

THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY ERA

HSTY 310

Fall 2008

Syllabus

TR: TuTh 2:45PM - 4:00PM Yost hall 101

Prof. M.R.Levin

OFFICE HOURS: Mather House 213; Tuesdays 1-2 and by appointment
(368-2624); mrl3@cwru.edu

The chief accomplishment of the French Revolution was the institution of a dramatically new political culture . . . What it did establish, however, was the mobilizing potential of democratic republicanism and the compelling intensity of revolutionary change.

Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness . . . we were all going to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short the period was so far like the present period . . .

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

The French Revolution is an historical event which extended over the decade 1789-1799. Yet the Revolution had its roots in political, cultural, and economic developments of the preceding hundred years, and it did not remain within French borders. Nor did it cease to exert an influence on the course of history after the close of the 18th century. What the nature of the revolution was and what its influence has been, however, remain matters of controversy among historians. The French Revolution was open to interpretation by historians, writers, artists and culture critics from its very beginnings and remains so even to the end of the 20th century. This course will focus on the French Revolution as a profound historical event, on its influence and function as a model for later revolutions including that in the colony of San Domingo (Haiti), and on interpretations of the Revolution by several historians, writers and filmmakers. A significant portion of the course will be devoted to exploring the new political culture created by the Revolutionaries and the ways in which the images, festivals, architecture they made both expressed and shaped the course of Revolutionary politics.

CLASS WORK There will be lectures and class discussion, written assignments and several presentations to the class. You are welcome, even encouraged to include visual materials in your assignments. The written assignments include one ten page paper on topics chosen in consultation with the professor, one biographical essay, one essay on human rights and an analysis of three films. Grading will be based on the following:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Biography and human rights papers: | 30% (15% each) |
| final paper: | 15% |
| 3 film review essays | 30% (10% each) |
| Presentations | 15% (7.5% each) |
| Class participation | 10% |

Late papers will be down graded by one letter grade for each day late, starting with those handed in after the end of class on the date due. Absence from class and/or missed or late assignments can only be excused by a letter from the Dean of Students to the instructor.

All work is to be your own. See the University regulations governing plagiarism for further information.

To keep the classroom clean and free of vermin, do not bring food to class. Bottled water, coffee, and/or other bottled drinks are fine, just be certain to dispose of the containers or take them with you at the end of class.

TEXTS AND XEROX MATERIALS are on reserve in Kelvin Smith Library. copies of the texts are on sale at the bookstore.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Anatole France, *The Gods Will Have Blood* (Penguin Ed., 2004 reprint)

Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*

Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin Classics, 1987)

Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789-19799*

Laura Mason and Tracey Rizzo, eds., *The French Revolution: A Document Collection*

Dubois, *Avengers of the New World* (Trilateral, 2004)

DATES AND TOPICS OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

PART ONE: PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE

WEEK ONE— French Society in the 18th century

August 26: Introduction.

Aug. 28: The structure of government and Louis XIV's unfinished work

Reading: McPhee, Introduction and Chpt. 1

WEEK II: Who Were the French? A Society of Privilege and Peasants

Sept. 2 Film *Ridicule* [[Video 1344S](#)], 103 minutes

Sept. 4: Discussion

Reading: Mason and Rizzo, pp. 16-29; p36,no 5; **Darnton**, Robert. "Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of **Mother Goose**" in his *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. New York: Basic Books, 1984

Encyclopedie selections (web) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did/index.html>

("Bakers", "Christian festivals," "Character of societies and particular groups").

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text->

[idx?c=did;cc=did;q1=privilege;rgn=main;view=text;idno=did2222.0000.845](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=did;cc=did;q1=privilege;rgn=main;view=text;idno=did2222.0000.845)

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text->

[idx?c=did;cc=did;q1=calendar;rgn=main;view=text;idno=did2222.0000.080](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=did;cc=did;q1=calendar;rgn=main;view=text;idno=did2222.0000.080)

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=did;cc=did;q1=equality;rgn=main;view=text;idno=did2222.0000.352>

PART TWO: THE REVOLUTION

Week III: The Crisis of the Monarchy in the 1780s

Sept. 9 France's difficulties in the latter half of the 18th century, Visit Special Coll, KSL

Readings: McPhee, Chpt. 2; M/R 8

*Film review no. 1 due

Sept. 11; New Social and Political Ideals; emergence of the public sphere

Readings: Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*, Chpt. 12 ["The City and The Revolution"], pp. 283-302; look at Lynn Hunt, Chpt. 4 ["Political Geography of Revolution"]; Browse images: web site: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/allfr.html>

WEEK IV LIBERAL PHASE

Sept. 16: The Revolution Begins

Reading: McPhee Chpt. 3 and 4; M/R #s 10-15

Sept. 18 The Structures of Revolution: clubs, national assembly and constitutions

#1 Assignment oral reports: Clubs

Readings: M/R 21, 24, 26

WEEK V: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FLIGHT TO VARENNES [JUNE 2, 1791] AND WAR

Sept. 23 Film *La Nuit de Varennes*

Sept. 25 War, The End of Monarchy, War, and Internationalizing the Revolution

Readings: McPhee, Chpt. 5; Blanning, Chpt. 2 [The Coming of War], in *French Revolutionary Wars: 1787-1802*, pp. 37-62; M/R 34, 35, 37, 39 declaration

WEEK VI: THE REPUBLIC

September 30: What Kind of Republic Was It?

Readings: Hunt, Chpt. 1, m/r 53.

Film review # 2 due

Oct. 2: Creating a Revolutionary Republican Culture

Readings: Hunt, Chpts. 2,3

WEEK VII: THE TERROR

Oct. 7: No Class work on Biographies

Oct. 9 Film, Danton, reading m/r 57

WEEK VIII: PORTRAITS OF REVOLUTIONARIES

Oct. 14: State Terror; Was the Terror Necessary?

Reading: McPhee, Chpts. 6 and 7, M/R 54, 55, 56

Discussion: Anatole France, *The Gods Must Have Blood*

OCT. 16: **#2 Assignment: Biographical reports (oral and written)**

WEEK IX: ENDING THE REVOLUTION

Oct. 21: No class, fall break

Oct. 23 Thermidor, the Directory's Wars and Napoleon

Readings: McPhee, Chpt. 8

Film Review #3 due

PART THREE: THEMES OF REVOLUTION

WEEK X: ASSESSING THE REVOLUTION,

Oct. 28 Technology and Science

Read Alder, "Revolution to Measure,"

Oct. 30: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity in Historical Perspective

Reading: McPhee, Chpt. 9; Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

WEEK XI: THEMES OF REVOLUTION:

Nov. 4: HUMAN RIGHTS

Readings: Hunt, *French Revolution and Human Rights*, Introduction, and documents no. 36-40. Review McPhee portions on the Vendee, Catholicism; web review:

<http://www3.uakron.edu/hfrance/reviews/kaufman.html>

Nov. 6: Religion: Jews, Protestants and Catholics

Readings: Hunt, 18-20, 22-25; M/R 80,81, 85

#3 Assignment: Human Rights and the Revolution (written)

WEEK XII: SLAVERY, HAITIAN REVOLUTION

Nov. 11: Modeling Revolutions

Reading: **Theda Skocpol**, 'Explaining social revolutions', chapter 1 in *States and social revolutions* (Cambridge 1979), either chpt 1 or 5, [HM283.S56](#)

Nov. 13: Marxist History and The First Colonial Revolution

Readings: Dubois,

WEEK XIII: COMPARISONS AND ENDINGS

Nov. 18: Comparing the Haitian Revolution to The Mainland Revolution

Readings: Dubois,

Nov. 20: The French Revolution is Over

Reading Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), Chpt. 1, "The French Revolution is Over," pp. 1-80

Week XIV: WORK WEEK

Nov 25: No class work on 4th assignment, individual meetings with instructor

Nov. 27: No class, Thanksgiving break

WEEK XV: PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS

Dec. 2 #4 Presentations of final paper projects

Dec. 4 #4 Presentations of final paper projects

DEC. 9TH FINAL PAPERS DUE IN PROF. LEVIN'S OFFICE BY 3:30