



**Arcadia University-AGS-Alliance Française
AGSD SOCC 360 Clash of Cultures**

Credits: 3

Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to aspects of contemporary French society from a cultural point of view to complement the historical and political perspectives provided by the core courses in the curriculum. The course concerns itself less with policies and outcomes, and more with developing students's capacities to analyze and assess what to most of them will likely be the unfamiliar (or at least the unelaborated) values and attitudes they will encounter as they progress through their semester abroad in France. To do so, the course concentrates on a few selected issues, and is divided into three parts: cultural "clashes" or contrasts between France and the United States; "clashes" or sources of tension inside the culture of France itself; and aspects of French culture that result in "clashes" between France and the world. "Clashes" as used in this context refers primarily to how the contrasts and conflicts of the respective issues may be characterized at first glance, and how they may be portrayed in the media to a general audience. When examined more closely, "clash" may seem a bit hyperbolic to describe the tensions between the various actors of the issues we will cover (though not always), and it is this more informed understanding that is a primary objective of the course. Perhaps most importantly, the course is also intended to provide a venue to help process the various experiences of a semester abroad and to integrate these experiences in a reasoned, logical fashion with each student's world view. After all, students can continue to accumulate historical and policy knowledge about France after they have returned to their home countries, but the daily stimulus, data, input, and examples to be absorbed when living here (not to mention the displeasures and delights) cannot be recreated once they have left France.

Pre-requisites

None.

Methods

Classes will consist primarily of lectures and class discussions, interspersed with films and other media, outings, guest speakers, formal and informal debates, role-playing simulations, case studies, and presentations (by students). As participation in class discussions and activities is a significant portion of a student's grade, students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the week's assignment (whether it be readings, out-of-class observations, interviews, or what-have-you). The structure and expectations for in-class debates, simulations, and case studies will be explained during class and will make up part of each student's participation grade.

Each student will also be required to make an oral presentation to the class at the end of the term on a book of their choice (and approved by the instructor) whose subject relates to the objectives

of the course. The format for the presentation will be discussed in class, and will make up 20% of the student's final grade.

There will be regular short written assignments to be handed in. For the first section of the course (roughly the first month), students will be asked to keep a journal (of sorts) in which they record their own observations of Paris and France as they relate to the following session's topic. In addition, for some reading assignments, students will be asked to bring a notecard to class on which they will have written an observation, comment, and/or question to contribute to the class discussion. Both the journal entries and the comment notecards contribute to a student's assignment grade, and are graded on a straight A, B, C, or 0 (if no notecard handed-in) scale.

The midterm and final exams will consist of in-class essays. The midterm will test the first half of the course and the final will test the second half of the course.

Attendance at each class session is required. Each unexcused absence lowers a student's final grade by 5%.

Required Reading

A course packet of readings will be provided.
Students must purchase or borrow a copy of the book they choose to present to the class.

Evaluation

Presentation: 20%
Midterm (in-class essay): 25%
Final (in-class essay): 25%
Participation (discussions, debates, attendance, etc.): 15%
Assignments (journals, notecards, interviews, etc.): 15%

Session Outline

N.B.: Assignments listed below are due *the following week* after the date listed.

Week 1

Session 1: Introduction

- Course introduction;
- Culture in International Relations theory;
- Assessing and adapting to new cultures in an academic context.

Assignment for next week: journal entry; reading from course packet

Week 2

Session 2: Cultural contrasts and comparisons, US and France I: social order

- Comparing French and American expectations and attitudes towards society at large.

Assignment for next week: journal entry; reading from course packet

Week 3

Session 3: Cultural contrasts and comparisons, US and France II: economic order

- Comparing French and American expectations and attitudes towards work, wealth, money, and the broader economy;
- Case study: US and French economies and the 2008 financial crisis.

Assignment for next week: interview of French acquaintance; reading from course packet

Week 4

Session 4: Culture as a commodity

- Comparing and contrasting French and American approaches to the export and import of culture.

Assignment for next week: journal entry; reading from course packet

Week 5

Session 5: Current state of French-US relations

- Survey of French-US diplomatic, social, and economic relations to date.
- In-class diplomatic simulation.

Assignment for next week: reading from course packet

Week 6

Session 6: Inside France: Role of the Media

- “Clash” of media and politics in French domestic polity.
- Debate: public and private media in France

Assignment for next week: reading from course packet; comment notecard

Week 7

Session 7: Inside France: History of Feminism and Women's Status in France

- Women in French society

Assignment for next week: study for midterm

Week 8

Session 8: Midterm

Assignment for next week: reading from course packet; interview of French acquaintance

Week 9

Break -- no class

Week 10

Session 9: Inside France: National Minorities

- History of national minorities in France and their status today.

Assignment for next week: reading from course packet; comment notecard

Week 11

Session 10: Inside France: Post-Colonialism and the DOMTOM

- Post-colonialism and the “location of culture” debate.
- Film: (TBD)

Assignment for next week: reading from course packet; comment notecard

Week 12

Session 11: France in the World: The Impact of Globalization

- France's simultaneous embrace and rejection of the phenomenon of "globalization."
- Documentary: (TBD)

Assignment for next week: reading from course packet; prepare presentations

Week 13

Session 12: France in the World: The French Military and Foreign Interventions

- French attitudes towards the military and foreign interventions in the post-Cold War era.
- Presentations (first wave)

Assignment for next week: reading from course packet; prepare presentations

Week 14

Session 13: France in the World: France in International Bodies and French NGOs

- France in international organizations and French NGOs
- Presentations (second wave)

Assignment for next week: study for final

Week 15

Session 14: Final exam