

## Europe and the French Revolution

History 342  
Sarah Curtis

Spring 2012  
MW 12:35-1:50

### Course objectives:

The French Revolution remains one of the most important events in world history, a catalyst for change throughout Europe and beyond. When asked what its impact had been, in 1972 Chinese premier Zhou En-lai reportedly replied “It’s too soon to tell.” In this course, we will examine the late eighteenth-century origins of the revolutionary outburst, the events of the Revolution itself, and its impact on Europe. Special attention will be paid to women’s role in the Revolution and the revolt of African slaves in the French colony of St-Domingue, which became independent (as Haiti) in 1804. Finally, in the last weeks of the course, we will consider the rise to power of Napoleon and the French conquest of Europe until his downfall in 1815.

### Reading:

The following books can be purchased at the bookstore:

Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 5th ed. (Prentice Hall)

Denis Diderot, *The Nun* (Penguin)

Charles de Rémusat, *The Saint-Domingue Plantation* (LSU Press)

Anatole France, *The Gods Will Have Blood* (Penguin)

Jakob Walter, *The Diary of a Napoleonic Foot Soldier* (Penguin)

Occasionally, we will be reading original documents from the period. These are available on the following website: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/>), which has short essays, original documents, images, maps, and songs. Specific assignments are listed in the schedule (document names are underlined), but you may also want to browse the website as well as use it as a study reference, along with the Popkin textbook.

There are also two assigned articles from the *American Historical Review*. These are available on the SFSU Library’s online database JSTOR (look up at <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/find/dbs/dbselector.php>). If you do not know how to use this database to access articles electronically, please consult a reference librarian.

### Course requirements:

This course will combine lecture and discussion. The Popkin textbook is background reading. The other assigned readings should be completed by Wednesday, when we will have some time to discuss them. Twice (February 13 and April 18) during the semester, you will be asked to use the readings as the basis of short (4-5 pp.) papers; topics are on the last page of the syllabus. There will also be a midterm (March 7) and a final examination (May 16); study guides for the exams will be handed out in class.

Graduate students taking the course for upper-division credit will have one additional assignment. Graduate students enrolled concurrently in History 799 (1 unit) will complete a 15-20 pp. historiographical essay in addition to the assignments on this syllabus. Both assignments are due April 30. Please see information sheet.

**Grading:**

Grades will be calculated as follows: midterm 25%, final 25%, each paper 20% (total 40%), participation 10%. (Graduate students: midterm 20%, final 25%, each paper 15%, participation 10%, book review 15%.) Students who wish to take the course CR/NC can change their grading status via “My SFSU” by March 16.

Make-up midterms or finals will only be allowed in cases of medical or other serious emergency, with documentation.

Papers due on Monday and turned into me by Wednesday of the same week will be penalized one-half grade (e.g. A to A-), due Wednesday and turned in on Monday two half-grades (e.g. A to B+), and one week late one full grade (A to B). **Papers more than one week late will not be accepted** without proof of illness or natural disaster.

If you are unable to complete the course requirements by the end of semester, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. I will issue no instructor-initiated withdrawals or incompletes. Student-initiated incompletes are reserved for serious medical excuses (with documentation) or other natural disasters within the last three weeks of the semester. The last day to drop a course without a “W” is February 3, and the last day to withdraw with a “W” (except in extreme circumstances) is April 20.

**Office hours and contact information:**

Monday 2:30-4:00 and Wednesday 10:30-12:00, and by appointment

office location: Science 267

phone: (415) 338-2250

e-mail: scurtis@sfsu.edu

website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/scurtis>

**Schedule:**

**Week 1            January 23-25**

**The Old Regime**

Diderot, *The Nun*, pp. 21-104

**Week 2            January 30-February 1**

**The Impact of the Enlightenment**

Popkin, chap. 1

Diderot, *The Nun*, pp. 104-89

**Week 3      February 6-8**

**The Crisis of 1787-89**

Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 105 (2000) 1-35 (JSTOR)

**Week 4      February 13-15**

**From Reform to Revolution**

**Monday: PAPER DUE**

Popkin, chap. 2

Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate?" (1789)

Attack on Seigneurial Dues

**Week 5      February 20-22**

**The Dilemmas of Citizenship**

Popkin, chap. 3

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, 26 August 1789

Clermont-Tonnerre, "Speech on Religious Minorities and Questionable Professions"

Olympe de Gouges, *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman* (September 1791)

**Week 6      February 27-29**

**Revolution in Haiti**

Franklin W. Knight, "The Haitian Revolution," *American Historical Review* 105 (February 2000): 103-15 (JSTOR)

Rémusat, *The Saint-Domingue Plantation* (entire)

**Week 7      March 5-7**

**Monday: Catchup and review**

**Wednesday: MIDTERM**

**Week 8      March 12-14**

**The French Republic**

Popkin, chap. 4

France, *The Gods Will Have Blood*, pp. 27-137

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9      March 26-28**

**Terror is the Order of the Day**

Popkin, chap. 5

France, *The Gods Will Have Blood*, pp. 138-251

The Law of Suspects

Robespierre, "On Political Morality"

**Week 10      April 2-4**

**Creating the Republican Citizen**

Religion: The Cult of the Supreme Being

Primary Schools

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen from the Constitution of the Year I (1793)

Discussion of Women's Political Clubs and Their Suppression, 29-30 October 1793

**Week 11      April 9-11**

**Thermidor and After**

Popkin, chap. 6

Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man and Citizen, Constitution of the Year III (1795)

**Week 12      April 16-18**

**Exporting the Revolution**

**Wednesday: PAPER DUE**

**Week 13      April 23-25**

**The Rise of Napoleon**

Popkin, chap. 7

Making Peace with the Catholic Church, 1801-2

The French Civil Code (1804)

**Week 14      April 30-May 2**

**Liberators or Conquerers? France in Europe (and Haiti)**

Popkin, chap. 8

Graduate assignments (book review or historiographical essay) due Monday.

**Week 15      May 7-9**

**Endgame and Legacy**

Popkin, chap. 9

Walter, *Diary of a Napoleonic Foot Soldier*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Wednesday, May 16, 10:45-1:15: FINAL EXAM**

## PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

Each paper should be 4-5 pp. (6-7 pp. for graduate students), typed (12-point font) and double-spaced with normal margins. Staple it in the upper left-hand corner and include page numbers.

The paper should advance an *argument* (usually expressed in a thesis statement at the end of the introduction) that answers one of the questions below, using specific examples and evidence from the assigned readings. Do not simply summarize the plot of the novel. You should also refer to other documents that we have read when appropriate. You are not expected to do outside research. If you hate all the paper topics and have a better idea, see me.

Formal footnotes are not necessary in this paper, but you should use some consistent and clear system of citation (parentheses are fine) to indicate sources and page numbers of quotations and significant ideas. You do not have to provide citations for commonly known information or lecture material. Copying material outright from another source, including the internet, is plagiarism and a violation of the student conduct code, which will result in a zero on the assignment and referral to the university judicial affairs officer.

### Paper due February 13

- 1) According to Diderot's *The Nun*, what is flawed about religion and/or the Catholic church in Old Regime France?
- 2) In what ways is Diderot's *The Nun* a popularization of key Enlightenment ideas?
- 3) Outside of religion and the church, what elements of Old Regime politics and society is Diderot criticizing in *The Nun*?

### Paper due April 18

- 1) In *The Gods Will Have Blood*, what is the author's interpretation of the rationale behind the Terror and its impact? Can the historical evidence lead to any other interpretation?
- 2) The paradox of the Terror was that it extended democracy while engaging in dictatorship and summary justice. How does *The Gods Will Have Blood* help us understand this paradox?
- 3) How does *The Gods Will Have Blood* mirror real conditions and everyday experiences of ordinary French men and women during the Terror?