Course Description:
This course will explore the economic and social challenges facing contemporary France as a result of demographic change, European integration and globalization. We will consider how high unemployment, job insecurity, and mounting social and economic inequality have called into question the prevailing French systems of income redistribution and social protection. And we will examine how policy makers have tried to reform key elements of the “welfare state” (pensions, social security, healthcare) and how they have addressed the problems of unemployment and socio-economic exclusion. We will then consider how economists, sociologists and other critics and intellectuals have responded to the policies and proposals that the different political actors have advanced, both at the national and European levels. The course as a whole aims both to give students a basic understanding of the contemporary French economy and to introduce them to the conceptual framework of modern political economy. There are no prerequisites, though the course assumes a basic knowledge of the political history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century France. The quality of the course will depend on the quality of the discussion, which depends on everyone reading the selected texts and participating in class. Grading is as follows: class participation (30%), one presentation (30%), and the final term paper (40%). The topics and format of the term paper will be worked out in discussions.

DRAFT SYLLABUS

Chapters of the following books will be read during the semester. Photocopies will be handed out the week before the reading is due. Students are encouraged to read the * books in their entirety. The books can be purchased at the bookstore or on the internet. Most of them can also be borrowed from Bobst, and the IFS library has non-circulating copies.


Données sociales, la société française, Paris : Insee, 2002. 654 p. (Collection Références. ISSN 0758-6531)

Jacques Commaille, Pierre Strobel, Michel Villac, La politique de la famille, La Découverte, Repères, 2002, Chap. 1-3
SECTION 1. THE FRENCH ECONOMY TODAY: AN INTRODUCTION TO CURRENT DEBATES IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Week 1 (Sep. 8)

Introduction

Week 2 (Sep. 14) ***special day: on TUESDAY***

Unemployment and Precariousness


Week 3 (Sep. 22)

Inequality and Redistribution

« Inequality and Happiness: are Europeans and Americans different? », Alesina, Di Tella, MacCulloch, NBER 9198, 37p. (you can skip the technical sections).


« The Death of Horatio Alger », Paul Krugman, The Nation, January 5, 2004

SECTION 2: THE FRENCH WELFARE STATE: BETWEEN INSURANCE AND SOLIDARITY

Week 4 (Sep. 29)

Origins of the Welfare State
Comparing Welfare States


A. Alesina and E. L. Glaeser. Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe. Chapters 4,5,6,8.

Recommended but not mandatory:

Week 5 (Oct. 6)

The French Social Protection system: past, present, future


2, pp.2-23.


Recommended:

Week 6 (Oct. 13)

Social Protection: Health Care


Week 7 (Oct. 20)

Social Protection: Old-Age


« Quarante ans pour tous ? », Libération, 12/05/2003, 1p.

Recommended

(A theater play from 1984):
Loleh Bellon, De Si Tendres Liens (Such tender ties)

Week 8 (Oct. 27)

Social Protection against Unemployment and Exclusion


Recommended

Week 9 (Nov. 3)

Social Protection: Family policies


SECTION 3. THE WORK AND WELFARE NEXUS: CHALLENGES FOR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Week 10 (Nov. 10)

What's wrong with European Labor Markets?


Week 11 (Nov. 17)

Failures and Successes in Reforming European Labor Markets: The cases of France and Sweden

Paul Krugman, 1997. "Is Capitalism too productive?" (9p.)

The Economist, 2004. "Thirty-five hours of misery" (1p.)

Olivier Blanchard, 2003. "Reforming employment protection" (3p.)

SECTION 4: THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION

Week 12 (Nov. 24)

Globalization: Gain or Pain?


Week 13 (Dec. 1)
What should we expect from the European Monetary Union?


**Week 14 (Dec. 8)**

Open.