

HSTY 2658

French Politics and Culture

Essay Questions – Semester 2, 2008

Guidelines:

1. Your essay is due by **4 pm on Wednesday, 24 September**. Submit your essay at the SOPHI office. Make sure that it has a signed cover sheet. Remember that there are penalties for late essays. (See the course outline.)
2. You are expected to be aware of, and adhere to, the University's policy on academic honesty (plagiarism).
3. The essay must follow the guidelines – available on the Department of History website – about referencing and presentation. Points will be deducted if this is not the case.
4. The essay is 2500 words in length, and should generally not be over or under that word count by more than ten per cent. There is no set number of references, but a good essay will probably have *used* in a significant way – and not just in a tokenistic way – at least 7-10 sources.
5. Part of this exercise is for you to locate appropriate sources, in particular academic monographs and journal articles. You should avoid sources that are inappropriate for a university-level essay. Take advantage of the various bibliographic guides available in Fisher Library or on-line.
6. Remember that the point of the essay is interpretation! Make your own arguments, draw conclusions, buttress what you say with evidence. And write in an engaging style!
7. Please ask the tutor or lecturer if you have questions or would like to discuss your work.

Questions:

Choose *one* of the following topics. There is no 'right' answer, and most of the questions are fairly open-ended to allow you to consider various sources and interpretations.

1. To what extent do present-day historians agree with the major arguments of Jules Michelet's *The People* [in Reserve in Fisher], written on the eve of the 1848 revolution?
2. Why did monarchism/royalism effectively fail as a political movement by the late nineteenth century in France?

QUESTIONS CONTINUED...

3. Was the 'Belle Epoque' really 'belle' for the French?
4. Analyse Charles Péguy's essay 'La Jeunesse' [a copy in English is available in Fisher Reserve], written in 1910, in the context of French politics and society of the time in which it was written.
5. 'If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast'. Reflect on this quotation from Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* [in Fisher Reserve]. What was the place of the 'lost generation' in interwar Paris, and why was Paris a 'moveable feast'?
6. Compare and contrast Pierre-Jakez Hélias's *A Horse of Pride* [in Fisher Reserve] with another original memoir of French peasant life in the early twentieth century, placing the works in historiographical context.
7. Was France infused with pacifist sentiment or war anxiety during the 1930s?
8. Did 'collaboration' or 'resistance' dominate in France during the Second World War?
9. To what extent were the 1950s an era of modernization in France?
10. Why was the Algerian war of independence so fiercely fought?
11. 'Le cinéma de papa est mort' ('Dad's cinema is dead'). To what extent does the so-called *nouvelle vague* ('new wave) in French cinema in the 1960s reflect changes in postwar French society and culture?
12. 'Boredom is counter-revolutionary!', 'Barricades close the streets but open up the way', 'They are buying your freedom. Steal it!', 'It is forbidden to forbid', 'Take your desires for realities!', 'Don't negotiate with the bosses. Get rid of them!', 'Under the paving stones, the beach!'. What do such graffiti as these tell you about the zeitgeist – the spirit of the times – in France in the late 1960s
13. Is the France of the 1990s and early twenty-first century a racist society?