

**Department:** Modern and Classical Languages

**Course No:** FREN 3211 [211]

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Contemporary France

**Contact:** Roger Travis

**Content Area:** CA1-Arts and Humanities

**Diversity:** CA4 International

**Catalog Copy:** FREN 211. Contemporary France. Second Semester. Three credits. Recommended preparation: FREN 164 or 175 or three years of high school French or instructor consent. An historical and cultural overview of France in the 20th and 21st centuries: from D-Day to the European Union, from Communism to the Green Party, from ballad crooners to rap, from love stories to action films; the changing French Nation through authentic documents, literary texts and films.

**Course Information:** a. French 211 stresses radical and dramatic changes and transformations of France since WWII, from a dominantly catholic and peasant France before WWII, to urban and modern France in the '50 and '60 to post-colonial, multicultural and multiethnic France since the mid-seventies. French National identity in

crisis is contemporary France and global context, is the main argument of the course.

b. Requirements: Midterm and Final exams, one final research paper, three quizzes, and weekly written assignments (300-500 words answer to a question related to the readings)

c. topics in chronological order: History, Economy, Politics and Culture: French historical "debacle" in WWII, Vichy Regime (French collaboration with Hitler), National conservative revolution, antisemitic policies (i.e Drancy camp and deportations) vs the Resistance (de Gaulle, Jean Moulin), -Liberation and purges, "revenge" on women who dated Germans (Sheared Women), trials and executions of writers and artists (Brasillach, Drieu la Rochelle, Celine etc..) -the crucial role of the Communist Party in the Resistance, and consequently in French politics until the mid-seventies in schools and universities, in philosophy, culture and art (ie Aragon, Sartre) - Economic Reconstruction (1945-1975) and the new Providence State (social security system), the New Constitution (1958) of the fifth Republic and the work force from the colonies -Decolonization (Indochina 1954) North African states (Morocco and Tunisia 1956), Algeria (1962), West Africa and all other African and Pacific French colonized countries mid-sixties)

-The sixties: students revolt of May 1968, workers general strikes and the end of Gaullism.

-Women Liberation movements and sexual minorities struggles in the sixties and the seventies, rights for prisoners, emigrants and marginalized populations

- the eighties and the socialist-liberal economic restructuring and the new social inequalities, the new extreme right party and antisemitism, racism and the second generation emigrants or "Beurs"

-the nineties and the new poor: homeless, unemployed, illegal and without papers populations

-Contemporary France: the debate on French identity and citizenship, the new role of Islam (second religion in France), fundamentalism and international terrorism, the Islamic veil and laicity, urban insecurity and violence, drugs, ghettos. Democracy, Human rights and global economy. Philosophical, intellectual and cultural movements: from Modernism to Existentialism, from Structuralism to Deconstruction, from New Philosophers to New French Thought.

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** Course meets 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 Through weekly written assignments and class discussions, through critical practices and analyses of discursive and non-discursive material, this course help the students become articulate, acquire analytical competence through methodological and theoretical tools applied to analyse imaginary and symbolic representations and acquire internet literacy as they use documents and material for their research paper.-the range and scope of topics and issues, in history, economy, politics and culture help them acquire intellectual breath and critical judgement, make them aware of contemporary France, with similarities and differences with other European countries and the USA. By stressing the post-colonial, multicultural and multiethnic components of French Society, they become aware of the diversity of human culture and experience.

**CA1 Criteria:** French 211 meets three criteria:

1 -historical and critical analyses of Contemporary France; 2: stresses the importance of French Constitution changes, the Fifth Republic, and its effects on political stability, as well as the crucial importance of French intellectuals in social and political debates (see for instance the heated debate on the Islamic veil) 3 and 4. Material include popular culture, from movies, crooners ballads to rap music, from hip hop to flash mobs, from popular fiction to non-fiction documents, street performances, all require careful analyses of imaginary and symbolic representations.

**CA4 Criteria:** French 211 - meets 1, 2, 4, 5

As shown in topics and themes, this course introduces to the dramatic changes and transformations in two or three generations of France from a Catholic, and mainly white population, to a multiracial, multiethnic one, and the difficulties to adjust to such drastic changes: with Islam as the second religion in France, with at

least six millions muslims (one million Protestants and 600,000 Jews),and new mixed population mostly from previous French colonies, the extreme Right in France is playing with great success on fears and anxieties created by such radical change.

Islamophobia, rise in antisemitism acts, African practices of female excision, the islamic veil in School and work places, insecurities in inner cities, rise in violence and crime, all these facts that make the daily medias, are symptoms of real difficulties. They shape and influence all political issues and debates, and help the extreme right (the Front National), second in the last presidential elections in April 2002.

--to study contemporary France means to take into account its post-colonial context, its new multiethnic and religious diversity, although France struggles fiercely with its multiculturalism, opposing new abstract and formal forms of republicanism to global and universal rights.

> All these contexts serve perfectly issues in diversity and multiculturalism, and comparing French contexts to USA contexts help understand how differences and similarities are grounded in history, politics and culture, and how they are symbolically constructed.