

AUTUMN 2021

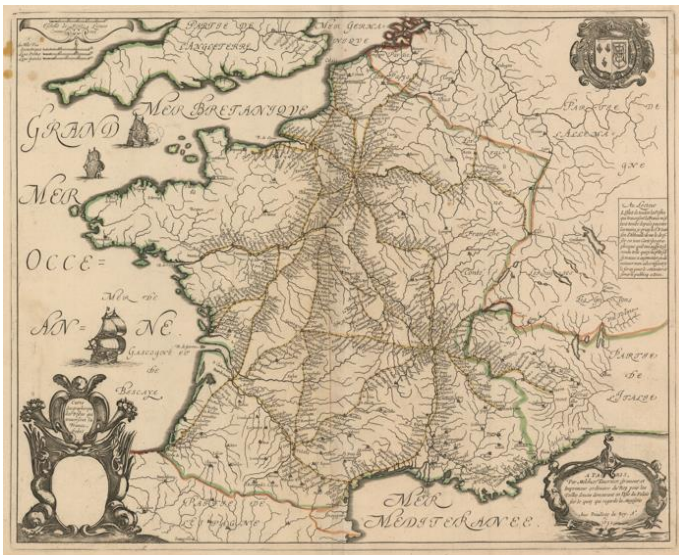
FRENCH 376 A

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

(5 credits; I&S/VLPA; Conducted in English; No Prerequisites)

Instructor To be Announced
MW 12:30-2:20pm, Condon Hall 139

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 international 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”; mobility; urbanization and new consumption patterns fueled by trade and colonialism; climate and health
- * Evolving views and practices related to marriage, gender, privacy, and domestic life
- * The emergence of new media environments, shaped by the growing print trade 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 politics of religion in a Catholic monarchy with one of the oldest and largest Protestant communities in Europe