovitz
- B. Chronicles of an ordinary *banlieue*

5 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

Short readings are used to supplement lecture material

Readings

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

Pierre Rosanvallon, *La nouvelle question sociale*, Seuil, 1995.

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

Olivier Galland, *Les jeunes français ont-ils raison d'avoir peur ?*, Armand Colin, 2009.

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, 1989.

Grading

Student work is evaluated on the basis of a written examination at the end of the course the grade for which is averaged with grades received for oral présentations, reading reports, and press reviews prepared for the afternoon workshop, as well as student's level of participation in the workshop.