

Judy Coffin (Professor Coffin)

Office Hours Thursdays 1.30-4 pm and by appointment in Garrison Hall 2.206  
jcoffin@austin.utexas.edu Read this note!<sup>1</sup>

Michael Schmidt (Michael)

Office hours Tuesdays 11:30am-1:30pm in the PCL café and by appointment  
[Schmidt.m.james@gmail.com](mailto:Schmidt.m.james@gmail.com)

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION & NAPOLEON: 1789-1815

In the 1950s, the Chinese Premier Zhou En-Lai was asked what he thought about the French revolution of 1789. He answered that it was “too soon to tell.” Historians, social scientists, and politicians have studied and debated this extraordinary event for two centuries, and they still have not answered the many questions it poses. Why does a regime collapse? How is a new state built? Are revolutions *necessarily* protracted and violent? Writers and artists, too, have been captivated by the human drama of this tumultuous decade and a half. How did ordinary people survive? How were extraordinary careers made – and lost?

In this course we’ll use the French revolution to think about all these questions concretely. We have three aims. The first is to help you master the major events of the revolution itself. The second is to introduce issues of interpretation and historical methods, for the French revolution has long been a forcing ground for new theories of history and new approaches to the past. The required readings represent some of those approaches. Third, we hope you will learn how the revolution has become one of the defining points of modern history, how it has shaped the world we inhabit today, and how it compares with other revolutions, including ones going on right now.

The following books are **REQUIRED reading**:

- William Doyle, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
- David Bell, *The First Total War*
- Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*
- *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, Lynn Hunt, ed.

**Additional required reading** will be on Blackboard as well as the excellent George Mason University website: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity:” (LEF) <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution>. Required documents are noted on the syllabus. You may be able to access them directly, by clicking on the URL. You will probably have to search for the document by name. The site has *lots* of additional material that you will find useful: essays, time lines, and glossaries.

If you have any questions about assignments or the material, please ask.

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<sup>1</sup> Here are some pointers to help all of us manage our email. Make sure you are checking the mail at your Blackboard address. Please answer us promptly if we ask you a question. You will get better quality feedback and substantive discussion by coming to office hours. Please don’t email us with procedural and logistical questions unless you have asked your fellow students and consulted Blackboard. In this course *and in life*, address the person you’re writing politely, be clear, delete automatic signatures that aren’t appropriate, and read your mail over before you send it!

Optional reading:

For the Napoleon followers among you, I have ordered Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life* (analytic and appreciative) and Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (narrative and critical). If you would like more detail on the revolution, I recommend Simon Schama's *Citizens*. I have ordered a few copies of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (the Peaver and Volokhonsky translation) in case a few of you would like to organize a W&P reading group.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

\*\*→This is not an introductory course. You may enjoy it more if you have some background in History. In any event, everyone will have to learn names and dates; you need facts to discuss the broader and more interesting issues, such as the origins of the terror, the problems of forging a state and nation, or what the revolutionaries meant by "democracy."

\*\* →Learning the basic material will be more difficult if you skip lectures. I don't post the powerpoints, since I often adjust a lecture to questions and interests. If you miss a class, get the notes from a fellow student, and do the reading with those notes in mind. Missing more than 2 classes on a T-TH schedule may jeopardize your performance in the class.

We expect you to keep up with the reading, which is marked on the syllabus, and to be prepared to discuss it. We will have small and large group discussions, and we expect respectful, informed, and intelligent participation in those discussions. We will have informal writing assignments in class. Those cannot be made up if you miss class.

I adjust the schedule over the course of the semester, partly in response to student requests. I *assume* you are present, paying attention to announcements, consulting with fellow students, and checking \*\*your Blackboard email.\*\* (See the legal notice on this.) → **Keep track of changes in assignments, lectures, and discussions.**

Your grade in the course will be based on:

- 3 4-page take home papers (25% each)
- mid-term test (20%)
- various in-class assignments and participation (5%)

\*\* Historians care about writing. It is impossible to separate form from content, and both count in your grade. Check your grammar, sentence structure, and word usage. Go to the writing center. Have someone read and comment on your paper. Give yourself time to revise.

We evaluate the paper's argument, clarity, and thoroughness, how well you have synthesized the material in lectures, and how well you have understood the reading.

All papers and take-home exams must be typed, double spaced, with regular fonts and margins and your name on each page. They must be handed in, not emailed.

**Graduate students** \*Graduate students taking the course (even for undergraduate credit) will have additional readings and different requirements. Please see me.

**SOME POLICIES:**

- 1) NO LAPTOPS, cell phones, or texting in the classroom.
- 2) Check in at the beginning of class. PLEASE DO NOT disrupt class by talking, wandering in late, or

- leaving early. If for some reason you have to leave class early, do so quietly and let me know beforehand.
- 3) All the assignments are required, even if you are taking the course pass-fail.
  - 4) You cannot Q drop the course after the deadline if you are failing it -- if, for instance, you have missed quizzes or forgotten to hand in papers. Please bear this in mind.
  - 5) It is easy to buy papers on the Web and to copy from websites. You will get a 0 for the assignment, from which it is hard to recover.
  - 6) All federal, state, and university laws apply. These are spelled out at the end of the syllabus.

## **SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS**

### **PART I: THE OLD REGIME**

#### **1. (August 25): Introduction**

Doyle, *Very short history*, ch 1  
Bell, *First Total War*, intro (quickly; get what you can from it)  
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/chap2a.html> "The Monarchy Embattled"

What were the most fundamental characteristics of the Ancien Regime? What powers and problems did Louis XVI inherit?

#### **2. (Aug 30 & Sept 1): Absolutism and its critics**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, book I (entire); book II (1-4 and 8-11). Consult handout on BLACKBOARD. Be prepared to discuss Rousseau next week.  
*The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Documentary History*, pp. 1-12 ; docs 1 (*Encyclopedia*; pay attention to natural law and general will) and 2 (Voltaire)

#### **3. (Sept 6 & 8): Corruption and Utopia: The Social Contract**

Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature" in *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*. (pages 1-40 in the 1982 trade paperback). Blackboard  
Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book III (4-6, 9-10, 16-18); Book IV (1 and 8)  
*Fr Rev & Human Rights*, docs 1 (*Encyclopedia*; pay attention to natural law and general will) and 2 (Voltaire) and 6 (the first few pages of Raynal).

#### **4. (Sept 13 & 15) 1787-1789: The Making of a Crisis**

Abbé Sieyès (say – yes), "What is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate?" in *Fr Rev & Human Rights*, 63-70  
Doyle, *Very Short History*, ch. 2.  
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/chap1a.html> "Social causes of the revolution"

 [Attack on Seigneurial Dues](#)

 [Cahiers from Rural Districts: Attack on Seigneurial Dues](#)

#### **5. (Sept 20 & 22) 1789: The end of feudalism and the rights of man**

*Fr Rev & Human Rights*, pp 1-31 and docs 5 (Jews), 9 (women), and 14

**Thursday Sept 22: 1<sup>st</sup> take-home paper due**

## PART II: REGIME CHANGE

### 6. (Sept 27 & 29) 1790: Reacting to the Revolution

 [Populace Awake](#) (1790)

 [Edmund Burke, \*Reflections on the Revolution in France\*](#)

 Thomas Paine, [Rights of Man](#)

 Mary Wollstonecraft, [A Vindication of the Rights of Woman](#)

Doyle, ch. 3 (goes all the way to Nap, so you can read it all at once, or in short bits)  
Start Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*

### 7. (October 4 & 6 ) 1791: The King and the Popular movement

Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, chs 1-6

I will give your club assignments based on the readings from this week and last.

 [Champ de Mars: Petitions of the Cordelier and Jacobin Clubs](#)

 The Massacre of the *Champ de Mars* [Parade ground] in [the Révolutions de Paris Parisian Petitions to Dethrone the King \(3 August 1792\)](#)

 [Proceedings of the Quinze-Vingts Section](#)

### 8. (October 11 & 13) 1792: The Second French revolution

Tackett, *Flight*, finish

Bell, *First Total War*, chs. 3-4

The Marseillaise (War Song for the Army of the Rhine) <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/625/>

Extra points if you (or your political club) can sing it...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=werf88C7lkA>

Why did the revolution radicalize? Compare Bell's analysis with Tackett's.

Why did the revolutionaries go to war? What problems was war meant to solve?

### 9. (Oct. 18 & 20) 1792-3: The King's trial

Speeches at the King's trial, which I will post

You will be responsible for everything up to and including the September Massacres

### Mid-term test Oct 20

### 10. (Oct. 25 & 27) 1792-4: Terror and Counter Revolution

Bell, *First Total War*, ch. 5

Where was the Vendée? Why was the region counter-revolutionary, if it was? How do you

account for the violence on both sides in the region? In Paris ?

### **PART III: NAPOLEON'S EMPIRE AND THE REVOLUTION ON THE WORLD STAGE**

#### **11. (Nov. 1 & 3) 1794-1802: Robespierre to Buonaparte, and then to Napoleon**

Bell, *The First Total War*, chs. 1, 6, 7

LEF [Chapter 9: The Napoleonic Experience.](#)

#### **12. (Nov. 8 & 10) 1792-1804: Empire and Revolution in the Caribbean**

LEF "Slavery & the Haitian Rev". <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/chap8a.html>

*Fr Rev & Human Rights*, docs. 26-33

#### **13. (Nov. 15 & 17) The Rise (1803-7) and Fall of Napoleon's Superstate (1808-1812)**

Bell, *First Total War*, chs. 7-8-epilogue

#### **14. (Nov. 22) War and Peace (1812-1815)**

Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, pages to be posted

**TUES NOV. 18: SECOND TAKE HOME PAPER DUE**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

#### **15. (Nov. 29 & Dec. 1) The Revolution and its Legacies**

review Bell and Tackett



[Thomas Jefferson on the French Revolution](#)



[A Positive American View](#) (Franklin)

Doyle, *Very Short History*, chs. 4-5 (important) and 6 (less important)

**FINAL TAKE HOME DUE ON DATE OF FINAL EXAM**

(the University Schedule is posted by the middle of the semester  
at <http://utdirect.utexas.edu/rgexam/getyys.WBX>)

### **THE LEGAL MATTERS**

#### **Academic Integrity**

#### **University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity,

honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. Cooperating should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e mail, an e mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

#### **Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students**

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

#### **Documented Disability Statement**

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

- Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations for assignments are required.
- Contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) or reference SSD's website for more disability-related information:  
[http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for\\_cstudents.php](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for_cstudents.php)

#### **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

#### **Q drop Policy**

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231:

“Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”