

2022-2023 Academic year

Autumn Semester



The Political Regime of France

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Course description

The current political regime of France, the Fifth Republic, was established by the 1958 Constitution. After two centuries of political and constitutional instability, the Fifth Republic is often presented by its numerous supporters as the expression of a political maturity and equilibrium between the principles of liberty and authority. Even if this judgement has to be balanced, it is undeniable that the political regime of today's France, which is neither a "presidential regime" like the USA nor a classic "parliamentary regime" following the Westminster model, is a quite original and peculiar combination of presidentialism, democracy and rule of law. Its various components and its balance of powers will be presented and discussed in this course.

Grading and course requirements:

Final exam – 100% and optional assignments

Compulsory reading

- Anne Stevens, *Government and Politics of France*, 3rd edition, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Further readings (in English)

- Alistair Cole, *Governing and Government in France*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Alistair Cole, Sophie Meunier, Vincent Tiberj (eds), *Developments in French Politics*, 5th edition, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Andrew Knapp, Vincent Wright, *The Government and Politics of France*, 5th revised edition, Routledge, 2006.
- Yves Mény, *The French Political System*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1998.

To go beyond (in French)

- Olivier Duhamel, *Le pouvoir politique en France*, 5e éd., Paris, Le Seuil, 2003.
- Bastien François, *Le Régime de la Ve République*, 5e éd., Paris, La Découverte, Repères, 2011.
- Jean Gicquel, Jean-Eric Gicquel, *Droit constitutionnel et institutions politiques*, 27e éd., Paris, LGDG Domat droit public, 2013.

WEEKLY PLANNING

- Lesson 1. *L'Esprit des lois*, the social and historical roots of the French regime
- Lesson 2. "A Constitution is a text, a spirit and a practice"
- Lesson 3. The Executive branch in the text : dyarchy and shared powers
- Lesson 4. Presidents and Prime-Ministers : the practice beyond the text
- Lesson 5. Ministers, cabinets & the higher civil service : the co-governors of France
- Lesson 6. Decentralization & the territorial governance of contemporary France
- Lesson 7. A modest but indispensable Parliament
- Lesson 8. The French "party system"
- Lesson 9. French "statism" & a "weak" civil society ?
- Lesson 10. Conclusions & final discussion