

## **History 600: Transatlantic Encounters in the Revolutionary Era, 1750-1815**

Professor Desan  
Fall 2006

Tuesday 1:20-3:20  
Section 4 (of the 600s)

In the late eighteenth century, both Europe and the Americas witnessed radical upheavals in politics, society, and national identity, as revolution broke out in the American colonies, France, and Haiti. Although they occurred in very different contexts, these revolutions took place within a broader eighteenth-century dialogue about crucial issues, such as human rights, representative politics, the nature of empire, and the meaning of race. This class will explore these revolutions in a Transatlantic context and ask how they forged new definitions of politics and challenged (and at times overturned) fundamental social practices, such as slavery in Haiti and “feudalism” in France.

We will particularly focus on how the three revolutions influenced one another and ask how French, Americans, and Haitians reacted to each other’s political turmoil. There are many opportunities for you to analyze this international discussion among revolutionary participants and observers. To give only a few examples, critics of French monarchical politics on the eve of the French Revolution looked to American upstart politics for inspiration. Leaders of the Haitian Revolution simultaneously drew on French revolutionary ideology and revolted against French colonialism. As Americans debated the nature of republicanism in the 1790s, they lined up as “republican” admirers of the French Revolution vs. “federalist” critics of the Terror and political chaos in France. At the same time, revolutionary upheavals encouraged or forced many individuals to travel within the Atlantic, and these individuals also offer interesting possibilities for study. For example, Caribbean plantation owners and French royalists fled Haiti and France for North American shores; American diplomats, travelers, and merchants left rich accounts of French revolutionary politics and events; sailors of all backgrounds carried news, rumors, and political ideas around the Atlantic.

During the first half of the course, we will sample a variety of primary sources written in this era and also do secondary source background reading about the revolutions and their interactions. The second half of the course will be devoted to researching and writing your papers. Students will write rough drafts by Thanksgiving and have the opportunity to critique each other’s work and receive comments from me before completing the final drafts by the end of the semester.

Students interested in the course should come see me: Office = 5124 Humanities; office hours = 11:30-12:30 Monday and 11-12 Wednesday. If you need to make an appointment for a different meeting time: my email = [smdesan@wisc.edu](mailto:smdesan@wisc.edu). Also, since I need to be absent from work for medical reasons for about two weeks in late March and early April, you can also meet with A.J. Dubois to discuss enrolling in this class.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Department of History  
Semester I, 2006-2007

HISTORY 600: Transatlantic Encounters in the Revolutionary Era, 1750-1815  
Tuesday 1:20-3:20  
Office hours: Tues. 3:30-5:30

Prof. Desan  
5124 Humanities  
[smdesan@wisc.edu](mailto:smdesan@wisc.edu)

This research seminar focuses on the revolutions of the late 1700s in North America, France, and Haiti. Although they occurred in very different contexts, these revolutions took place within a broader eighteenth-century dialogue about crucial issues, such as human rights, representative politics, the nature of empire, and the meaning of race. This class will explore these revolutions in a Transatlantic context and ask how they forged new definitions of politics and challenged (and at times overturned) fundamental social practices, such as slavery in Haiti and "feudalism" in France. We will particularly focus on how the three revolutions influenced one another and ask how French, Americans, and Haitians reacted to each other's political turmoil.

The major purpose of the seminar is to offer students the opportunity to do a primary-source research paper on some aspect of this era. Students can write on diverse topics, but should focus on international discussion among revolutionary participants and observers. All sorts of individuals participated in the transatlantic experience of revolution. To give but a few examples, you could work on French or Haitian émigrés who fled to North American shores, American political activists who used reactions to French and Haitian turmoil to invent American politics, or Haitian enslaved people or people of color who turned French revolutionary ideology against France to revolt against French colonialism. Sources can include travelogues or memoirs, novels, political manifestos or political theory, personal letters, fantasy literature, records of political clubs, newspapers, caricature and pamphlets, etc. During the first half of the course, we will do some background reading and sample a variety of primary sources. The second half of the course will be devoted to researching and writing your papers, and also discussing each other's research projects.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** The central requirement of this course is a research paper (c. 20-25 pp.) on a topic related to transatlantic encounters in the revolutionary era. Choice of topic and compilation of bibliography will begin early in the semester, and the second half of the semester will focus primarily on the research and writing of the paper. Short assignments earlier in the semester will be oriented toward preparing you for this final paper. These short assignments include: a short 5-page paper analyzing primary material; a two-page proposal; a bibliography; an outline; a group discussion of topics. Rough drafts of the final paper are due on Nov. 21 and will be shared & discussed by groups. Final paper is due Dec. 12. Participation in seminar discussions is also a crucial requirement of the course.

The books marked with an asterisk (\*) have been ordered at the University Bookstore and placed on reserve at H.C. White. Other articles and documents are in a packet available at the Copy Center in the basement of the Humanities Building in room 1650 or on reserve in H.C. White.

Week 1: (Sept 5) INTRODUCTION

Week 2: (Sept 12) THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION & FRENCH REACTIONS

\* Gordon Wood, The American Revolution: A History, read 47-74; you can skim 74-88 on war; read 91-135

Excerpt from Thomas Paine, Common Sense (1776), 1-4

Durand Echeverria, Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815 (Princeton, NJ, 1957), 39-78

Abbé Raynal, The Revolution of America, (reprint of orig. ed. 1781, Boston, 1972), 22-37

Week 3: (Sept 19) THE FRENCH REVOLUTION & HAITIAN RESPONSES

Lynn Hunt, The Making of the West, vol B, 1320-1830 (Boston, 2005), 752-772

Robert Darnton, "The Revolutionary Character of the French Revolution," Princeton Alumni Weekly (March 1989): 17-23

Lynn Hunt, The French Revolution and Human Rights, 13-32

Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen (1789)

\*Laurent Dubois & John Garrigus, ed., Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804, 67-70, 73-75

Week 4: (Sept 26) THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION & FRENCH RESPONSES

\*Dubois & Garrigus, Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804, 7-42, documents 108-112, 119-128

Franklin W. Knight, "The Haitian Revolution," American Historical Review 105 (2000): 103-115

\* William Kelleher Storey, Writing History: A Guide for Students, 87-111. Read this advice on writing before you write your document paper.

\*\*\* SHORT PAPER DUE, Friday, Sept. 29 at 5 pm in my Box #5031 on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of Humanities; Document analysis

Week 5: (Oct 3) AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

R. R. Palmer, The World of the French Revolution, (NY, 1971), 218-232

Susan Branson, These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia, 55-85, 97-99

Philip S. Foner, ed. The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800, A Documentary Sourcebook (Westport, Conn., 1976), 102-104, 260-264

Ruth Bloch, Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800 (Cambridge, Eng., 1985), 202-17, 230-31

Theodore Dwight, "Oration spoken at Hartford, Connecticut, on the Anniversary of American Independence, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1798" (Hartford, 1798), 3, 21-26

Week 6: (Oct. 10) THE FOCUS ON RESEARCH

\* Storey, Writing History: A Guide for Students, 1-59

We will meet in the library this week in room 436 Memorial.

Week 7: (Oct 17) AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

Alfred N. Hunt, Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean (Baton Rouge, 1988), 84-101, 147-173

Robert Alderson, "Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793" in David Geggus, ed., The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World (Columbia, S.C., 2001), 93-111

\* Dubois & Garrigus, Slave Revolution, 159-166

Tim Matthewson, "Abraham Bishop, 'The Rights of Black Men,' and the American Reaction to the Haitian Revolution," Journal of Negro History 67 (1982): 148-152

Week 8: (Oct 24) INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

\*\*\* 2 PAGE PROPOSAL = description of topic, key primary sources, and central questions, due at your meeting with me.

Week 9: (Oct 31) WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER

Sample Student Paper: "American Politics and the French Revolution" (unpublished, used anonymously with student's permission)

\* Storey, Writing History: A Guide for Students, 61-86

We will have a visit from a Writing Lab Instructor.

\*\*\* BIBLIOGRAPHY of primary and secondary sources due Friday, Nov. 3.

Week 10: (Nov 7) INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

\*\*\* OUTLINE due at your meeting with me.

Week 11: (Nov 14) GROUP MEETING: PRESENTATION OF TOPICS & SOURCES

Week 12: (Nov 21) EXCHANGE OF DRAFTS

\*\*\* Rough drafts due at class.

Week 13: (Nov 28) DISCUSSION OF ROUGH DRAFTS

Week 14: (Dec. 5) INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Week 15: (Dec 12) FINAL PRESENTATIONS

\*\*\* Final Paper due on Dec. 12