CAS 199 – Reacting to the Past (CRN 16953)  
Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791  
McKenzie 473  
Tues/Thurs, 2-3:50

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Office hours: Tuesday 10-11:30, Thursday 12-1:30, or by appointment

Course Description

This course is centered on a role-playing game developed by the Reacting to the Past (RTTP) program at Barnard College. The game we will be playing this quarter is Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791. It will offer the opportunity to learn about the French Revolution, what the revolution was “about,” the ideas that inspired the revolution, and the conflicts that arose as participants tried to implement those ideas.

We will open the quarter by looking at some of those ideas. By fourth week each of you will be assigned a “role” to play in Paris in the summer of 1791 as the National Assembly tries to implement a new constitution. Most of the remainder of the course will be devoted to playing the game. Each role has certain defined objectives. You will achieve those objectives by trying to persuade your fellow game-players to pursue the policies that you believe are right. You will make speeches, right articles, negotiate, make backroom deals, riot, perhaps stretch the truth on occasion, maybe even betray erstwhile allies. Along the way you will hopefully gain a greater appreciation of what at stake in the revolution and why the passions it unleashed proved so very difficult to control.

We will conclude the quarter by taking a step back and returning the “historical” French Revolution and what really happened in the summer of 1791.

Grades and assignments

Class attendance is required: the game simply will not function in your absence. You will not be able to properly play your role without attending the earlier sessions. Missing two sessions of the game (weeks 5-8) without a valid excuse will result in failure for the course.

Grades will be based on a combination of class participation and written work (roughly speaking, 1/3 and 2/3, respectively). Shy about participation? Don’t worry, it is unavoidable once the game begins – you’ll find yourself pulled in.
Class participation includes both the game and class discussion.

**A note on participation**: each of you will receive a role sheet describing your role and game objectives. Your participation grade will be determined in large part by how well your play conforms to your role. In simple terms: if you are cast as a conservative, you may not act like a radical and vice versa. You must play the role you are assigned.

There are seven graded written assignments. The first three are short analyses of class readings. The next three are the newspapers that you will write and edit together with your fellow faction members. A final paper based on one of several topics that I will post in fifth week will be due on Wednesday, December 8, my office, between 1 and 3 in the afternoon.

The writing assignments will be worth, roughly: 5 pts. each for the first three; 10 pts. each for the newspapers; and 20 pts. for the final paper (equals 65, or just short of the 67% of the grade that the written assignments comprise: I’ll keep the last 2.5% for myself as a discretionary reserve).

**Coursebooks**

Available for purchase in the bookstore:
Mark C. Carnes and Gary Kates, *Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791.* Pearson, 2005. (Referred to below as “coursebook.”)


-I’ve ordered the Maurice Cranston translation and while it will be easier to follow in class if you have this version, you can use any edition.

**All other course materials** will be available via the course Blackboard site.

**Class schedule** (for more details see the coursebook, pages 47-48)

**Week 1**

September 28: Introduction to class: What is RTTP and how does it work? Why the French Revolution?

Read syllabus, scan *Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France* (and read pages 1-6 and 45-6); also: William Doyle, “The Principles of the French Revolution,” and selections from William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (the last two can be found on the class Blackboard site).
September 30: The Enlightenment: Voltaire and Diderot

Read: Voltaire “Selections from the Philosophical Dictionary,” and sample articles from the Encyclopédie. (Links to pieces on Blackboard site: remember that you can print up these documents.)

Assignment: select three passages from the readings that exemplify different aspects of enlightenment thought. Print them and briefly explain how they illustrate enlightenment thought.

Week 2

October 5: Rousseau

Read: Rousseau, First Discourse (in coursebook, pages 68-80); and Social Contract, Books. I and II (pages 47-101) – pay especially close attention to Book I, chs. 6, 7, and 8; and Book II, chs. 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11.

Also: see coursebook, 49-53 for study questions: these should be of help for your paper due on Thursday

October 7: Rousseau

Read: Rousseau, Social Contract, Books III (esp. chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 13, and 15) and IV (esp. chapters 2 and 8)

Assignment: choose a single passage (this can be a single sentence or as long as a paragraph) that you think best illustrates the single most important message of The Social Contract: explain in no more than two pages.

Week 3 (roles will be distributed this week)

October 12: Old Regime France and the Revolution

Read: Historical Context in coursebook 1-26; and Gershoy, coursebook,119-129

October 14: The Revolution
Read: The Game in coursebook; primary documents in coursebook, 55-67; and Gershoy, coursebook, 129-157
Week 4

October 19: Burke and counter-revolution

Read: Burke, *Reflections* in coursebook 81-117; and Gershoy in coursebook 157-170

**Assignment**: choose a single passage (this can be a single sentence or as long as a paragraph) that you think best illustrates the underlying political philosophy of Burke’s critique of the French Revolution. Explain in no more than two pages.

October 21: Movie: Danton

We may meet at library for screening. Stay tuned.

Week 5 (yeah! The game begins: see coursebook 53-4 for quick outline)

October 26: Faction meetings

October 28: First Committee Meetings; National Assembly (organization)

Week 6:

November 2: Public Session #1

**Assignment**: volume #1 of newspapers (all factions) due

November 4: Public Session #2

Week 7

November 9: Public Session #3

**Assignment**: volume #2 of newspapers (all factions) due
November 11: Public Session #4

Week 8

November 16: Public Session #5

Assignment: volume #3 of newspapers (all factions) due

November 18: Public Session #6

Week 9

November 18: Depending on attendance, either post-mortem or movie

Week 10

December 2: Post-mortem

December 4: Historiography and the French Revolution as an experiment in democracy

Read: Gary Kates, “Introduction to The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies” in coursebook 170-182

Final paper due: Wednesday, December 8, 1:00-3:00 pm (this is the time scheduled for our final) – please drop by my office: I’ll be there.