This course will analyze key issues in contemporary French history from the outbreak of World War I to the present. Particular attention will be placed on the interplay between political, social and cultural developments. Themes to be studied include the Great War, the Popular Front, the Vichy Régime, the Liberation and the Fourth Republic, Decolonization, De Gaulle and the Fifth Republic, France and the European Community -- as well as broader themes concerning the changing nature of French society, the disappearance of the peasantry, and the role of women in politics.

Requirements: One midterm examination and one final. A paper is also required: 4-6 pages for 3 credit students; 9-11 pages for 4 credit students. Students are required to do the readings and participate in class discussions. I will also schedule a number of optional discussion sections where we will examine the readings in greater detail -- times will be announced early in the semester. Grading will be based on class participation, the paper and the examinations. Books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore and are also on 3 hour reserve in Helen C. White library.

Required Books


Marc Bloch, Strange Defeat (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968)


Week 1. Introduction and the Origins of the Great War


Week 2. The Great War and its Consequences

Reading: Becker, The Great War and the French People, 103-149; 195-196; 205-218; 251-301; 323-327.


Week 3. French Fascism and the Crisis of the 1930s

Reading: McMillan, Twentieth-Century France, pp. 89-111.

Begin reading Jean-Paul Sartre, The Reprieve [Le sursis for those of you who might want to read it in French].

Week 4. The Popular Front and the late 1930s

Reading: Jean-Paul Sartre, The Reprieve (finish book).

McMillan, Twentieth-Century France, pp. 112-123.

Week 5. From Defeat to Vichy

Reading: Marc Bloch, Strange Defeat (entire book).

Begin reading Robert Paxton, Vichy France, pp. 4-50.

Week 4. Resistance, Liberation, and the New Regime

Reading: Robert Paxton, Vichy France, pp. 51-185; 330-383.

McMillan, Twentieth-Century France, pp.135-212.

Week 7. Intellectuals in the Post War Period

MIDTERM. THURSDAY MARCH 4.

Week 6. SPRING BREAK

Week 9. Decolonization and de Gaulle


Week 11. The Fifth Republic and May 68


Henri Mendras, Social Change in Modern France, pp. 91-142

Week 13. Politics and Religion

Reading: Mendras, Social Change in Modern France, pp. 51-90.


*** PAPER DUE IN CLASS THURSDAY APRIL 15 ***

Week 14. Women and Immigrants

Reading: Mendras, Social Change in Modern France, pp. 145-196.

Continue reading Bernstein, Fragile Glory.
Week 15. Culture and the Politics in the 1980s

Reading: McMillan, Twentieth-Century France, 204-233.
Bernstein, Fragile Glory, finish book.

Week 16. The Rise of the Extreme Right

Reading: Mendras, Social Change in Modern France, pp. 199-246.