

AUTUMN 2022

FRENCH 376 A (15635)/ **JSIS 488 A** (17048) / **HSTEU 490 A** (23340)

Culture, Politics and Society in France from the Religious Wars to the Revolution

(5 credits; I&S/VLPA; conducted in English)

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TTh 10:30-12:20

By the 1680s, France had become, under Louis XIV, the foremost superpower in Europe. The global influence of its culture continued in the 1700s, “when all of Europe spoke French.” But while global elites from Saint Petersburg to Lima adopted French as a prestige language, most people in France, even on the cusp of the 1789 Revolution from which the modern Republic was born, spoke it only as a second tongue, if they spoke it at all.



Map of French postal routes, 1632

The staging of French grandeur at Versailles masked the degree to which France was—and remains—a diverse and fragmentary patchwork of regional communities and traditions. Louis XIV's 20 million “subjects” remained deeply wedded to local customs, affiliations, histories, and dialects. They had limited contact with the central government (mostly via the hated tax collector) and no natural affection for it.

How did a modern unified *nation*, with a single administration, language, and the claim to a shared French culture and national identity, evolve from this patchwork?

Readings, lectures, discussions, and projects will touch on the following themes:

- * The modern state. Absolutism and divine right; Versailles, the court, and the cult of the King; the rites of political representation; theorizing the “nation” and citizenship
- * The upheaval of traditional social “orders” (aristocracy and the third estate); mobility; urbanization and new work and consumption patterns fueled by trade and colonialism; climate and health
- * The politics of religion; the Catholic monarchy and religious plurality; the growth of Protestantism
- * Marriage, gender, privacy, and domestic life; traditions, critical perspectives and new practices
- * Language and linguistic politics; multilingualism and the codification of “French”
- * New media environments and cultures of information, shaped by the growing print trade, the press and rising literacy; propaganda and contestation; the rise of public opinion
- * New forms of organization and diffusion of knowledge in the “Age of Enlightenment”; the *Encyclopédie*