

Virtual Special Issue

Modern & Contemporary France

Women in France

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France has advanced equality legislation, gender parity laws, state support for domestic workers, women ministers and women presidential candidates. The recently appointed head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, was previously the first woman Finance Minister: French women intellectuals, theorists and writers are world famous; women students and graduates outnumber their male counterparts; and girls outperform boys at school. French women won the vote in 1944, the right to work in paid employment without their husband's permission in 1965, the legalisation of contraception in 1967 and abortion in certain circumstances in 1975. It might seem, therefore, that the separate study of women in France is no longer necessary.

However, in France, one woman is killed every two and a half days by her husband or partner; 75,000 women are raped every year; and the gender pay gap is 27%. With women making up 18.9% of the Assemblée nationale, France occupies 59th position in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's table of women in parliaments worldwide. This places France just below Lithuania, El Salvador and Tajikistan, and way below the table leaders, Rwanda, Andorra and Sweden.

Women have not been passive recipients of rights bestowed upon them by male parliaments; they have fought for their rights and, once won, fought to see them implemented. The articles in this collection are not simply accounts of inequalities and injustice; they are also about resistance and struggle. Together, they contribute to our understanding of the lives of women in France: not just famous individuals, but workers, activists, ordinary women, who make up 53% of the population.

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Gendering the occupation of France

Hannah Diamond and Claire Gorrara

New Women's Writing in France

Gill Rye

Parité, la nouvelle 'exception française'

Françoise Picq

The Chèque Emploi-Service, the Titre Emploi-Service and the Chèque Emploi-Service Universel in France: the Commodification of Domestic Work as a Route to Gender Equality?

Jan Windebank

Introduction: Women in French Politics: Still le deuxième sexe?,

Rainbow Murray

Political Debate: A Man's Game? Public Participation in Television Debate Programmes During the Presidential Election Campaign of 2007

Maggie Allison and Sheila Perry

Ni Putes ni Soumises: A Republican Feminism from the Quartiers Sensibles

Nicole Fayard and Yvette Rocheron

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Renate Günther

Contemporary trends in women's employment in France

Abigail Gregory

Reinventing gendered violence? The autobiographical writings of Jeanne Hyvrard, Helene Cixous and Marguerite Duras

Owen Heathcote

Fifty Years of Feminising France's Fifth Republic

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Reading national identity: Gender and 'prostitution' during the occupation

Karen H. Adler

Two women filmmakers remember the dark years

Lynn A. Higgins

Gaining the vote – a liberating experience?

Hanna Diamond

Rendez-vous manqués: Feminisms and anti-racisms in France

Cathie Lloyd

French feminism: National and international perspectives

Gill Allwood and Khurshed Wadia