HIST 407/507: Men, Women, and Revolution, 1789-1815
Prof. Ian F. McNeely – University of Oregon – Fall 2005

Meeting times: Wed. 3:00-5:50 in 471 MCK
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Description

What impact did the French Revolution have on gender roles? How did men and women relate differently, as spouses, friends, and lovers, before and after its impact? How did same-sex relationships change? How did parents and children relate differently? How did different genders respond differently to the revolutionary experiences of violence and warfare, deprivation and hardship? What new opportunities or setbacks did the Revolution bring about for different groups defined by gender, sex, family roles, and generation?

This course is a research seminar aiming to recapture the lived experience of revolutionary politics and violence through attention to gender, family, and sexuality. Students’ principal goal will be the preparation of a lengthy paper based on primary-source research on a topic of interest. Papers should be 15 to 20 pages long and are due on the first day of finals week. Additional assignments during the term will be oriented toward the preparation of the research paper.

Papers should focus on continental Western and Central Europe during the epoch of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815. I will consider topics on Britain and the United States, and on the surrounding time periods, only in exceptional cases.

I particularly encourage the study of familiar and intimate letters exchanged between a male and a female correspondent. Letters exchanged between members of the same sex, if read creatively, can also provide insights on the gendered nature of individual and collective responses to the French Revolution. Diaries and newspaper articles are also acceptable (though less preferable) sources, as are letters intended less as immediate personal exchanges than as literarily crafted works for publication on topical issues; as we will see, the difference between emotional spontaneity and literary craft is often hard to pin down in contemporary letter-writing. For the purposes of this class, I discourage the use of memoirs written long after the events they describe, as well as fictional, philosophical, or political works.

At our first class meeting, I will circulate a list of suggested research paper subjects and primary sources available at Knight Library or through the Summit interlibrary loan system. You are welcome to select one of these topics or develop your own in consultation with me.
In the early weeks of the term, students will read an introduction to the French Revolution and a book-length interpretation of its relation to gender, family, and sexuality. After rounding out our interpretive framework with several shorter analytical articles on the cultural and gender history of the epoch, I will hold an in-class workshop on research methods; I may also assign additional articles as particular interpretive problems arise in the course to research topic development. For two weeks after that, I will meet with students individually to discuss the progress of their research and writing. During the last three weeks of the term, students will present a primary source excerpt to the class for discussion and critique.

Assignments

- Class participation, including on-time preparation of starred (*) assignments and in-class primary source presentation (40%)
- Research paper, 15-20 pages (60%)

Schedule and readings

* = indicates homework assignment in addition to assigned readings

**9/28** Introduction: letters as a primary source

Selections from the letters of Wilhelm von Humboldt

**10/5** An overview: the French Revolution and its significance


*Generate and turn in a list of possible research paper subjects

**10/12** An interpretive framework: linking politics and gender

Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*

*Finalize and turn in a description of research paper subject and acquire primary source; include a description of the primary source with a xeroxed title page and table of contents
(10/19) Other interpretations of the Revolution’s impact on men and women

READINGS TBA (approximately three articles, accessible online, addressing issues of relevance to one or more research topics). Check this space on the web for specifics after 10/12.

*Turn in a two-page prospectus, including (a) a one- to two-paragraph description of your topic, its significance, and your research methodology and (b) a list of 5-10 unresolved questions in your research

(10/26) In-class workshop on research methods and/or additional readings TBA

(11/2) No class: meet with instructor

*Turn in source sample for in-class presentations and complete bibliography

(11/9) No class: meet with instructor

*(Same instructions as for 11/2)

(11/16) Student-led source readings

(11/23) Student-led source readings

(11/30) Student-led source readings

(12/5) Research papers due

*Drop off papers in my office, 319 McKenzie Hall by 4:00 pm