HISTORY 339: THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:15-3:15; Wednesdays by appointment  
Eres Password: france

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers one of the most transformative centuries in European history, from the 1715 death of Louis XIV through the 1815 fall of Napoleon. In a period of great intellectual achievements, Enlightenment thinkers embraced the linked notions that the world operated according to predictable laws and that the human mind was not only capable of discerning these laws, but could actively help move humanity toward a future golden age of prosperity, justice and reason. Intellectual and cultural changes were matched by deep reaching social and economic transformations as the last vestiges of a rural, subsistence-oriented and paternalistic society were challenged by market forces and the worlds of commerce. This was also an era of intense political debate and experimentation. The revolutionary period from 1789 through 1815 saw the culmination of these transformations as new ideas and views of the world challenged the very foundations of the monarchy, aristocracy and the church. As the revolution gained momentum in the 1790s, new issues emerged concerning the rights and duties of citizens, the power of the secular nation-state, and the nature of national security. Since the era of the revolution, historians have struggled to understand why in this period, a revolution conceived in the spirit of democracy, freedom and an optimistic view of human potential morphed into the Terror – in which the streets of Paris running red with the blood of thousands of victims of the guillotine – and culminated in the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte’s military dictatorship. This course will focus primarily on French history, but where appropriate we will explore wider European and global contexts and legacies.

By the end of the semester students should demonstrate the ability to:

• Differentiate between primary and secondary sources
• Identify and express the strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of historical evidence
• Define and explain the key individuals, terms and concepts associated with the history of Old Regime, Revolutionary and Napoleonic France.
• Discuss major historiographical interpretations of the following key themes:
  - Definitions and critiques of the terms absolutism, Enlightenment, democracy and revolution
  - Political, social, cultural and intellectual conditions in France in the 18th century
  - The long term, middle term, and short term causes of the 1789 revolution
  - The impact of contingencies on the development of the revolution
  - The problems posed by competing definitions of citizenship, loyalty, patriotism, and national security in the midst of the revolution
  - Continuities and changes between different phases of the revolution
  - The European and global contexts of the revolution
• The long term historical significance of the revolution
• Present critical ideas in discussion and in writing in a manner that is clear, concise, and conformable to standard English usage.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grade Breakdown:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Written Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Work Leader</td>
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Exams (25% each)
There will be two exams administered for this course on 13 October and 20 December. Exams will consist of two parts: a take home essay requiring a 3-4 page analysis of materials presented in lectures, discussions and readings, and an in class section consisting of 4 or 5 short essay questions that critically analyze concepts presented in class and the contents of course readings. Questions for the take home essay and a study guide for the in class section will be circulated at least 7 days before the exam date.

Final Paper (25%)
On 8 December, students will be required to submit a 15-20 page research paper. Students, in consultation with the instructor, may focus on any topic of interest pertaining to France in the period 1660-1815. In consultation with the instructor, students may choose to explore a topic that extends beyond the boundaries of France (e.g. colonies, international relations, foreign perceptions of the revolution, etc.). In advance of this paper, students will submit a topic proposal/preliminary bibliography (due 20 October). Final papers that have not had this preliminary assignment graded will automatically receive a failing grade.

As with all 300-level history courses, this final paper should demonstrate an advanced level of competence in preparing a history research paper. Students may elect to write a primary source-oriented research paper using at least 4 book-length scholarly secondary sources (or some combination of books and journal articles) and at least 250 pages of primary source readings or a historiography paper using at least 7 book-length scholarly secondary sources. These are minimum (i.e. C grade) requirements for this assignment.

As a general rule, this paper should be about something that you personally are interested in. As you think about paper topics, keep in mind that I am very flexible and would encourage you to engage yourselves with topics of interest, even if they may not seem to lie within the domain of “traditional” history.

Short Written Work (10%)
On most days marked “Group Work” on the schedule, students will be asked to write a short response paper based on pre-circulated questions. Except in the case of emergency, I will not accept late quizzes and/or response papers. At the end of the semester, I will drop every student’s one lowest response paper grade.
Class Participation (10%)
Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussions. Although I am sympathetic to the problem of shyness, students who do not engage themselves with class discussions, group work, or other class activities will see this portion of their grade suffer. Likewise, habitual absenteeism will quickly have a negative effect on your grade.

Group Work Leader (5%)
At the beginning of the semester, students will be divided into discussion groups of approximately 4 people. On days devoted to “group work” on the course schedule, one student from each group will take responsibility for leading his or her group’s discussion of the assigned readings. Each student will need to serve as group leader twice during the course of the semester. Study guides will be handed out in advance and group leaders should plan to prepare written notes on approximately 8-10 questions in preparation. Group leaders must hand in their study notes and a one-paragraph post-group work write up; these are due the first class period following the group work session. Students will receive a check plus (equivalent to an A grade), check (equivalent to a low B) or a check minus (equivalent to a low C) for these write ups. Students who miss any assigned discussion leader session without an extremely credible excuse will receive an automatic zero for this component of their grade.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Readings, Due Dates and Extensions
Make sure you keep up with the syllabus. Most of the group work sessions for this class involve long books, and you need to make sure that you read ahead so that these assignments aren’t left until the last minute.

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late exams and research papers will be deducted 10% per day and will move to the bottom of my list of things to do (in other words, don’t expect quick feedback on a paper that you didn’t hand in on time). Papers that are more than one week late will be given an automatic zero.

Requests for extensions on major assignments should be made at least a week in advance of the due date (except in the case of a dire illness or other emergency) and must be accompanied by some concrete evidence that you have been working on the assignment. I will not grant extensions for work that is incomplete due to poor planning on your part.

Paper Drafts
I will be happy to look at drafts of the research paper and discuss ideas/progress with you at any point in the semester. However, please be considerate of my schedule if you want feedback on a rough draft. It takes several days for me to read and comment on drafts, plus revisions may take several days on your part. Drafts submitted less than a week before the due date will be reviewed at my convenience and discretion. I will not review drafts of test essays, but will be happy to discuss ideas and/or outlines.

Classroom Conduct and Class Participation Standards
Geneseo is a liberal arts college. The curriculum assumes that students will show up to class having prepared and reflected upon the course materials and will be ready to discuss them. To get an A in class participation, you need to be present, you need to demonstrate that you’ve read and thought about the readings, you need to be willing raise relevant points during class discussions, and you need to be an active and critical participant. If you come to class regularly, but do not participate in discussions, you can expect a D for class participation.
Since this is a discussion-based class, you are expected to attend class regularly. I do not take attendance during lecture classes, but will take attendance on Group Work days. Excessive absenteeism will negatively affect your class participation grade. If a long-term absence arises as a result of illness, injury, family emergency, etc., please contact me as soon as possible.

**Email and Outboxes**

Everyone will automatically be enrolled in a HIST 339 listserv. Major announcements for this class (e.g. schedule changes, class cancellations, etc.) will be made through this list. Be sure to check your geneseo.edu account on a regular basis.

I store copies of all class handouts and Powerpoint presentations in a HIST 339 folder in my network outbox. Please check the outbox before you ask me/email me for copies of handouts (but please do email me if you can’t find a document in the outbox – I sometimes forget to post things). Learn how to use this incredibly useful resource at www.geneseo.edu/~cit/quickguides/pdf/boxes.pdf.

Email is a terrible format for communication certain kinds of information, and is particularly unsuited to giving feedback on written work. Unfortunately, some students increasingly rely on email as their main line of communication with faculty. If you want to discuss your work, please try to make an appointment to see me or drop by during open office hours. If you cannot find time to speak with me personally, you may email me. However, my response will not be instantaneous (especially at busy points in the semester and over the weekends) and may not be as detailed as you would like.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined in the SUNY-Geneseo Undergraduate Bulletin as the “deliberate representation of someone else’s words or ideas as one’s own or the deliberate arrangement of someone else’s material(s) as one’s own. Any one of the following constitutes plagiarism: (A) Direct quotation without appropriate punctuation and citation of source; (B) Paraphrase of expression or thought without proper attribution; (C) Dependence upon a source for a plan, organization or argument without appropriate citation.” (http://handbook.geneseo.edu/3)

If this is too abstract, think of it this way: if you commit an act of academic dishonesty on any assignment in one of my classes, you will automatically fail the course and a letter will be placed in your academic file at the dean’s office.

Citations in papers (for direct quotations and for the citation of ideas) should adhere to a consistent and standardized form. Acceptable forms of citation can be found in the various editions of The Chicago Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press), Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (University of Chicago Press) or John R. Benjamin, A Student’s Guide to History (Bedford/St. Martin’s Press). It is strongly recommended that all students taking upper level history courses have a copy of one of these style guides.

**Accessibility**

I will be happy to make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. Students should discuss needed accommodations with myself and the Director in the Office of Disability Services (Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin) as early as possible in the semester.
REQUIRED READINGS
All of the texts listed below are available at Sundance Books.

- Eres documents (password: france)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings/Group Work Note: All readings should be completed before class and students should bring assigned texts with them to class. Some group work days duplicate readings – these are texts that will be discussed both in lecture and in group work, and should be completed before their earliest appearance on the course syllabus.

**Week 1**
August 30 Introductions
September 1 Group Work: 18th Century Life and Culture
  Read: Darnton, “The Great Cat Massacre” (Eres)

**Week 2**
September 6 Old Regime Structures: Society
  Read: Mason and Rizzo, 16-24
September 8 Old Regime Structures: Politics
  Read: Censer and Hunt, 1-48

**Week 3**
September 13 “The Republic of Letters” and the Literacy Revolution
  Read: Darnton, 3-82; Kramnick, 1-21, 26-38
September 15 Group Work: The Place of Humor in the Enlightenment
  Read: Voltaire, all; Kramnick, 115-130, 140-150

**Week 4**
September 20 Religion, Politics, and the Enlightenment
September 22 Group Work: The Enlightenment as a Political Critique
  Read: Kramnick, 265-275, 405-416, 452-459; Darnton, 198-246

**Week 5**
September 27 The Gutter Press and the Enlightenment
September 29  Group Work: Enlightenment Pornography
Read: Darnton, 85-114, 249-299; Mason and Rizzo, 42-46

Week 6
October 4   The Crisis of the Old Regime
Read: Censer and Hunt, 49-84; Mason and Rizzo, 51-54
October 6   The Collapse of the Old Regime
Read: Darnton, 115-166, 300-389

Week 7
October 11  Fall Break, no class
October 13  EXAM 1

Week 8
October 18  The Estates General and the Revolution of June 1789
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 49-50, 54-75
October 20  Group Work: The Early Revolution
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 49-75, 98-104
Paper Proposal/Preliminary Bibliography Due

Week 9
October 25  Women and the Revolution
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 83-87, 109-113
October 27  Slaves and the Revolution
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 32-36, 108-109, 120-123, 208-214; Kramnick, 640-644

Week 10
November 1  Group Work: Outsiders and the Revolution
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 32-36, 83-87, 105-123, 208-214; Kramnick, 640-644
November 3  Counter Revolutionaries and Radicals
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 125-137, 144-156, 218-220

Week 11
November 8  Executing the King
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 159-185; De Baecque, 87-120
November 10 Gearing Up the Terror
Read: Censer and Hunt, 85-114; Mason and Rizzo, 199-204; Kramnick, 424-442, 568-580

Week 12
November 15 The Terror
November 17 Group Work: The Terror
Read: Mason and Rizzo, 159-185, 199-204, 221-262; Kramnick, 424-442, 568-580; De Baecque, 37-60, 61-86

Week 13
November 21  The Thermidorian Reaction
Read:  Mason and Rizzo, 263-268, 278-279; De Baecque, 145-174
November 23  Thanksgiving, no class

**Week 14**

November 29  Napoleon
Read:  Censer and Hunt, 139-170; Mason and Rizzo, 334-348
December 1  Group Work: Napoleon
Read:  Johnson, all

**Week 15**

December 6  Group Work: The Napoleonic Wars “From Below”
Read:  Walter, 1-111
December 8  Making Sense of It All
Read:  Censer and Hunt, 171-196
**RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Exam Session**

December 20  EXAM 2 (8-11)