

**Register to vote ASAP and vote next November.
Democracy is a fragile right, not to be taken lightly.**

**AS 100.310 The French Revolution (Sp 2026)
Tu, Th 3-4:15**

The French Revolution is one of the first great revolutions of the modern world. As it moved through periods of liberalism, radicalism, conservatism, and reaction in a single decade, citizens and on-lookers debated the meaning of words like “liberty,” “equality,” and “rights,” forging concepts and practices that are with us today. We no longer assume— as did many historians of the 19th and 20th centuries— that the French Revolution is a metric by which to assess other revolutions, but it remains a vibrant moment that helps us better understand regime change, radicalization and polarization, compromise and negotiation, and how upheaval shapes ordinary lives.

This course introduces the social, political, and cultural history of the French Revolution and posed questions that are essential to understanding cataclysmic change. How and why did the Revolution begin? Whose interests did it serve? Why did it radicalize? How was it to be ended? What were its long-term consequences? We will attempt to answer such questions by weighing primary evidence from the period and scholars’ retrospective arguments, discussing scholarly hypotheses, and producing our own well-documented arguments.

Course Requirements

Reading: There will be 40-60 pp. of reading per wk, with some exceptions (Tackett and Mason run to about 100-120pp/wk). Look ahead, to begin longer readings early and balance your workload. Mark texts and bring hard copy to class for easy reference.

We will address specific questions each week but you should always ask the following of any given text: Is it a primary or secondary source? Why does that matter? What does the author argue? What evidence do they use? How does this reading build on or complicate issues raised previously? What is your opinion of the argument? What evidence supports your interpretation?

Discussion & Lecture: We will divide our time between lecture & discussion. Tuesdays will be given overwhelmingly to lecture but you are expected to have done the readings assigned for that day and be prepared to answer questions about them when necessary. **No computer screens are permitted during Thursday discussions** (w/out authorization from Student Disabilities), so **bring hard copy of readings to class** with you. Discussion helps students make sense of new ideas by asking informed questions and sharing opinions based on a growing body of knowledge so participation is vital. Accordingly, know your materials in advance, be prepared to listen, and be ready to engage (critically, but politely) with what others say. Lectures are meant to elaborate on context for the readings but the readings form the heart of the course.

A note on attendance: Attendance is essential to facilitate our work as a collective. Students are allowed two undocumented absences (lecture or discussion). Please provide documentation for grad school or job interview absences. For absences due to extended illness or family emergency, coordinate with someone in the Office of Student Life, who will inform us of your situation. In those cases, we can make alternate arrangements for course work if necessary. 2X tardy to class (more than 5 minutes late) counts as an undocumented absence. Each absence beyond the two permitted will lower your participation grade by 1/3 (from B+ to B, etc).

Writing Assignments: Two brief Canvas posts/wk, which pose a discussion question based on themes in one or more of the assigned texts for that day. Be prepared to elaborate on your question if called on to do so (even on Tuesdays!) **Posts due by noon, day of class, no late submissions.** You may miss 2 canvas posts without penalty. Each missed post after that will lower your participation grade by 1/3 (from B+ to B, etc)

Two short in-class exams that will ask you to identify passages from course materials and explain their significance.

Take-home midterm and final that ask for synthetic essays based on course readings. Late take-home exams will be lowered by 1/3 grade (from B+ to B, etc) for each day beyond deadline.

Grades

Blackboard Posts	5%
Participation	10%
In-class exams	20% each
Take-home Midterm	20%
Final Exam	25%

Students with Disabilities: In compliance with JHU policy and equal access laws, I am happy to discuss appropriate accommodations. Request for accommodations should be made in the first week of the semester in coordination with the Office of Student Disability Services. Contact info is 410- 516-8075/ studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu and/or disability accommodations site: <https://advanced.jhu.edu/student-resources/disability-services/disability-accommodations/>

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to comply with University regulations for academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, copying another student's work or using other materials without proper citation. Failure to maintain academic integrity will result, at a minimum, in a loss of credit for the assignment. Other penalties may also apply. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak to me before the assignment is due. Further guidelines and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty can be found at the JHU website: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/policies-guidelines/undergrad-ethics/>

Appropriate use of AI: You **may use** spell check, grammar check, and thesaurus tools when writing. You **may not use** AI to generate ideas or write any portion or draft of your essay. Evidence of inappropriate use of AI will be considered plagiarism and, as such, grounds for investigation into academic integrity. You may discuss readings, discussion posts, and exam essays with your fellow students. Course instructors will not use AI to prepare lectures, grade, or respond to your work.

Counseling and Mental Health. College is a time of major transition, change, and growth that can be both exciting and stressful. At times, the challenges of college life may feel overwhelming and impact your mental health, making it difficult to manage daily demands. The Counseling Center provides a safe, confidential, nonjudgmental space where students can feel free to explore a wide concerns and issues. <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/>

Required Texts

Laura Mason & Tracey Rizzo, *The French Revolution: A Document Collection*, 2nd edition

Peter McPhee, *Liberty or Death; the French Revolution*

Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*

Laura Mason, *The Last Revolutionaries: the Conspiracy Trial of Gracchus Babeuf and the Equals*
Canvas Reserves

Schedule

The Old Regime

- Tu Jan 20** Introduction
Th Jan 22 McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 1-22
Mason/Rizzo, 9-16: Charles Loyseau, *A Treatise on Orders (1610)*
Canvas (see "Assignments" tab) : Excerpts from Arthur Young, *Travels during the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789 (1792)* (8 pp)

Origins of the French Revolution

- Tu Jan 27** McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 23-57
Th Jan 29 Canvas (see "Assignments" tab): D'Alembert & Diderot from *Encyclopédie*; Voltaire, *Reflections on Religion*; Montesquieu from *Spirit of the Laws*; Rousseau on *Origins of Inequality* (excerpted from Kramnick (ed) *The Portable Enlightenment* 44 pp.)
Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*; Louis Sébastien Mercier, *Paris Scenes* (Mason/Rizzo 32-41)

From Reform to Revolution

- Tu Feb 3** McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 58-80
Mason/Rizzo, 42-56: "From Estates General to National Assembly"
Th Feb 5 Canvas: William Sewell, "Historical Events as Structural Transformations: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille," *Theory & Society* v. 25 #6 (Dec 96) 841-881

Remaking France

- Tu Feb 10** McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 81-101
Mason/Rizzo, 87-96, 99-110, 112-119: "Legislating an Enlightened Regime"
Th Feb 12 ----- In-class Midterm 1 -----

The Fracturing of the New Regime...

- Tu Feb 17** McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 102-132
Mason/Rizzo, 57-77, 110-112: "The Emergence of Popular Revolution"
Th Feb 19 Mason/Rizzo, 120-123, 131-143: "New Tensions"

The Birth of Democracy

- Tu Feb 24** Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* 1-56
Th Feb 26 Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* 88-150

The March to War and a New Revolution

- Tu Mar 3** McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 142-163
Mason/Rizzo, 144-160, 171-181
Th Mar 5 Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* 151-218

----Take-home midterm due by noon Monday, 11 Mar---

Revolution in the Colonies

- Tu Mar 12** Revolution in the Colonies I
Canvas: Laurent Dubois & John Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 7-22*
Mason/Rizzo, 96-99, 204-213: Documents from Saint-Domingue

Th Mar 14 Revolution in the Colonies II
Canvas: Laurent Dubois & John Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Carribean*, 24-33
Richard Lee Turits & Laurent Dubois, "Emancipation and the Rooting of Freedom,"
Freedom Roots (2019), 93-114

Mar 16-20 Spring Break

Popular Activism

Tu Mar 24 McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 181-204
Mason/Rizzo, 190-204: "Popular Movements Beyond the Convention"

Th Mar 26 Mason/Rizzo, 218-220: "Popular Movements..."
Canvas: Olwen Hufton, "In Search of Counter-Revolutionary Women," Gary Kates
(ed) *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies* 1st edition
(1998) 302-333

Renewal & Terror

Tu Mar 31 McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 205-227
Mason/Rizzo, 223-227, 240-243, 259-263: Constitution of Year I; Barère on the
Maximum; Saint-Just on Redistributing Property

Th Apr 2 Jean-Pierre Gross, *Fair Shares for All* 64-92

Tu Apr 7 ----- **In-class Midterm 2** -----

Th Apr 9 Marisa Linton & Michel Biard, "Terror in the Convention," *Terror: the French
Revolution and Its Demons* (2021) 96-118
Mason/Rizzo, 220-222, 227-240, 253-259: Vendée, Suspects, Virtue

The Long Process of Ending the Revolution

Tu Apr 14 McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 274-296
Mason/Rizzo, 264-277: "The Thermidorian Reaction"

Th Apr 16 The Directory
Laura Mason, *The Last Revolutionaries* (2022), 44-89

Tu Apr 21 Canvas: Laura Mason, *The Last Revolutionaries* (2022), 118-126, 143-158, 174-
188, 200-214

The Meaning of it All

Th Apr 23 McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 342-370
Canvas: Jennifer Heuer, "Did Everything Change? Rethinking Revolutionary
Legacies," David Andress (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of the French Revolution*
(2015) 625-641

Take-home final due 5pm Friday May 1

Guidelines for Papers & Take-Home Exams

Narrow your focus

You cannot say everything there is to be said in a short paper or exam essay. so focus a couple of issues and explain what they tell us about the larger problem you are discussing.

Make a clear, strong argument

Your essay should not summarize McPhee but, instead, make a persuasive argument that addresses the question posed.

Begin your essay by stating your argument in the clearest possible terms. This may require several good declarative sentences. Accordingly, write a draft of your introduction when you begin the paper to guide yourself, and revise thoroughly after you finish the essay. The introduction should be the last thing you revise because we rarely have a perfectly clear sense of what we are arguing until we finish writing. You should convey your final sense of the material to your reader.

As a rule, your first (introductory) paragraph and your final (concluding) paragraph should be brief, no more than a half-page. State your case and add background info as necessary in the body of the essay.

Organize your essay clearly and effectively

Each paragraph in the body of your essay should contribute to the logical development of your argument. Think in terms of a series of main points. Make sure each paragraph develops one point, not several. Use a clear topic sentence to make the main point of each paragraph immediately visible. If you want to make an especially complicated point, consider devoting two consecutive paragraphs to developing it. Otherwise, limit development of each main point to one paragraph. Order the presentation of your main points carefully, to build your argument logically and systematically. Use clear transition sentences to ensure that each paragraph flows from the previous one.

Demonstrate your main points with relevant examples from sources

To make your overall argument and main points convincing, you must analyze your sources. Avoid lengthy general discussions and simple summaries of sources. Give a brief overview of the source's provenance or significance (who wrote it? what does it address?), then explain, precisely, how it is relevant to your argument. Do not assume that a pithy quotation can make your point for you. Rather, lean into summary and explain how your source advances your argument. To ensure that each paragraph reinforces your analysis, avoid long block (indented) quotations when a briefer quotation will suffice.

Do not assume too much knowledge

It's good to get in the habit of writing for a general reader. In other words, do not assume that your reader is familiar with the texts you're analyzing. Give a very brief summary, cite the author's full name, and include the title of the book or article in question before moving to the that concerns you. For example:

*In **The Return of Martin Guerre**, Natalie Davis argues that peasants had some room to negotiate the material and social constraints that defined their world.*

Eliminate typographical and grammatical errors

Your essays should have a bare minimum of typographical and grammatical errors. Numerous mistakes – in particular, poor syntax– may contribute to a significant drop in grade. Among the most common writing mistakes are run-on sentences; unclear references; failure to ensure that subjects, verbs, and objects are in agreement; and sentences with improper punctuation (in particular, commas and semi-colons). Multiple verb tenses are also a common source of confusion. Finally, avoid the passive voice whenever possible.

Most writing problems are relatively easy to solve, above all by consulting a writing manual and/or a writing specialist, and then consciously working to improve those aspects of your writing that are causing you trouble. If you have been alerted to problems with clarity of expression, consult Strunk & White, *Elements of Style* (available for free on MSE website) and take drafts of your papers to the Writing Center. Correct grammar and syntax are essential to a good paper because persuasive arguments demand sound reasoning and clear expression.

Cite your sources

Cite any direct quotation, paraphrase, ideas or thoughts that are not exclusively your own, including information you've gathered from assigned readings, lectures, and films. FAILURE TO CITE PROPERLY IS PLAGIARISM. Full footnotes are not necessary when citing assigned materials. Cite the author and page number of the text you're using (McPhee, 47). When citing a document, name the original author and where you consulted the text (Necker in Mason/Rizzo, 19).