

EMPIRE AND EUROPEAN CULTURE: ROUSSEAU

Professor Benjamin Gregg
GOV 335M ▪ CTI 335 ▪ EUS 348
Meets M/W 15:30-17 in Waggener 308
Uniques ▪ GOV 38867 ▪ CTI 34183 ▪ EUS 36632

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Flags: Global Cultures ▪ Writing

This seminar examines how major thinkers of the European Enlightenment, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, developed core concepts of modern political theory: reason, progress, sovereignty, property, freedom, and rights. The seminar also examines how the political postulate of freedom (all humans as free and equal moral beings) is partially rescinded wherever some Enlightenment thinkers categorize different human communities and place them in a normative hierarchy.

This year's version of this seminar will focus on Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), the great Romantic thinker whose political thought influenced the French elite that guided the French Revolution and the colonial elite that guided the American Revolution; who championed deeply modernist forms of subjectivity and introspection; who advocated the education of the whole person for citizenship; who contributed to the genre of the sentimental novel that encouraged the idea of human rights.

Future versions of this seminar may focus on Vitoria, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Voltaire, Diderot, or d'Alembert, among others.

Texts to be purchased (to coordinate our work in seminar, students are required to have these particular editions):

- *First and Second Discourses*. 1964 [1750; 1754]. St. Martin's. **ISBN 978-0-312-694401**
- *On the Social Contract*. 1978 [1756/1762]. St. Martin's. **ISBN 978-0-312-694463**
- *Emile or On Education*. 1979 [1762]. Basic Books. **ISBN 978-0-465-019311**
- *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. 1979 [1782] Penguin. **ISBN 9780140443639**

Evaluation¹

1. The final grade will be the average of three essays, each five to six pages, adjusted for quality of class participation. To pass the course the student must submit all essays, each on time. No late submissions accepted.
2. For each of the essays, the instructor will provide a list of topics from which students may choose (students may also develop their own topic). Students may modify the topic chosen in ways that suit the logic of their essay's argument. Each essay should develop original insights about our authors, in the student's own and

- unique voice. Avoid glosses of our author. Please **(a)** formulate a **clear thesis** and state it within the first paragraph of your essay, **(b)** then **defend that thesis with clear, rationally plausible, discursive arguments** and support both your thesis and your arguments through **close textual analyses** of our assigned readings while **(c)** drawing on one or more carefully chosen **examples**. **(d)** Consider Rousseau on his own terms before submitting his works to your careful and thoughtful critique. This entails “reconstructing” the part or parts of the theory you draw upon. **(e)** Define all key terms. State explicitly your interpretation of those of Rousseau’s key concepts that you use; never assume that your reader understands either the concept or your particular interpretation of it. **(f)** Write as concisely and clearly as possible. Avoid convoluted sentences and overuse of adjectives. Avoid run-on paragraphs. Be very thoughtful about appropriate word-choice. **(g)** Provide complete page references for all textual citations.
3. Grading: A = 4.00, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.00, B- = 2.67, C+ = 2.33, C = 2.00, C- = 1.67, D+ = 1.33, D = 1.00, D- = 0.67, F = 0.00. Final grades will include pluses or minuses, as appropriate.
 4. Students enjoy two unexcused absences. Each failure to attend class beyond those two will lower the student’s final grade by one letter. Exceptions will be made only in cases of illness or other significant circumstances which, in all cases, must be documented within 48 hours of the absence by a *written* explanation from a physician or other relevant person.

Schedule of Readings, Sessions, and Assignments

January 19 • Introductory lecture (background on the emergence of the Enlightenment both as a scientific and cultural phenomenon; how Rousseau responds to the broad social, political, and economic shifts taking place across Western Europe at this time; introduction to characters such as the *Philosophes*, to whom Rousseau responds in part)

We begin with the two *Discourses* that articulate Rousseau’s fundamental problem. The rest of the seminar will be accompanied by one question: does Rousseau solve this problem, whether in the *Social Contract*, in the *Emile*, or in the *Reveries* (each of which offers a solution distinct from the others)?

Unit 1. Rousseau’s problem: for all of its obvious benefits, modernization has created at least as many problems as it has solved: the *First and Second Discourses* of 1750 and 1754, respectively

January 24 • *First Discourse*, pp. 34-47

January 26 • *First Discourse*, pp. 47-64

January 31 • *Second Discourse*, pp. 101-121

February 2 • *Second Discourse*, pp. 121-141

February 7 • *Second Discourse*, pp. 141-161

February 9 • *Second Discourse*, pp. 161-181

► *February 11* □ *First essay due by noon via Blackboard upload*

Unit 2. Rousseau's political solution: *On the Social Contract* of 1756/1762

The *Social Contract* is the most famous of Rousseau's various solutions. The thematic link is found in its very opening paragraph concerning the chains alluded to in both *Discourses*. The *Discourse on Inequality* ends with subjects in chains; the *Social Contract* opens with subjects in chains. Note, however, that Rousseau (unlike, say, Karl Marx) does not intend to abandon all chains but to make them legitimate. Legitimacy in this sense is the great question posed by the *Social Contract*.

February 14 • *Social Contract*: Book 1, pp. 46-52

February 16 • *Social Contract*: Book 1, pp. 52-58

February 21 • *Social Contract*: Book 2, pp. 59-67

February 23 • *Social Contract*: Book 2, pp. 67-77

February 28 • *Social Contract*: Book 3, pp. 78-91

March 2 • *Social Contract*: Book 3, pp. 92-107

March 7 • *Social Contract*: Book 4, pp. 108-120

March 9 • *Social Contract*: Book 4, pp. 120-132

► *March 11* □ *Second essay due by noon via Blackboard upload*

Spring Break: 14-18 March

Unit 3. Rousseau's pedagogical solution: *Emile or On Education* of 1762

Making citizens: how can political community produce citizens capable of the high expectations set forth in the *Social Contract*? Through careful rearing – or at least that answer might be the most straightforward reading of the *Emile*. But the book is much more than pedagogy. Note that the opening sentence itself is a tidy summary of the *Second Discourse*; the book explain in greater detail how individuals are typically ripened for tyrants -- and how Rousseau would end that cycle.

March 21 • *Emile*: Book 1, pp. 37-55

March 23 • *Emile*: Book 1, pp. 55-74

March 28 • *Emile*: Book 2, pp. 77-106

March 30 • *Emile*: Book 2, pp. 106-135

April 4 • *Emile*: Book 2, pp. 135-163

April 6 • *Emile*: Book 3, pp. 165-186

April 11 • *Emile*: Book 3, pp. 186-208

April 13 • *Emile*: Book 5, pp. 357-398

April 18 • *seminar does not meet; prepare third essay*

April 20 • *seminar does not meet; prepare third essay*

April 25 • *Emile*: Book 5, pp. 398-439

April 27 • *Emile*: Book 5, pp. 439-480

► *April 29* □ *Third essay due by noon via Blackboard upload*

Unit 4. Rousseau's post-political solution: *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* of 1782

Man or citizen? *The Reveries* are enigmatic. Readers don't know whether to incorporate them into Rousseau's political framework or to read them as surrender of that framework. Ask yourself: is this is a political book? If not, what is it?

May 2 • *Reveries*: First through fifth walks, pp. 27-91

May 4 • *Reveries*: Sixth through tenth walks, pp. 93-155

Recommended Secondary Literature

- Cranston, Maurice. 1982-97. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. University of Chicago Press (a biography)
- Gilden, Hilail. 1983. *Rousseau's Social Contract: the Design of the Argument*. University of Chicago Press
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau: fondateur des sciences de l'homme," in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Neuchâtel: Baconnière: pp. 239-248
- McDonald, Joan. 1965. *Rousseau and the French Revolution, 1762-1791*. Athlone
- Melzer, Arthur. 1990. *The Natural Goodness of Man: on the System of Rousseau's Thought*. University of Chicago Press
- Orwin, Clifford, and Nathan Tarcov. 1997. *The Legacy of Rousseau*. University of Chicago Press
- Plattner, Marc. 1979. *Rousseau's State of Nature*. Northern Illinois University Press.
- Strauss, Leo. 1972 [1947]. "On the Intention of Rousseau" in Cranston and Peters, eds., *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Doubleday Anchor

¹ Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>