

HUM116/L116 La France Contemporaine  
Winter 2025  
California Institute of Technology  
Division of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Course Instructor: Christiane Orcel  
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**Organization Meeting on Monday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 3 pm. Location to be announced.**

Course description

***La France contemporaine* is intended to serve as a civilization course. It immerses students in the France of today, through information concerning the political, social, technological, and cultural forces affecting French society. It emphasizes the tension in contemporary France between tradition and transformation. The class focuses on subjects such as the cultural and linguistic identity, the increasingly multiracial society, the individual and institutions, the family structures, the changing role of women, and the position of France in the European Union. Hum116/L116 strive to provide students with the knowledge familiar to the average, educated French citizen. The class is structured with North American students in mind. It makes frequent references to the institutions and customs of the United States, highlighting parallels and contrasts. Hum116/L116 also prioritize language acquisition. Students are expected to read about the various aspects of contemporary France, discuss them in class, and write about these topics on examinations. To assist them in performing these tasks, the level of language is easily accessible to undergraduates who had two years of French. Students finishing the course will have an excellent grasp of the lexical items that are part of daily life in France today. Moreover, the class provides insight into the historical roots of French behavior and institutions. Although the approach is primarily thematic, relevant events in each section are included to show their relation to contemporary concerns. To further aid students in assimilating the material, each chapter concludes with a set of exercises (Contrôle des connaissances), which will be used as an in-class check of comprehension. Additional articles from French magazines such as**

***L'Express, Le Point, or Le Nouvel Observateur* are also available for each chapter.**

Required text:

La France contemporaine by William Edmiston, Anne Duménil. [Sixth Edition](#) 2023, Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-0-357-66442-1

The textbook is available at:

<https://www.cengage.com/>

**The textbook is also on reserve at Sherman Fairchild Library.**

**Hum116/L116 will be conducted in French.**

Reading assignments three times a week. Two research projects on an aspect of France, 4-page long each, in French for L116 students, in English for Hum116 students. Fifteen short take home quizzes due after the completion of each chapter. A take home final exercise on the historical, cultural material covered in the course **OR** a final paper, 4-page long in French for L116 students, in English for Hum116 students.

Grading:

Take Home Final Exam **or** Final Paper: 20%

Projects: 40%

Take Home Quizzes: 20%

Class Participation: 20%