Course description

One of the oldest traditions in France has been la contestation: a word that can be translated as questioning, entering into a dispute, confronting, protesting or simply contesting. French history has consequently borne the imprint of this long and lively history. More often than not these movements have been led by the youth, for whom protest was a means to bring about change and right what they viewed as wrong. According to one specialist on the subject, Philip Cerny, political protest has become part of the adolescent political socialization.

This class aims to journey through a number of such movements and investigate what was being contested, why, and what was achieved as a result. We will start with the 19th century, 1848 and the Paris Commune when the youth manned the barricades and often paid with their lives for their ideals. We will visit the 20th century, namely 1968, when the streets of Paris and other major cities witnessed an unprecedented level of contestation challenging the all powerful government of Général de Gaulle. We will end with the twenty first century when 16-18 year olds’ refusal to accept the CPE (Contrat du Premier embauche) forced the government to withdraw the law and the youth in the Banlieues (outer cities) revolted against social injustice and tried to force the governments to face their responsibilities.

The aim of this course is to:

1. Present a historical overview of France’s revolutionary tradition and question its origins and validity.
2. Discuss with some detail each of the events that saw a major confrontation between the people and the government.
3. Contextualize or even empathize with the demands in each case through a reading of documents of the period.
4. Discuss our present day understanding of the events and the demands.
5. Review some of the more recent events in relation to youth protest movements.

Course requirements:
Students can choose one of the two options:
**Option A**
Presentations 20%
Midterm 30%
Paper 20%
Final 30%

**Option B**
Presentations 20%
Midterm 40%
Final 40%

*Participation and Discussion: 20%*

*Students are required to fulfill their reading assignments every week and come to class with an outline ready to participate in the class discussion.*

Class participation should demonstrate knowledge of arguments and issues examined in the readings and an ability to participate in a discussion.

As part of the participation grade, students will take turns serving as discussion leaders. Discussion leaders will be responsible for guiding the discussion and raising thoughtful questions that can help to address key controversies and interesting insights from the readings. Discussion leaders should put together 3-5 questions which they should email me no later than 10 pm the day before class.

If you have difficulty speaking in class, please come and see me sooner rather than later so that we can discuss possible strategies so that you would not be surprised by your grade at the end of the semester.

Mid-term exam: 30% / 40%

Final exam: 30% / 40%

*Research Paper: 20%: Research paper on a topic related to France and Islam. The research paper should not be more than 6-7 pages. The students need to present a written proposal and have it approved by week 8. Students will be asked to present their research findings to class.*

**Class Policy:**
- There are NO additional or make up assignments.
- Late assignments will not be accepted.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Regardless of the quality of work, plagiarism is punishable with a ‘failing grade’ in the class. Plagiarism may be broadly defined as “copying of materials from sources, without acknowledging having done so, claiming other’s ideas as one’s own without proper reference to them, and buying materials such as essays/exams."

**Required reading:**
All the articles will be posted.
**Required viewing of films:**
Peters Watkins’ *La Commune.*
Jacques Tati’s *Mon Oncle*
Peter Davis’, *Hearts and Minds*

**Week 1: February 1st & 3rd**

*Lecture: France’s revolutionary tradition: myth or reality?*

**Reading:**

- **Passages for discussion:**
  - The text of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, August 1789.
  - The Rights of Women 1791 Olympe de Gouges
  - The US Bill of Rights, 1776

**Discussion:**

- Similarities and differences between the three documents.
- Does the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the US Bill of Rights render ‘Man’ free?
- In what ways were these documents ‘revolutionary’?

**Weeks 2: February 8th & 10th**

*Lecture: 1830 – 1848: Were the two revolutions ‘confiscated’?*

**Reading:**

- General background:

**Passages for discussion:**


**1830-32**

- Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, the Heroes
- Delacroix’s *Liberty guiding the People*
- Horace Vernet, *Juin 1832 Rue Soufflot*
- Passage from Alfred Cobban’s *A History of Modern France* Vol 2 1799-1871

**1848**

- Percy B. St. John, ‘The French revolution in 1848’ (an eye-witness account).
  Internet Modern History Sourcebook
  [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html)
- Alphonse de Lamartine, ‘History of the Revolution of 1848 in France’ (a contemporary account) Internet Modern History Sourcebook
  [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html)
- The quarante huitard: a drawing
Discussion 1:
- Is Property robbery?

Discussion 2:
- The effects and influence of imagery on collective memory.
- Some comments on the eye witness reports of 1848: similarities & differences. The values and limitations of eye-witness reports for a historian.

**Week 3: February 15th & 17th & Week 4 February 22nd & 24th**

*Lecture: The Paris Commune: how close were the Communards in changing the paradigm of democracy?*

*Reading:*

*Background Reading:*
- Greg Oxley, ‘The Paris Commune of 1871’ and a timeline showing the major events leading up and including the Paris Commune. Both found in [http://www.ucc.ie/acad/appsoc/tmp_store/mia/Library/history/france/paris-commune/index.htm](http://www.ucc.ie/acad/appsoc/tmp_store/mia/Library/history/france/paris-commune/index.htm)

*Passages for discussion:*
- Prosper Lissagaray, Chapter III, The eighteenth of March
- Prosper Lissagaray, Chapter VI, ‘The mayors and the Assembly combine against Paris’

*Discussion:*
- How legitimate was the Paris Commune?
- How important was that?

Here are some comments in the newspapers around whether elections should have taken place in Paris after March 18, 1871. They could help you get prepared for the discussion. The Lissagaray chapter on the Mayors and the Assembly is also relevant.

- The commune elections are a contest between two claims between two claims to legitimacy: “On the one hand a legal situation; on the other a legitimate aspiration.” *Rappel*, a moderate Republican newspaper, 28 March 1871
- “What does legality mean at a time of revolution?” Comment on the day of the elections by Elie Reclus.
- “Every revolution accomplished with the consent of the majority of citizens is legitimate.” *Père Duchêne*, one of the most popular of the revolutionary newspapers, 24 March 1871

*And if time:*
We will watch and discuss Peters Watkins’ film, *La Commune.*

**Week 5: March 1st & 3rd**

Reading:

Background Reading:
- Jean Benoît Nadeau & Julie Barlow, chapter 7 ‘World War II: the Unforgotten war’ in Nadeau & Barlow, What makes the French so French? Sixty Million Frenchmen Can’t be Wrong’, 2004

Passages for discussion:
- Guy Moquet’s letter to his mother.
- Maurice Halbwachs, ‘The Reconstruction of the Past’ in M. Halbwach, On Collective Memory, 1941

Discussion: Collective memory: a means to build a national identity.

Week 6: March 8th & 10th

Review and MIDTERM (March 10th)

Week 7: March 15th & 17th
Lecture: post-war France: what did the students in 1968 see wrong?
Reading:

General reading:
- Watch and discuss Jacques Tati’s Mon Oncle

No formal discussion.

Week 8: March 22nd & 24th
Lecture: The Algerian War and its spill-over into Metropolitan France
Reading:

General reading:
- Jean-Benoît Nadeau & Julie Barlow, chapter 8 ‘Algeria: the unacknowledged war’ in *What makes the French so French: Sixty Million Frenchmen can’t be wrong*, 2003

**Passages for discussion:**

- Declaration on the Right of Insubordination in the War in Algeria (The Manifesto of the 121) France 1960.

Discussions around each of the readings.

**Week 9: March 29th & 31st**

**Lecture: The Intellectuals in Post-War France**

Reading:

Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*

Discussions around the responsibilities of an intellectual in society.

**Week 10: April 5th & 7th**

**Lecture: The New Left:**

Reading:


Watch Peter Davis’, *Hearts and Minds*

**No formal discussion**

**Week 11: April 12th & 14th**

**Lecture: Guy Debord, Marcuse, Che Guevara**

Reading:


Discussions around each of the readings.

If time:

Watch Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*
Spring Break: April 17th – May 3rd

Week 12: May 3rd & 5th

Lecture: Post-68 France: continuity and change.
2005-2006: What are the demands of the French youth today?

Reading:
- Peter Wilby, ‘Humanity’s last rage’ in New Statesman, 12 May 2008.
- Chris Rootes, ‘Student activism in France: 1968 and After’ in Phil Cerny (edit), Social Movements and Protest in France, 1982
- As well as some newspaper articles

Week 13: May 10th & 12th

Review & Final examination

Extra reading
- Phil Cerny, ‘The Politics of Protest in Contemporary French Society’ in Phil Cerny (edit), Social Movements and Protest in France, 1982
- August Blanqui, ‘Project for a Revolutionary proclamation; (Call to Arms) Internet Modern History Sourcebook
  http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html
- Julian Jackson, ‘Epilogue: Remembering the Occupation’ in Julian Jackson, France: the Dark Years 1940-1944, 2001