French74000: Madame de Staël and the Problem of the Female Intellectual  
[Crosslisted as Hist72100]

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Course Description:

What were the Enlightenment’s notions of womanhood? How did these interact with ideas of genius and intellectual or artistic creativity? These are questions we will explore before delving into Madame de Staël’s life and work, from her great novels, Delphine and Corinne, to some of her more overtly political texts. To what extent did Madame de Staël imbibe and reflect reigning notions of gender, and to what extent did she subvert them? After reading some of the best and most recent scholarship on 18th century attitudes toward the female intellectual, we will turn to a consideration Madame de Staël’s own literary and political productions to see how she navigated the constraints and opportunities offered by the revolutionary times in which she lived. We will also consider whether contemporary approaches to Madame de Staël do justice to her stature as a female intellectual.

Course Learning Objectives:

- By the end of the course, students should be able to
  - Demonstrate familiarity with reigning notions of womanhood during the Enlightenment
  - Explain how Enlightenment notions of womanhood intersected with notions of class and genius
  - Communicate what Madame de Staël’s main intellectual preoccupations were in the context of her times
  - Explain how Madame de Staël experienced reigning notions of womanhood and how she reacted to them

Course Requirements and Grading:

- Class Participation 30%
- Class report on a recommended reading 10%
- On time submission of paper topic 5% (March 4)
- On time submission of preliminary biography 15% (April 8)
- Final paper 40% (May 13)
1. **Jan 28. Gender, Class, and Work**


**Recommended:** Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women. Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime*

2. **February 4. Woman’s Nature**

Lieselotte Steinbrugge, *The Moral Sex. Woman’s Nature in the French Enlightenment*

**Recommended:** Rousseau’s Second Discourse and the section on Sophie in the *Emile*
**Recommended:** Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, chapters 1-4.
**Recommended:** Ludmilla Jordanova, “Sex and Gender” in *Inventing Human Science*
**Recommended:** Anne Vila, “‘Ambiguous Beings’” Marginality, Melancholy, and the *Femme Savante*” in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*

3. **February 11. The World of the Salons**


**Recommended:** David Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1760-1789*.

4. **February 20. No Class**

5. **February 25. Women who Wrote**

Carla Hesse *The Other Enlightenment*

Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, Parts I and II

**Recommended:** Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment. Women Writers Read Rousseau*
**Recommended:** Elisabeth Badinter, *Emilie, Emilie. L’ambition féminine au XVIII siècle.*
Recommended: Anne Vila, “‘Ambiguous Beings’” Marginality, melancholy, and the
Femme Savante” in Women, Gender and Enlightenment

   Paper topic due

   Joan Scott, Only Paradoxes to Offer, chapters 1-2
   Joan Landes, Women and the Public Sphere

   Recommended: Suzanne Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France
   Recommended: Lori Jo Marso, “The Stories of Citizens: Rousseau, Montesquieu, and de

7. March 11. It’s All About Mother…

   Sonja Boon, The Life of Madame Necker
   Dena Goodman, “Suzanne Necker’s Mélanges: Gender, Writing, and Publicity,” in Going
   Public. Women and Publishing in Early Modern France.

8. March 18. A Distinctive French Feminism?

   Mona Ozouf, Women’s Words. Essay on French Singularity (especially the first 6 essays)

9. April 8. Narrating the life of Germaine de Staël

   Read one of the following:
   Angelica Gooden, Madame de Staël. The Dangerous Exile; Maria Fairweather, Madame
   de Staël; or Renée Winegarten, Germaine de Staël & Benjamin Constant. [If you would
   like to read another biography, please clear it with me first.]

   Recommended: Joe Burr Margadant, “Introduction” in The New Biography: Performing
   Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France, pp. 1032.

10. April 15. Germaine de Staël, Politics, Literature, and National Character, transl
     Preliminary bibliography due

11. April 22. Delphine
    Recommended: Germaine de Staël: Crossing the Borders

12. April 29. Corinne
    Recommended: Anne Vila, “‘Ambiguous Beings’” Marginality, Melancholy, and the
    Femme Savante” in Women, Gender and Enlightenment
   *Recommended:* Craiutu’s introduction

14. **May 13. Reports on papers (Papers due)**

15. **May 20. Reports on papers**