

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Department of History  
Spring 2023

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History 349  
Tu-Th 2:30 - 3:45  
1217 Humanities

**Contemporary France, 1914 to the Present**

This course analyzes key issues in contemporary French history from the outbreak of World War I to the twenty first century. Topics to be studied include the Great War, the Depression and Popular Front, the German occupation and the Vichy Régime, the Liberation and the Fourth Republic, colonialism and decolonization, De Gaulle and the Fifth Republic, and France and the European Union. We will pay close attention to broader themes such as the changing nature of French society, the disappearance of the traditional rural society, immigration and citizenship, transformations in gender roles, the challenges facing the Muslim and Jewish communities, changing understandings of secularism, and France's place in a globalized world.

**Objectives:** This is an upper division course that will provide you with an in-depth overview of French history in the 20th and 21st centuries. In this class you will:

- Gain an understanding of France's social, political and cultural history.
- Situate France's changing place in the world (collapse of the Empire; the construction of Europe).
- Understand how French history is the subject of deeply contested interpretations.
- Understand how the past informs France's present, and understand how contemporary developments shape our understanding of that nation's past.
- Learn how to use different kinds of sources (novels, films, secondary sources) to make persuasive arguments about the past.
- Learn how to make concise arguments.

**Requirements:** Two one-page papers, a five page paper, a six-page paper, and a final exam. Essay topics will be distributed in advance; papers require no outside research and will be based on class readings.

- **Students should have completed the readings in time for our in-class discussions. These are marked with an ➔**

**Movies:** We will watch and discuss two movies: Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion* (*La grande illusion*) and Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers*. Links to the movies will be

posted on Canvas. *The Battle of Algiers* is also available on Kanopy via the UW library site [look for: Kanony (films) under databases].

**Honors:** We will meet 3-4 times during the semester to discuss four movies (all in French with English subtitles): François Truffaut's *Le Dernier Métro* (1980) (*The Last Metro*), Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1980); Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (2007) (*Hate*) and Laurent Cantet's *Entre les murs* (2008) (*The Class*). You will be asked to write a short paper (3 pages).

**Grading:** Two one-page papers (5% each), 5 page paper (25%), 6 page paper (30%), final exam (15%), and discussion (20%).

**Office hours: Tuesday between 11 and 1 pm.** You can also speak with me after class or send me an email to set up an alternative meeting time. I'm always happy to meet with you to discuss the class.

**Discussions →:** We will hold 7 in-class discussions about the movies and the readings. By 8 pm on the evening before each discussion students should post on Canvas:

1) **A one paragraph response to the reading.** Among the question you may wish to consider: Was the reading compelling and why? What questions are left unanswered? Does it shed light on the issues we are studying in class?

2) **One question for discussion.**

Your posts are not graded, but I will take them into account when I calculate your discussion grade.

**The History Lab:** The History Lab is a resource center where experts (PhD students) will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process — choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts — the History Lab staff can help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. To make an appointment see [The History Lab – Department of History – UW–Madison](#)

**Workload:** This 3-credit course meets for two, 75-minute class periods over the spring semester. The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 3 hours outside of class for every class period. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 6 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this class.

**Electronic Devices:** Please turn off electronic devices (laptops, phones) during lecture. Research underlines that students learn more when they take notes by hand and they perform better than students who are electronically connected. Laptops can be distracting both for the user (who is often tempted to surf the web) and for their neighbors.

Multitasking is not conducive to learning. During lecture and discussion you should focus on the material and keep outside distractions to a minimum.

**Plagiarism:** I expect you to hand in your own work, and not to borrow sentences or sentence fragments from books, articles, or the web. In other words, all your sentences should be of your own making (if you use more than three successive words from a book, you should put them in quotation marks). Students are urged to familiarize themselves with the rules and guidelines concerning plagiarism -- any cases of plagiarism or cheating will be dealt with severely. Downloading material from the web and claiming it as your own is a form of plagiarism. To learn more about quoting and paraphrasing check the Writing Center's excellent tips at

<https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/quoting/sources/>

Further information on the University's policies on plagiarism can be found at <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/> (scroll down the page and look at UWS Chapter 14). If you are unclear about what you should or should not be doing, please don't hesitate to ask.

**Course Evaluations:** Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

**Accommodations:** The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with the student or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

**University Statement on Diversity** is available here: <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

**Books** are available for purchase at the bookstore of your choice and are also on 3-hour reserve in Helen C. White library. Most of the books have been translated from the French, and those of you with a good knowledge of *la langue française* may want to read them in their original version (copies available at Memorial Library). There is no required textbook for the class. Those wishing to consult an overview of twentieth century France can turn to the following:

- Roderick Kedward, *France and the French: A Modern History* (Overlook Press, 2007)
- Tyler Stovall, *Transnational France: The Modern History of a Universal Nation* (Westview Press)
- Emile Chabal, *France* (Polity Press).

These books have been placed on Reserve. Each of these books have different strengths: Stovall is best at placing France in a global context, Kedward excels on the domestic context (and especially the Second World War), and Chabal proposes a series of interpretive essays. If you miss a class, or just feel a bit lost, I urge you to read the relevant chapters in these works.

### Required Books:

Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (Penguin Books, 2004) [*Le Feu*]

Emilie Carles, *A Life of her Own. A Countrywoman in Twentieth-Century France* (Penguin, 1992) [*Une soupe aux herbes sauvages*]

Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France during the German Occupation* (Picador, 2004)

Irène Némirovsky, *Suite Française* (Vintage Books, 2007) [*Suite française*]

Henri Alleg, *The Question* (Bison Books, 2006) [*La question*]

Azouz Begag, *Shantytown Kid* (Bison Books, 2007) [*Le gone du Chaâba*]

### Week 1

January 24: The Origins of the Great War

January 26: The Front Lines and the Home Front

### Week 2

January 31: The Postwar

Feb 2: French Fascism?

**Reading:** Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire*, chapters 1-12

### Week 3

→Feb 7: **Discussion, Barbusse, Under Fire** (finish book). Post on Canvas  
**Due in class, Feb 7: write a one-page paper explaining what the *poilus* in *Under Fire* are fighting for**

Feb 9: The Popular Front: Antifascism and Social Reform

“Programme of the Popular Front,” (Canvas)

### Week 4

→Feb 14: **Discussion of Grand Illusion (Movie)** + Lecture: The Coming of WWII

Feb 16: The Strange Defeat

**Movie:** Jean Renoir, *Grand Illusion*. **View before the Feb 14 discussion.**

**Begin Reading** Irène Némirovsky, *Suite Française*

**Week 5.**

Feb 21: Vichy France

Feb 23: France under the Germans: Collaboration, Accommodation and Resistance

**Reading:** Irène Némirovsky, *Suite Française*, 1-144

**Week 6**

→Feb 28: **Discussion, Némirovsky, *Suite Française***

**Reading:** Irène Némirovsky, *Suite Française*, 145-300 [I encourage you to read beyond p. 300 and finish the book]

March 2: Purges and the New Regime

**Week 7**

March 7: Intellectuals

March 9: The end of Empire

**Reading:** Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, 1-90

☒☒☒ **5-page paper due in class on March 7** ☒☒☒

**Week 8 Spring break****Week 9:**

→March 21: **Discussion, Gildea, *Marianne in Chains***

**Reading:** Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, 209-90; 317-47

March 23: The Algerian War

**Week 10**

March 28: Charles De Gaulle

→March 30: **Discussion: Alleg, *The Question* (pp. 33-96) + *Battle of Algiers* (movie) [post one question about the movie and one about the book. Post a paragraph on *either* the book or the movie].**

**Due in class March 30: write a one-page paper explaining why the French army tortured in Algeria**

**Reading:** Henri Alleg, *The Question*, 33-96; **Movie:** Gillo Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers*, view by March 30.

**Week 11**

April 4: Rural Society

April 6: May 1968

**Reading:** Selections from Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets* (Canvas); begin Emilie Carles, *A Life of Her Own*

**Week 12**

→April 11: **Discussion, Emilie Carles, *A Life of her Own*.**

**Reading:** Emilie Carles, *A Life of her Own. A Countrywoman in Twentieth-Century France* (finish book)  
 April 13: The European Turn

### Week 13

☒☒☒ **6-page paper due on April 18** ☒☒☒

April 18: A Nation of Immigrants

April 20: The Unsavory Past

**Reading:** Begin Azouz Begag, *The Shantytown Kid*

### Week 14

April 25: The End of Socialism and the Neoliberal Turn

➔ April 27: **Discussion, Azouz Begag: *The Shantytown Kid***

**Reading:** Azouz Begag, *Shantytown Kid*, finish book

### Week 15

May 2: The Extreme Right from Jean-Marie Le Pen to Marine Le Pen

May 4: Secularism and Universalism in the Twenty First Century

**Reading:** Emile Chabal, "Local Citizens in a Global State," (Canvas)

☼☼☼ **Final: Monday May 8 at 10:05 a.m.** ☼☼☼