

Phil 87 Freshman Seminar: Reacting to The Past

Syllabus Fall 2017

Th. 1:00-2:00 pm

York Hall Room 4050

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HSS 7017

W 11:00 am-Noon Th. 2:00-3:00 pm

* Prof. Keller-Lapp's office is in the Making of the Modern World Program Office.

Overview

The class is taught jointly by professors Keller-Lapp and Lamey. Students who put in the necessary work will obtain a familiarity with classic texts in political philosophy by thinkers such as Rousseau, Burke and Montesquieu. Much of our class will take the form of a role-playing game called Reacting to the Past. As the Reacting web site puts it, "Reacting to the Past (RTTP) consists of elaborate games, set in the past, in which students are assigned roles informed by classic texts in the history of ideas. Class sessions are run entirely by students; instructors advise and guide students and grade their oral and written work."

Our game takes place during the French Revolution. Students will be assigned roles of historical personalities such as King Louis XVI and the Marquis de Lafayette, Commander of the National Guard, as well as members of various political factions. Students will work in factions to pass bills in the National Assembly and achieve other goals. As one summary of the French Revolution game puts it, "you will make speeches, write articles, negotiate, make backroom deals, riot, perhaps stretch the truth on occasion, maybe even betray erstwhile allies. Along the way you will hopefully gain a greater appreciation of what at stake in the revolution and why the passions it unleashed proved so very difficult to control."

For more information about Reacting to the Past see <https://reacting.barnard.edu>.

Readings

Students are required to obtain a copy of the following book, which is available at the bookstore:

Jennifer Popiel, Mark Carnes and Gary Kates. *Rousseau, Burke and Revolution in France, 1791 Second Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015)

We will also be reading Books I and II of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's masterpiece *The Social Contract* (1750) A free copy of the text is available here:

<http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>

Assessment

Students have two assessment options:

Option one: write a 1,200-word essay due 5:00 pm Wednesday of exam week. *Note that students planning to submit the essay must devise their own prompt and email it to either Professor Keller-Lapp or Professor Lamey before 9:00 am on the Friday immediately preceding exam week.*

Option two: regular attendance at seminar with no more than one unexcused absence and good class participation. Note that good participation involves consistently and actively contributing to the game and demonstrating familiarity in one's speeches with Rousseau and other assigned historical and philosophical texts.