

STANFORD
BUSINESS

GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF



FALL 2023

OSPPARIS 21: France in Crisis & Revolution: Historical Political Economics through a French Lens.

Bing Overseas Program in Paris, Fall AY2023-24

Classroom: #68 at the Stanford Center in Paris, or at Historical Sites around Paris.

Regular Session: 2-5pm Wednesdays.

Professor Saumitra Jha¹
saumitra@stanford.edu
Office Hours: any time, by appointment

Assistant: Jeannine Williams
jeannine@stanford.edu

[This syllabus will be updated regularly. Please click here for the latest version.](#)

France has been one of the world's great innovators in introducing new political ideas, often born out of economic or social crises, that have driven not only its own economic and political development but have also influenced institutions around the world. From the trauma of the Great Revolution to the modern emergence of the Extreme Right, the experience of France has much to teach us: not only about how societies develop economically, and how to manage the political polarization and conflict that can often result, but also the role of new ideas in shaping the institutions of nations.

In this course, we will study the latest ideas in Political Economics and Historical Political Economy in light of ideas and examples that draw from the French experience in comparative perspective. Each week we will pair a core concept in political economics with a detailed study of how the methods of social science history can shed new light on a particular crisis or episode in France's development. The aim will be to understand what lessons we might draw for reducing political polarization and conflict not only in France but around the world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This class is certified for the "Social Inquiry" Ways requirement, and aligns with those learning objectives. By the end of the class, you will not only study in depth key historical moments of

¹ Associate Professor of Political Economy, Stanford Graduate School of Business, *with tenure*; Senior Fellow, Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research; Senior Fellow, Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, Freeman-Spogli Institute for International Affairs; Faculty Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor, *by courtesy*, of Economics and of Political Science, Stanford University; Convenor of the Stanford Conflict and Polarization Initiative.

France's political and economic development but also learn how to apply methods of research from social science history, economics and political science in order to be both a more informed consumer of research and to evaluate qualitative and quantitative evidence. You will develop a more nuanced judgement for what constitutes the grounds to make causal claims through natural and field experiments and the historical and contemporary contexts in which these may be generalizable. These will be stepping stones towards your own original research.

THE BASICS

- **Materials:** All readings will be posted in Canvas.
- **Grading:** Course grades are based on an: i) final paper (40%), ii) class participation (40%), iii) 2 presentations (20%).

This course can be taken for either 3 or 4 units. Those taking the course for 4 units will have no further formal expectations but will be expected to read more deeply and delve more into the literatures underlying the themes and issues of the class.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (40)

- **Class Meetings:** We will meet once a week in person at the Stanford in Paris campus or at other relevant historical venues in Paris, for 170 minutes. Each class is the equivalent of a week of lectures, so please do not skip a class, as absences cannot be made up and will adversely affect your grade.
- Learning from one another is a key part of the class. As this is a class about learning lessons from social science history on how mitigate contemporary political conflict, we will be invariably be discussing some sensitive topics about which reasonable people may disagree. Yet what is exciting is that we are coming together as a team to think about and discuss novel solutions. For us to succeed, it is important to suspend judgement and assume the best intentions of one another.
- Class participation is critical for learning in this course and accounts for part of the overall grade. Class starts on time, repeated late arrivals will negatively affect the course grade (see course policy form for details). The quality of your participation will be judged on its relevance to the topics, your ability to integrate in-class readings and out-of-class experiences with the course concepts, and your contributions to a positive classroom climate. Each class, everyone is expected to listen carefully to each other's insights and to offer your own insights, both personal and based on the readings. Our class will be an open learning environment through which our understanding of the issues will become enriched by multiple perspectives.
- Class participation also may include points for answering surveys and short response questions and preparing and submitting a question for guest speakers, based upon their bios and the readings.
- Use of laptops, iPads, cellphones etc. during the class to surf the web or engage in other non-class related activities can be highly distracting and severely impacts your ability to contribute to the learning of your classmates. We therefore will not allow electronic devices in class (contact me if you have an accommodation). The one exception is when we are doing a trip outside the classroom, so you can follow slides electronically. However, you are expected to not use devices for non-classroom purposes even in this case.

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT (40): Deadline: December 1

Your final paper will be to carefully consider the life of a *particular individual* in the context of a particular group-level conflict in light of the frameworks of the course. Among the questions you will be expected to answer are: in what dimensions was that individual's endowed characteristics unique and what way were they representative of broader groups? To what extent was the individual free to make choices during the conflict, and to what extent were they constrained by exogenous forces? How did their exposure to ideas or exogenous experiences affect their decisionmaking? What were the drivers of the conflict more generally and how did the individual's circumstances interact with these drivers? What lessons, if any, can we draw from their lives for contemporary conflicts? What types of data and what type of (natural) experiment would be useful to test whether these lessons hold in other contexts as well?

You can choose the individual you wish to study, or if you wish, I can assign one to you, including from our datasets on Nazi collaborators, Resistants or revolutionary war veterans (see below). The person can be someone of personal relevance to you, someone historically relatively well-known, or someone whose lives are much less well-documented. Each poses different challenges: well-known individuals will have deep existing literatures to cover and synthesize. Less well-documented individuals will require more entrepreneurialism and original research. It is good to start thinking about whom you would like to focus upon as early as possible, and I am happy to talk, including on the Alsace trip. **Please let me know via email which individual you wish to focus upon latest by Sunday October 15.**

To maintain the "French lens" theme, though the individual and conflict you choose do not necessarily have to be explicitly French, they do have a connection to France, French ideas or influence. For example, Francisco de Miranda, the 'Precursor' of Latin American independence, who was influenced by Enlightenment ideas and served in the French Revolution would qualify on at least two grounds. Similarly members of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, the FLN in Algeria or Decembrist Russian officers who fought in the Napoleonic Wars would also qualify. Please talk with me if you have any questions.

Your paper should be no less than 10 pages and no longer than 15 pages long, typed in 12-point Times Roman font, spaced at 1.5 lines, with 1-inch margins.

PRESENTATIONS (30)

In parallel with the development of the paper, there will be two presentations. Mid-way through the class (week 5), you will do a 5 minute presentation of your initial research outlining the key aspects of the biography of the individual you have chosen, and your initial interpretation of the key drivers of the conflict in light of the literature (10). This will be an opportunity to get feedback from me and others in the class. **Please send me your slides (if any) latest by 1pm on Wednesday October 25.** In the second presentation (week 9), you will have a 10 minutes to present your final findings and conclusions from the paper (20).

THE HONOR CODE

Stanford has a tradition of respect for students' integrity in academic work. The Honor Code outlines mutual obligations for students and faculty in making this system work.

It is useful to recall that Honor Code prohibits plagiarism. According to the Stanford Board on Judicial Affairs, “For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person’s original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).” *In practice, this means that when you submit a written assignment for this class you should use quotation marks to indicate text written by others and you should use footnotes and references to cite others’ ideas or data. Further, for the purposes of this class, you may not seek any help from AI tools or other sources of writing help.*

The goal of these rules is not to create onerous or legalistic requirements. Rather, the requirement is simply that you must make clear the source of material you hand in. If you do this, everything will be fine. If you are uncertain about what the Honor Code entails for this class, feel free to consult me.

CLASS OUTLINE

Module 1: Is there a Structure to Agency in Conflict Environments?

Storms of the Past and Present (Week 1)

In this introductory module, we will lay out the basic framework of the course, which draws upon my book project *Wars and Freedoms*, with Steven Wilkinson (Yale). The first key example will be the Storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. We will hold the first meeting at the Place de la Bastille itself.

Resonating with the Storming of the US Capitol on January 6 in the United States, a number of the key leaders who changed the circumstances on July 14 were combat veterans, including those with service in the American Revolution.

We will draw on our original research exploiting natural experiments to understand the effects of war-time exposures by regiments of the French army in the eighteenth century to explore the effects of veterans and conflict on radical institutional change and the strategies used to prevent disorder in post-conflict environments.

Key readings (for after the first class):

Jha and Wilkinson “[Revolutionary Contagion](#)”, Stanford GSB working paper 2023.

This module will introduce you to some basic concepts for establishing causal relationships in observational data.

Recommended Background (Not Required)

*Jeremy Popkin *A New World Begins: The History of the French Revolution*, 2019

Simon Schama *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, 1989

Mike Duncan *Hero of Two Worlds: The Marquis de Lafayette in the Age of Revolution*, 2021

Andrew Roberts *Napoleon, A Life*, 2014

Jha and Wilkinson [“Does Combat Experience Foster Organizational Skill? Evidence from Ethnic Cleansing in the Partition of South Asia”](#), *American Political Science Review*, 2012

Fiction: Hilary Mantel *A Place of Greater Safety*, 1992

Heroes and Villains (Week 2 - 3): We will continue our discussion of the structure to agency in weeks 2 and 3 by fast-forwarding to World War I and II and the role of heroes in coordinating networks of politically influential individuals. I will draw upon evidence on 95,314 extreme right-wing supporters and Nazi collaborators in France, which experienced intense polarization in the 1930s and 1940s.² We show how democratic values can be undermined by exogenous networks of influential individuals, including heroes. In particular we examine the effects of rotation of French regiments under command of Philippe Petain at Verdun in 1916 in forging heroic networks that influence politics when the soldiers returned home. Heroes are specially positioned to widen the ‘Overton Window’ and legitimize views previously considered deeply repugnant. Social networks of individuals sharing such an identity can transmit and reinforce this influence, leading to escalating commitments that entrench political positions and make debiasing more difficult. However, heroes can also use their legitimacy to strengthen democracy. In the process, I will introduce you to archival research in economic history, drawing on a novel data set we have collected on the collaborators, and giving you the opportunity for further hands-on experience.

Key reading (**Week 2- second class**): Cage, Dagorret, Grosjean and Jha [“Heroes and Villains: The Effects of Heroism on Autocratic Values and Nazi Collaboration in France”](#), *American Economic Review*, July 2023

Week 3: (details TBC) (Partially) Optional Movie: Marcel Ophuls’ classic documentary on the hidden identities of Resistants and Collaborators: *La Chagrin et la Pitie*. This Oscar-nominated documentary was banned in France until 1981.

Recommended Background:

*Philippe Collin *Le Fantome de Philippe Petain*, 2022 (also on [podcast](#))

*Alistair Horne *The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916*, 1962

*Antoine Wieviorka *The French Resistance*, 2016

Robert Gildea *Fighters in the Shadows: A New History of the French Resistance*, 2015

Grosjean, Jha, Vlassopoulos and Zenou, “Political Trenches”, working paper, to be posted.

Un Village Francais (particularly the first four seasons), available on [Amazon Prime](#).

Recommended local visit: *Musee de la Liberation de Paris* (Metro: Denfert-Rochereau (free)); goes well when paired with the movie adaptation or book of Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre *Is Paris Burning?*

Module 2: Solutions to Conflict.**Week 5 Wednesday October 25: First presentations.****Week 4-5. Walking Together and Alone: The Promise and Limitations of Nonviolence:**

In this module, we will compare France's history of violent and nonviolent protests, that extend even before the French Revolution. We walk in the footsteps of the pioneers of the nonviolent approach to provide a reinterpretation of the histories of the great movements of the twentieth century, bringing to bear a host of new quantitative analyses to understand the challenges they faced, when they were successful at overcoming them and why. We develop a simple conceptual framework for understanding the strategies available to both the leaders and the followers of political movements, the media and outside audiences, as well as the regimes that they seek to influence, and how these decisions interact. We use this framework to highlight the presence of three key tensions that exist in many political movements. These tensions include: those between the *allure of violence* and the *seeming pedestrianism of nonviolence*, between the need for *numbers* and the need for *focus*, and between organizations that depend on *grassroots* mobilization versus *hierarchies and leadership*. At each step, we also discuss both strategy and the effectiveness of local tactics. We next compare the French experience with the Indian Independence Movement, US Civil Rights and modern protests such as the *Gilets Jaunes* and Black Lives Matter.

Key Reading: Bhavnani and Jha [How Non-Violence Works](#), book introduction.

Bhavnani and Jha [When Non-Violence Failed](#), Broadstreet Blog

Recommended Background:

**A Force More Powerful* video (<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/force-powerful-english/>)
Gandhi, directed by Richard Attenborough,
 Ramchandra Guha: *Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World*, 2018
 Taylor Branch: *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years*, 1998

Week 5-6. Swords into Bank Shares: Financial Solutions to the Threat of Political Violence:

In this module, we will draw upon my book [project](#) of this title and new research on [“Financial Markets under Siege”](#) to shed light on both financial economics and how finance relates to war and peace. Unusually, the Paris Bourse remained open during the Siege of 1870, with hot air balloons and carrier pigeons the only means of communication. We discuss how the financial markets respond to fake news, to war and to peace initiatives, in light of new data we have collected from the Bourse of Paris, which was cut off, and Bordeaux and Lyon, which were not. We will relate this to the broad question of how use financial approaches to reduce political polarization and conflict, using my research on [historical cases](#) and [modern field experiments](#).

Key Readings: Jha, Koudijs and Salgado [“Markets under Siege”](#) , [working paper 2023](#)

Jha and Shayo “[Valuing Peace: The Effects of Financial Market Exposure on Votes and Political Attitudes](#)”, *Econometrica* 2019

Saumitra Jha “[Can Financial Innovations Mitigate Civil and Ethnic Conflict?](#)” *World Financial Review* 2013

Local visit: tracing the path of key locations during the Siege and Commune: including the Mur de Federes at Pere Lachaise.

Recommended Background:

*Alistair Horne: *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune* 1870-71,

Saumitra Jha “[Financial Asset Holdings and Political Attitudes: Evidence from Revolutionary England](#)”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 2015

Dehdari and Gehring “[The Origins of Common Identity: Evidence from Alsace-Lorraine](#)”, *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 2022

Lalo Rivera, Enrique Seira and Saumitra Jha “Democracy Corrupted”, to be posted.

Week 7-9. En Marche: the Way Forward in the Age of Macron and Le Pen. Building on the analysis from the other modules, the capstone component of the course will look at how the legacies of the past shape contemporary French politics, and examine potential directions for mitigating the deepening political polarization in France today. We will also have final class presentations.

Week 8: We will have Professor Julia Cage, Sciences Po, Winner of the French *prix du meilleur jeune économiste* 2023, talk about her new book:

Julia Cage and Thomas Piketty: *Une histoire du conflit politique: Elections et inégalités sociales en France*, 1789-2022, 2023

Week 9: Final Class Presentations

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH:

The Bibliotheque Nationale de France has a great portal and many of its holdings are available digitally- start there: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/>

Data on local wealth and politics is available from the website for Julia Cage and Thomas Piketty’s new book. <https://unehistoireduconflitpolitique.fr/> and official data including at the intra-communal (IRIS) level is available at: <https://www.data.gouv.fr/en/datasets/>

Information on Individual Soldiers: <https://www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr/>

For researching individuals, [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) may also prove highly useful (may require a free trial membership.)

Stanford French Revolution Digital Archive also includes biographies <https://frda.stanford.edu/>

Libraries:

The Stanford in Paris library has a good collection of books that you might find useful.

Stanford Library's Online Collections include proquest historical newspapers and many other resources.

The Bibliotheque Nationale de France should have pretty much anything else.