

The Pennsylvania State University
Department of Political Science
PLSC 497A, Politics in France, Spring 2008
M, W 4:15-5:30, 351 Willard

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This course will focus on politics in France with substantial comparison to the US. I will assume no particular advanced knowledge of French, French history, or French politics, but the more you already know the more you may get out of this, and we will review quickly some basics of French culture and history before starting in earnest to analyze the current political system in France.

We will use a lengthy and (I have to admit) quite dense text on French government and politics. You'll have to bear with me as we wade through the book. However, it contains so much information, and much of it is useful, that I've chosen it in spite of what will be very obvious to you when you pick it up: It is dull. It also uses a lot of French terms without always translating them. Come to class with questions; I'll translate. But the more important idea is that the book, combined with the class lectures / discussions (which I promise will be more lively) will give you a very strong introduction into the workings of a democratic political regime that could hardly be more different than the US political system. Where we take for granted that federalism and separation of powers are essential parts of a democracy, like a two party electoral system, France has none of those features and yet it is obviously a democratic society. So we will spend a lot of time in this class understanding how the French system works, who has power, how much power they have, why the power is so strongly amassed in so few hands (as compared to the US), and then at the end (but also through your questions throughout the term) we'll consider how this compares to the US system. But make no mistake: In order to make a comparison, one needs to understand how the system works, so we're going to go into great detail about the institutions and practices of how France's political system works.

Two books have been ordered and are required. The Knapp and Wright book is the main text for the course; Kingdon's book we will read toward the end of the semester. In addition to the texts, we'll use a lot of on-line resources. Purchase the texts right away.

1. Knapp, Andrew, and Vincent Wright. 2006. *The Government and Politics of France*, 5th Edition. New York: Routledge. ISBN: 0-415-35732-2.
2. Kingdon, John W. 1999. *America the Unusual*. New York: St. Martin's. ISBN: 0-312-18971-0

The Wikipedia pages related to Politics in France contain a wealth of extremely useful information about history, politics, election results, and links to other useful resources. I encourage you to explore it especially when there are segments of the book that are confusing or when you want an update. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_France. In fact, I will expect you to be familiar with information there and certainly for any assignments this is an obvious place to start your research.

Assignments and grades will be as follows:

Class participation	15 points
Occasional unannounced in-class quizzes	35 points
Short (5-7 page papers), 10 points each x 5 papers	50 points
Total:	100 points

Class participation comes first on the list because it is fundamental. I will expect you to be ready, having read the material from the readings *as well as* reviewed the relevant wiki material. I will remain relatively on schedule compared to many professors, and I will expect you to do so as well. You do not need necessarily to come to class with all the answers or having memorized the material from the readings. However, you do need to: 1) come to class (!); and 2) be familiar with the topics and ready to ask questions when you don't understand the material from the readings. I'll expect lots of questions.

Quizzes. I'll give lots of short quizzes throughout the term. These will be mostly factual quizzes and will be extremely easy for the most part, *if you have done the readings*. They will focus just on the main themes, not obscure details from the readings. But they will be pretty regular, and if you don't do the readings you may well fail the quizzes. Do the readings. It makes you get more out of the class, believe me. If you miss a quiz, you get a zero. All the quizzes will be weighted equally and combine to a total of 35 percent of your course grade.

Papers: Five times throughout the term, I'll want a short paper from you on an assigned topic, related to the material most recently covered in the syllabus. These papers should require you to go into more detail on a given topic than what we do in class. There will be some freedom for you to explore different aspects of French politics in this way. I will give a template for what the papers should look like before the first paper is due. I will also give more specific information about the precise topic and assignment before each one is due. In general, the papers will require that you go into more detail about a single aspect of the French-US comparison, and to use specific evidence to support whatever argument you develop. The focus should always be on France, but comparisons / evaluations / explanations of why it may differ from the US are welcome in the concluding sections.

Late assignments: If you have a university excuse, of course I'll let you make anything up. But things that are simply late will be marked down by 5 points per 24 hours, starting the minute class *begins*. So if you had something in two days late the grade goes down by a full 10 points. Saturdays and Sundays count. Email me the assignment when you have it done, and then also bring a printed copy to class. The email copy will have a time stamp on it and we'll go by that.

Quizzes can't be made up at all, unless you have a university approved excuse. Note that late or not, I'll want an email attachment copy of your paper in all cases.

Please note the following official department policies:

Academic Dishonesty¹

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist of any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Other violations include, but are not limited to, any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in regard to an examination, such as tampering with a graded exam or claiming another's work to be one's own. Violations shall also consist of obtaining or attempting to obtain, previous to any examinations, copies of the examination papers or the questions to appear thereon, or to obtain any illegal knowledge of these questions. Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of a violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to impose appropriate penalties that are consistent with University guidelines.

¹Much of the text above has been directly obtained from the sections of the Princeton University website <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/rrr/99/pages/OI.htm> concerning academic integrity (Rights, Rules, Responsibilities introductory text as well as pages 55-69) as well as from the website of the Department of Economics at The Pennsylvania State University.

Disabilities

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

Visit our web site

The Political Science Department is in the process of upgrading its web site and will continue to do so during this and future academic years. In the undergraduate section you will find a wealth of information including course schedules, faculty office hours, faculty home pages describing their areas of teaching and research activities, answers to questions about advising, internship opportunities, announcements, and much, much, more. Check back often: we will continuously update our information about internships and career opportunities: <http://polisci.la.psu.edu/>

Weekly topics, readings, and assignments

Week 1 January 14, 2008: Introduction

Monday: Introduction, overview

Wednesday: Overview of the Historical and Cultural Context

Knapp, pp. 1-24, also pp. 501-502

Week 2 January 21: More Background on French History and Context

Monday: No class, happy Martin Luther King Day

Wednesday: More Recent Developments

Knapp, pp. 24-48

Week 3 January 28: The Constitutional Basis and Design of the Fifth Republic

Knapp, Ch. 2

Read the French Constitution here and be prepared to discuss:

<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/english/8ab.asp>

Paper 1 due Wednesday Jan 30, constitutional design of France compared to the US

Week 4 February 4: The Presidents of France, their Backgrounds and Policies

Knapp, Ch. 3

Presidential Approval data: http://www.php.sofres.com/cote2/ensemble_presidents.php

Also check the wiki for information on Nicolas Sarkozy

Week 5 February 11: Executive Power / The Presidency as an Institution

Knapp, ch. 4

Week 6 February 18: The Dual Executive / the Prime Minister / Cohabitation

Knapp, ch. 5

Week 7 February 25: The Parliament

Knapp, ch. 6

***Paper 2 due Wednesday Feb 27, French and American Executive-Legislative relations ***

Week 8 March 3: Political Parties of the Left

Knapp, ch. 7

Monday: The Communists and the Extreme Left

Wednesday: The Socialists and the Greens

Note: Spring Break, March 10-14

Week 9 March 17: Parties of the Right

Knapp, ch. 8

Monday: Gaullists and the Center

Wednesday: The National Front

Week 10 March 24: Voting and the Party System

Knapp, ch. 9

Paper 3 due Wednesday Mar 26, French parties and elections compared to the US

Week 11 March 31: The Administrative State

Knapp, ch. 10

Week 12 April 7: Interest Groups and Policymaking

Knapp, ch. 11

Note: At this point we are going to skip chapters 12 and 13 in Knapp on local government and the judiciary. The only reason is that we don't have time, not because they are not interesting or important. Read them just for fun if you like!

Week 13 April 14: France and the EU

Knapp, ch. 14

Paper 4 due Wednesday Apr 16, French public policy compared to the US

Week 14 April 21: Why is the US so Different?

Kingdon, entire book

Week 15 April 28: Conclusions

Monday: complete our discussion about Kingdon and the US

Wednesday: short paper due on Kingdon.

Note: Last class period, April 30.

***Paper 5 due Wednesday April 30, Review of US-France differences ***