

PT182 Thinking Revolution: Philosophy and Politics

Seminar Leader: Jeffrey Champlin

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

Office: K24, 008 or on Zoom

Course Description

Credits: 8 ECTS, 4 U.S. credits

Course Times: Mon & Wed 9:00-10:30

The French Revolution brought philosophical ideals of equality and self-government into modern politics with unprecedented force and suddenness. In its violent wake Enlightenment thinkers fiercely debated the limits of progress, institutional reform, and the relation between human nature and government. In this course we begin with Rousseau's articulation of the social contract and natural right which explicitly inspired revolutionaries. Then we move to the debate between Burke and Paine on the comparative advantages of tradition and abstract rights as the basis of government. Comparing Hannah Arendt's account of the American and French Revolutions with these earlier authors challenges us to reconceive the relation between thought and action in the form of participatory politics. In conclusion, C.L.R. James's work on the Haitian revolution then challenges Arendt's apparent purification of action of both violence and the exclusion of race as merely relevant to an apolitical 'social' sphere.

Please note that this course is being offered jointly with the OSUN Hubs for Connected Learning and will include students studying remotely from Kenya and/or Jordan. This is a new teaching format and I will ask for class participation to employ it for the benefit of all.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Requirements

We will make the most of the liberal arts seminar format by developing ideas and analysis through a process of discussion and writing. Toward that end, each student will contribute a short presentation and write a midterm and final paper. Overall class participation is also essential, and will be evaluated based on consistently preparing the readings and class engagement.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from this twice-per-week course will not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2022: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. In these cases, students will be able to join class through a remote access link. Otherwise, please check in with me with an asynchronous participation option. When in doubt, you can submit a 1 page, double spaced, response to a quote of your choice from the day you missed to make up for participation. To be counted, I need to receive this one week from the day you return to class.

Assessment

Class presentation: Students will present on one day's reading as per a signup sheet. Each presentation of about 20 minutes will examine key passages of your choice as guided by a commentary handout that I will provide. You are encouraged to revise your presentation into either the midterm or final essay. However, if you have another topic that you prefer, you may write on that after clearing it with me.

Writing Assignments: Students will write two papers. The midterm paper will be 2,000 words. It will be focused on one text and is due at the end of the day on **March 16**. The final paper will be 3,000 words. It will develop a longer comparative analysis of two texts we have studied in the class. It is due on **May 4th** at the end of the day for graduating students. For non-graduating students, it is due on **May 11**.

Meeting with Writing Tutor: Each student is **required** to meet once with the class writing tutor. You may do so before your presentation, midterm paper, or final paper. I recommend meeting with them for an assignment earlier in the semester rather than later to make the most out of their support. Meetings with the tutor may be held in pairs or groups of 3 if you prefer and the tutor agrees.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late.

Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (quality and quantity): 25%,
Meeting with Writing Tutor (credit for attending): 5%
Presentation: 15%
Midterm paper (2000 words): 25%
Final essay (3000 words): 30%

Course Materials

Note: In order to accommodate the other students online, we will generally refer to texts in electronic formats. Thus, you may bring your laptop or tablet to class for this purpose.

Please Access the course on **Brightspace** and find these books under "Content." You will be emailed an invitation to Brightspace by Philip Fedchin, Technology Strategist - International Education (p.fedchin@berlin.bard.edu).

To Purchase:

Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution* (Penguin Classics, 2006) ISBN-10: 0143039903
James, CLR. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. (Vintage, 1989). ISBN-10 : 0679724672

Public domain copies of these texts will be supplied online:

Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Macmillan, 1890).
Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen of 1789
Paine, *Rights of Man* (book 1). In: *The Writings of Thomas Paine, vol. 2* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1894).
Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895).
The United States Declaration of Independence

This text will also be supplied online:

Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 7 (Summer 1986): pp. 7-15.

On Reserve in the Library:

Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution* (Princeton Classics, 2005) ISBN: 9780691121888

Schedule

January 31 Introduction: "Thinking Revolution" from the Enlightenment to today.

February 2 Historical Introduction: "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen"

February 7 *The Social Contract* Book 1

February 9 *The Social Contract* Book 2

February 14 *The Social Contract* Book 3

February 16 *The Social Contract* Book 4

February 21 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* pp. 1-60

February 23 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* pp. 61-120

February 28 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* pp. 121-180

March 2 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* pp. 181-240

March 7 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* pp. 241-280 (end)

March 9 Paine, *Rights of Man* pp.258-300

March 14 Paine, *Rights of Man* pp.300-350

March 16 Paine, *Rights of Man* pp.350-397 (end)

March 16 Midterm Papers due at the end of the day

March 21 U.S. Declaration of Independence

March 23 Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 7 (Summer 1986): pp. 7-15.

March 28 Arendt, *On Revolution* "Introduction," Chapter 1

March 30 Arendt, *On Revolution* Chapter 3

April 4 Arendt, *On Revolution* Chapter 5

April 6 Arendt, *On Revolution* Chapter 6

Spring break April 11 – April 18 (Monday April 18 is a federal holiday)

April 20 James, *The Black Jacobins* Prologue, Chapter 1, Chapter 2

April 25 James, *The Black Jacobins* Chapter 4, Chapter 5

April 27 James, *The Black Jacobins* Chapter 6, Chapter 7

May 2 James, *The Black Jacobins* Chapter 10, Chapter 11

May 4 James, *The Black Jacobins* Chapter 12, Chapter 13

May 4 Final Paper due at the end of the day for graduating students

May 9 Concluding discussion and texts suggested by students

May 11 Concluding discussion

May 11 Final Paper due at the end of the day for non-graduating students